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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Janice Josephine Carney
Conducted by Laura M. Calkins, Ph.D.
May 24; June 6, 7, 8, 2005
Transcribed by Hailey Yeilding**

NOTE: Any 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 Laura Calkins: This is Dr. Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University initiating an oral history interview with Janice Carney. Today's date is the
3 24th of May 2005. I am in the interview room of the Special Collections Building on the
4 campus of Texas Tech in Lubbock, Texas and I am speaking with Janice by telephone
5 from your home in Florida, is that right Janice?

6 Janice Carney: Yes, in Largo, Florida.

7 LC: Good afternoon, how are you?

8 JC: A little sick so my voice is sounding raspy, but—

9 LC: Okay, well we'll work with that. Janice, I just want to confirm that you're
10 aware this is an oral history interview for the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech and that our
11 intention here is to do the fullest possible interview with you about your life, your service
12 to the country and that for historical purposes and research interests, we will make the
13 interview available publicly, is that all right with you?

14 JC: Oh, that's fine with me.

15 LC: Okay, thanks Janice. Let's start just by nailing down some basic biographical
16 data. Where were you born, Janice, and when?

17 JC: I was born February 25, 1950 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

18 LC: Can you tell me a little bit about your family, the family in which you were
19 born?

20 JC: I was born in what you would call; you would call it low class or middle class,
21 though, at the time. My father was just a common laborer, he was a World War II

1 veteran and bounced around from job to job and had a serious drinking problem. I was
2 roughly the middle child; I had four brothers and two sisters.

3 LC: Wow.

4 JC: We moved, roughly, at least once a year during my years, from birth onto say
5 junior high.

6 LC: Were you moving all around in the Boston, Boston Cambridge area?

7 JC: Yes, the whole metropolitan Boston area, I lived in—with Boston I lived in
8 the Columbia Point housing projects for a while, Fields Corner in Dorchester,
9 Charlestown, Somerville, just about everywhere.

10 LC: Wow, sounds like, now you mentioned that your father had served in World
11 War II, do you know anything about his service?

12 JC: I learned more about his service after he died.

13 LC: From your mom?

14 JC: I did the research, I was working on a biography which I hope to go back to
15 someday, but I kind of got away from it. I got his discharge papers, which show where
16 he actually served in World War II.

17 LC: Which was where? Can you share that with us?

18 JC: He started in Africa, he was in an engineering unit and he went from Africa to
19 France to Germany.

20 LC: How many years was he in the service? Do you know?

21 JC: Well, I don't, he was either, two, it was two to three years.

22 LC: Wow.

23 JC: The time frame really shows pretty much going through the wars in North
24 Africa and then invasion into Normandy and then going into Germany and it was an
25 engineering unit and just from my experience in Vietnam, I understand how they're
26 ahead, actually ahead of the fighting.

27 LC: Yes.

28 JC: And I really related more to you know, what he went through and he, he was
29 discharged as a private, which to be a, is saying something too, they would, after all that
30 you were discharged as a private it's a sign you were a little bit of a rabble rouser.

31 LC: Something probably went on, huh?

1 JC: Oh, obviously, you know, after all that and leaving with the same rank you
2 got out of basic, it's—but I, he—growing up he never, he never talked much about World
3 War II up until my senior year in high school when I hinted about my possibly going to
4 Canada.

5 LC: Okay.

6 JC: That was when we got into some very adamant arguments, especially after I
7 graduated, over issues of my sexuality and my gender and a lot of issues and he was just
8 so adamant about no son of his was not going to desert or go to Canada. He made it a
9 whole issue of my manhood and everything that I was going to serve in the Army or the
10 military and that was the final one, and even at that point, all he did was say, all I knew
11 was that he served in World War II and I really didn't know much about it.

12 LC: Did he, did you have brothers, then, that were older than you?

13 JC: I had three older brothers, my oldest brother, they were all, actually, I had
14 three older brothers and they were all from different—this sounds like a good episode of
15 Oprah Winfrey or something, I had three older brothers who all had different fathers. My
16 oldest brother was from a different father than my mother was, never married him and he,
17 as soon as he turned 18, he left and joined the Air Force and he was in the Air Force for
18 several years and the brother younger than him was also from a different father. When
19 my father married my mother, she had the one child and she was pregnant and they got
20 married just before he shipped off in the military and that was my brother Jimmy, that's,
21 he never served in the service, he had a lot of issues, he was a pedophile and I was one of
22 his victims.

23 LC: Okay.

24 JC: But he never served in the military. Then the next brother was my brother
25 David, was closest to my age and he did the same thing, he quit high school at 18 and he
26 joined the Army.

27 LC: He went into the Army.

28 JC: Yeah, he actually, he was in Germany, we were in roughly about the same
29 time and then he got out. It was funny I was trying to avoid Vietnam and he was trying
30 to go to Vietnam.

1 LC: I'm going to ask you about that later because that is pretty interesting. So
2 your relationship with David was a good one then? Or better, certainly better.

3 JC: Yes, he was the only, of course, growing up we were just about a year and a
4 half apart. He, not a year and a half, but two years and twenty days actually, apart. And
5 he obviously didn't like me following him around, the big brother thing, when we were
6 young. But when we were older it was kind of like a role-reversal thing that he looked up
7 to me because I had served in Vietnam.

8 LC: Really?

9 JC: Yeah.

10 LC: Interesting.

11 JC: And he was kind of, he always, and he was the only one in my family that
12 knew, you know, my gender issues and he was always supportive and protective of me.
13 You know, later in life, he never told anybody, he was the first one I think, to really
14 know.

15 LC: Was he a confidante of yours as well as things went, as time went on?

16 JC: Oh yes, we were, as close, I don't think I've ever been that close to anybody.

17 LC: Wow, is David still with us, Janice?

18 JC: No, he died from a brain aneurysm in his thirties.

19 LC: Oh, I'm sorry, when did that happen?

20 JC: I think it was—

21 LC: In the '70s sometime?

22 JC: The same year John Lennon died, it was a couple of weeks after.

23 LC: Oh, 1980, I guess.

24 JC: Yeah, it was '80, '80 something, it was right around; I think it was a week
25 after John Lennon died.

26 LC: So right around Christmas, or just before Christmas.

27 JC: Yeah, yeah.

28 LC: Well that's, that's very sudden and very sad. Tell me a little bit about your
29 sisters, if you can. You have one younger brother then, I take it and—

30 JC: I have two younger brothers—

31 LC: Two, I'm sorry.

1 JC: That are younger than me, neither one of them—didn't serve in the military. I
2 scared them. (Laughing)

3 LC: Yeah, and their timing was also probably a little better than yours if they
4 were born in the early 1950s.

5 JC: Yes, my two younger brothers, they obviously, they came into the age after
6 the Vietnam War, by the time they were eighteen and it was all volunteer Army, so you
7 didn't have the draft to worry about.

8 LC: And they weren't drawn to that life.

9 JC: No, I think if I spoke good of it, they might have been, because both my older
10 brother, the brother that was in the Air Force and my brother, David, they both never,
11 never knocked the military. They described it as a lot of drinking, a lot of fun and a lot of
12 sex and a great time and got to see the world. Their experience was completely, you
13 know, alien to mine, to my experience.

14 LC: So, your younger brothers got a more complicated picture, probably because
15 of your experience?

16 JC: Yes, especially the first four or five years, I don't know, the first decade I was
17 back, I was pretty much—pretty messed up and hard to deal with. Then I get, my sisters
18 are too—we're years apart. I have a sister that's older, she, I don't, seven years older
19 than me, I'm not sure exactly. That's my older sister and we're, she's the closest member
20 with my family now that, she's always calling me and we're always talking and she's,
21 probably the most acceptive member of my family. Since I, since I've had gender
22 reassignment surgery, she's been the most accepting. My baby sister is just totally,
23 doesn't talk to me anymore and as far as she's concerned, her brother is dead, I mean,
24 buried.

25 LC: Does she say that to you?

26 JC: Oh yeah, pretty blatantly.

27 LC: Wow, wow, well tell me a little bit about yourself as a youngster, you know
28 you've said things are clearly complicated, your family's moving around and there's a lot
29 of kids, how did you cope? How did you, for example, feel about going to school? Was
30 school a good place to go?

1 JC: School was just, I still start stuttering even remembering it, I was, from as far
2 back as I can remember—and this is part of why, the biography I was trying to write—
3 part of what I did is I went, I tried to trace all of our different houses we lived in and what
4 an experience that was. Driving all over Boston or taking the subway and empty lots
5 with new buildings where there was once duplexes that we rented.

6 LC: Oh, sure.

7 JC: And it was kind of fascinating and I got a list of all the addresses, those
8 addresses and I got all my siblings birth certificates.

9 LC: Really?

10 JC: Because, my mind was really blank on so much stuff, I really blacked out a lot
11 of things, it was during this process with a lot of memories being molested at a young age
12 came back. With the birth certificates, I got that sense where the eight of us counting
13 even the two before, my half-brothers.

14 LC: Yes.

15 JC: Having every single birth certificate and it was like my mother was having a
16 child roughly every two years, so that would be a decade. We—at every single birth
17 certificate it was a different address, where we lived in a different area of Boston and I
18 think all but one, what it was, my brother, trying to think—oh, Jimmy and David, my
19 father was listed as being in the military. And then the rest of us, it was all listed as
20 unemployed, I think there was only one, I'm not sure when it was, it was only one when
21 he had a job, where he had a job and that was as a laborer. So pretty much he was listed
22 as unemployed and there was all these different addresses and that, and I tried to use this
23 information to track, where, I know I spent three years in the fourth grade, which is quite
24 an achievement.

25 LC: Yes, I think you're the only one I've ever heard of.

26 JC: Me and Einstein.

27 LC: Right, okay two, that's good.

28 JC: I'm serious, he had a very similar, I read his biography, and he had a very
29 similar problem.

30 LC: That's interesting.

31 JC: But he turned out okay, I guess.

1 LC: He turned out all right, yeah.

2 JC: Let's see, we had just moved so much and I was in and out of so many
3 schools and there was one period where I could, I tried to trace all of the different schools
4 I was in in the fourth grade and that's when I kind of saw what my problem was. I was
5 never in a school long enough to even make friends or even know anybody.

6 LC: Were you in the public schools?

7 JC: Yeah, it was Boston public schools and I ended up being labeled retarded
8 which was the term they actually used and I had problems with stuttering and the stupid
9 bedwetting and at the time, I was, actually legally blind in one eye and I didn't have
10 glasses.

11 LC: Did no one know? Did your parents know?

12 JC: No, I mean, I just was—

13 LC: You just thought that was the way everybody was?

14 JC: Yeah, I just was totally lost in this middle where my mother—my father either
15 was working some laboring job and coming drunk and my mother was in and out of
16 different affairs so that didn't, she was never around. Being in the middle of, you know,
17 all these kids, it was almost like a non-existence.

18 LC: And you feel like you got lost in there.

19 JC: Yes, I was just was kind of, during those years, ages, pretty much through the
20 first grade right on through up until about the fifth grade when I started to, you know,
21 taking care of myself.

22 LC: Do you remember any adult who you felt you had access to during that time
23 period?

24 JC: Only when we lived in Charlestown, there was a librarian at the old Bunker
25 Hill Library and the Bunker Hill Boys Club and those are the two places I used to go, I
26 stayed at the library; I would spend hours at the library.

27 LC: You did?

28 JC: Yeah.

29 LC: What were you doing?

30 JC: Reading.

31 LC: What were you reading, do you remember? What did you like?

1 JC: When I was young I really liked the Madeline books and as I got older—at a
2 very early age I was reading a lot of philosophy, I don't know, I was in the seventh grade
3 and I was reading Nietzsche.

4 LC: Gosh, I think you're probably closer to Einstein than to retarded, I'm just
5 guessing.

6 JC: It was really weird, but I had this teacher that—I was flunking everything and
7 just barely getting by and my homeroom teacher was scared of me. I was just constantly
8 reading and going for these books and I was reading a lot of Herman Hesse and
9 Nietzsche.

10 LC: Probably scaring the hell out of the teachers.

11 JC: Yeah, but yet I was flunking everything and was, and that was when they
12 started the different IQ tests and stuff and they were saying that, you know, and I got
13 glasses by that time too, which was a great help. I think I was in the fifth grade when I
14 got my first pair of glasses.

15 LC: Tell me about the librarian that you mentioned.

16 JC: I'm not even sure how old I was, but she used to, bring me bowls of cereal.

17 LC: Really?

18 JC: Yeah, yeah, because she knew I was spending a lot of time there and I wasn't
19 eating.

20 LC: That's, that's very cool.

21 JC: She was really a neat lady from what I can remember.

22 LC: Sounds like it.

23 JC: She, you know, she never bothered me and she let me stay there and it
24 wasn't—I didn't want to go home, I had no friends.

25 LC: So you hung out at the library?

26 JC: Yeah.

27 LC: Sounds good. You said that you started kind of managing your, for yourself
28 a little bit more around about fifth grade or so. Did you then, just to clarify, continue to
29 move all through those years? The next years coming up, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth
30 grade?

1 JC: Well, what happened is somewhere around, I don't know, the fourth or fifth
2 grade when I was twelve or thirteen, I started selling newspapers in Boston and I was,
3 you know, for that age I was doing pretty good with tips and stuff and I always had a
4 little bit of money and I was going into Boston by myself after school, it was right after
5 school, I would have to go into, you know, and you stand on a corner by the subway
6 stations.

7 LC: Whereabouts? Do you remember which, which stations did you—?

8 JC: Right in the corner, if you're familiar with Boston, it's right at the corner of
9 Washington and Summer streets.

10 LC: Oh, okay, uh-huh.

11 JC: It was the old, the Boston Globe and the Boston Record-American, as it was
12 called then. I really aged myself, they were like seven cents each or something like that
13 and everybody would give you a dime.

14 LC: So you just hung onto the change?

15 JC: Yeah, just about everybody at that time.

16 LC: Sure.

17 JC: But when the paper got up to a dime, the tips went right down the—

18 LC: I'll bet. That was not good for your, you know, your income.

19 JC: Yeah, then it wasn't worth it. But I, you know, but after doing that and then I
20 got a job through the connections—and this is right in the corner of Washington and
21 Summer street, where it goes down in the subway basements. So you just had—after
22 school what we did was try to get there in time for them, when all of the businesses close
23 and you just had people swarming down to the subway that wanted the paper to read in
24 the train.

25 LC: So you'd just stand there and unload the newspapers and collect the dimes.

26 JC: Yeah.

27 LC: How did you get into it? How did you know you could do that? Do you
28 remember?

29 JC: My brother David had been doing it and he's the one that got me the job.

30 LC: And you did that for what, a couple of years or—

1 JC: Yeah, I was, I'm trying to think, I started—I was doing it when Kennedy was
2 assassinated in '63.

3 LC: Do you remember that?

4 JC: Oh yeah, it was, just unbelievable day.

5 LC: Tell me what you can about it, Janice.

6 JC: Just, in school, they just had this announcement that the president was shot
7 and he didn't say much and didn't, they just dismissed the, shut the school down and told
8 us all to go home, Clarence Edwards Junior High, in Charlestown.

9 LC: Yes.

10 JC: I was just really big on JFK. I met him once.

11 LC: Really?

12 JC: Yes, because selling papers, right in that downtown corner is where a lot of
13 the politicians would come. I think it was when he was running for, I think he running
14 for senator.

15 LC: So you had actually seen him?

16 JC: Yeah.

17 LC: Did you shake his hand?

18 JC: Yeah, I really, I just really, he was, you know, I remember very young reading
19 *Forefathers and Courage* and this goes back to a lot of the stuff with my father, I was big
20 on World War II it being a good war and those are my heroes and I—if Vietnam had been
21 more black and white by the time I graduated high school in '69, even in spite of what
22 ever other personal issues I had, I probably would have joined the military. But by the
23 time I graduated in '69, Vietnam was just such a quagmire and it was just so, there was
24 just so much going and you could, I, even I couldn't see any logical reason why the hell
25 we were there. But that, but going back to that, after selling the newspapers, I had a
26 friend, I got a job washing dishpans and dishes and she had like a little restaurant on
27 Winter Street and I did that for about a year and then I got a job in Harvard Square in
28 Cambridge.

29 LC: Yes.

1 JC: And there was a supermarket there that's not there anymore and it's, I worked
2 in there as like a bag boy and all that kind of stuff and it was neat because that was back
3 in, in the Club 47 days where all the folkies played.

4 LC: Yeah, and did you hang around to hear music as well?

5 JC: Yes, I loved to go over there, because they got all their food and stuff, their
6 coffee and all that stuff from our little market.

7 LC: Oh, I see.

8 JC: So I got to deliver their stuff over there. I could be over there in the afternoon
9 when different people were, you know, practicing, Dylan, Joan Baez, all these people.

10 LC: Like, like did you see Joan Baez there? Who else, do you remember?

11 JC: Bob Dylan, I'm trying to think, there was somebody, Tom Paxton, Phil Oaks.
12 This was the real heyday because they all would come in in the afternoon, you know to
13 set up the, make sure the sound thing was set up, the mikes and all that and so when they
14 come in, obviously at night and it'd be a much more, just relaxed thing, you know
15 atmosphere.

16 LC: Oh yeah, this is, this is sort of pre-superstardom for all of these folks.

17 JC: Yeah, this is the early Club 47 days when they all would just, you know.

18 LC: And Club 47 was what, a couple of blocks from Harvard Square?

19 JC: Yes, it was in, what street was it on, I don't know if it was on Church Street.

20 LC: I'm trying to think.

21 JC: These, all the, it was on one of those little side streets in, but what I did also
22 do during this time frame, going back to how I lived, I always had a part time job, so I
23 had, you know, a little money for stuff and we, we moved from, I'm trying to think,
24 Fields Corner in Dorchester to Somerville when—

25 LC: To Somerville, uh-huh.

26 JC: Yeah, Somerville, Mass—I was in, oh, I think the fifth grade and I had
27 already had, you know, like I said, three years in the fourth grade and the—they gave me
28 a bunch of tests and stuff because it was the first time I was in the Somerville school
29 system which was not part of the Boston.

30 LC: Right, separate.

1 JC: And Boston had pretty much just labeled me as retarded and had me in these
2 slow classes, which pretty much means you just sit in the back and we'll teach you how
3 to make an ashtray or something.

4 LC: Yikes.

5 JC: And it was the Somerville, they put me in the fifth grade and they actually got
6 me an eye exam, which my family never did, and they got me my first pair of glasses.

7 LC: And you said that made a huge difference.

8 JC: Oh yeah, because I was always holding books like, you know, real close and I
9 was, I could only read a little bit and I would get headaches.

10 LC: Are you, are you still, do you still have that deficiency in your one eye?

11 JC: Yes, it's corrected with lenses.

12 LC: Okay.

13 JC: Which, that goes back up until I graduated high school and I went off for my
14 draft physical. I just, I won't get ahead, but I almost fainted when he told me I was 1A.

15 LC: I'll bet you did.

16 JC: Wait a minute.

17 LC: Hey, wait a minute, yeah.

18 JC: You know, I'm blind, I can't walk straight, what are you talking about? But,
19 after that year, they promoted me into the sixth grade and my family moved back to
20 Dorchester. But by that time, my oldest sister was living in Somerville, she was married,
21 her husband was in the Marines and he was in, he actually was in jail in Quantico,
22 Virginia for desertion.

23 LC: Was he?

24 JC: Yeah, he did his own little world and so, I talked my sister into letting me
25 move in with her.

26 LC: So you could be in that school district.

27 JC: So I could stay in Somerville, I didn't want to go back to Dorchester.

28 LC: Yeah, that was very smart. Are you the one who figured that out?

29 JC: Yeah, I just, there was no way I was going to go back to Boston public
30 schools.

31 LC: What did your sister say?

1 JC: She said it was no problem.

2 LC: Wow.

3 JC: And she, she lived not too far from the, she was in that same school district so
4 I stayed in the same public school. Then that's when I think, no first, I lived with my
5 grandmother with for a while, because my grandmother lived in Somerville.

6 LC: So you managed to kind of patch together staying in the Somerville schools.

7 JC: Yeah, because then, first I lived with my grandmother and then my family
8 moved to Dorchester then they came back like about, I don't know, seven or eight
9 months into another apartment in Somerville and I moved back with them so I could stay
10 in the school, then they moved to Charlestown and, but this is, so I did the fifth and sixth
11 grade in Somerville and it, then they moved to Charlestown and I moved in with them
12 and I went to the Clarence, that was when I went to the Clarence Edwards which was the
13 junior high.

14 LC: Okay.

15 JC: I just went there for about a week and I just was having all kinds of troubles,
16 it was just, kids that remembered me from—

17 LC: Oh really?

18 JC: Yeah, because I was always, you know being picked on and stuff, but this
19 time I just was—I was just really feminine, even by this time, the way I walked, the
20 clothes I liked wearing.

21 LC: That just made you a natural target.

22 JC: Yeah, I was very, very small and very skinny and I just, I couldn't deal with it
23 and I think that's when I went back to either my sister's or my grandmother's. I ended up
24 going to, oh yeah, I went to my grandmother's but I went Northeastern Junior High for a
25 couple of weeks which was a real rough school.

26 LC: Yeah.

27 JC: And that was where my brother, my brother was like a year ahead of me and
28 he had gone to Northeastern and he told me that it was pretty rough, they tried to get in
29 Southern Junior High. It's weird how, I don't know, how it was, but I think the
30 Northeastern was where a lot of kids from the projects went and where the other junior
31 high, Southern Junior High was, was in an area where it was more residential and I think

1 it's like that with any city. If you have a school that's got a lot of kids from the projects,
2 they just seem all, I don't want to, it's hard for me to sound classism, but—

3 LC: That's okay.

4 JC: It's what happens in these cities, and I ended up moving to my sister's who
5 was in that district so I got into Southern Junior High.

6 LC: Which one, Sutton?

7 JC: It's Southern Junior.

8 LC: Oh, Southern, yeah, right.

9 JC: In Somerville and that's when it really just kind of stayed together. I ended
10 up, between staying with my sister and my family moving back to Somerville, I ended up
11 staying two or three years at Southern Junior High and then going to Somerville High and
12 so for those years I was in the, you know, in the same school and managed to make a few
13 friends, but it was kids that knew me. I actually made the Honor Roll in the seventh
14 grade.

15 LC: There you go.

16 JC: Which was pretty, it was that teacher, the homeroom teacher I was telling you
17 about earlier, he was just so fascinated with the books I was reading and he couldn't
18 understand and he's the one that when I—I had, I think I had one C and everything else
19 was B and As and he went to the teacher and he got that teacher to change it to a B so for
20 one quarter I was on the Honor Roll.

21 LC: Did your, were your parents present enough to congratulate you and make a
22 big deal out of you and say this was a good, this is quite an accomplishment and so on or
23 no?

24 JC: Not as much, by the time I finished high school, my father still had, you
25 know, his drinking problems but he wasn't working and he was just so, by that time the
26 alcohol had just done so much of a number on him, he had been in and out of the hospital
27 with operations on his stomach, he had tuberculosis, it was in the, he still drank but he
28 just was, he wasn't the angry violent man, he just was, was just drinking into himself and
29 wouldn't talk to people very—but, I did really get this sense, you know, from both of my
30 parents at the time that having one of their kids graduate high school was important to
31 them. Because neither one of them had graduated high school.

1 LC: That's interesting.

2 JC: Up until me, all three of my older brothers and my older sister, had all quit
3 school as soon as they turned eighteen or seventeen.

4 LC: They had, none of them completed high school?

5 JC: No.

6 LC: Wow. Did, were both of your parents born in the US or no?

7 JC: Yeah, they both of them, my father was born in Cambridge, Mass. and a long
8 history of his father and his father were both, you know, were born in Cambridge, Mass.
9 and I think it was, I'm not sure if it was the great-grandfather or the great-great-
10 grandfather was from Ireland.

11 LC: Okay, sure.

12 JC: But they settled in Cambridge and there's a long, a long lineage of John
13 Joseph Carneys, who I used to be.

14 LC: Janice, let me ask you about high school. How, how was it structured for
15 you? Did you stay up in Somerville or where did you go?

16 JC: Well, for high school I lived with my sister for a little while, but most of it I,
17 by this time my family had stayed in Somerville. They moved twice during the, was it
18 nine, ten, eleven, when I was in middle school. From the tenth to the twelfth grade, they
19 moved twice, but they stayed in Somerville.

20 LC: So you, did you—

21 JC: So it didn't interfere because they only had one high school.

22 LC: Oh there was only one, uh-huh.

23 JC: Right, so it didn't interfere as far as—actually, I think it was actually three
24 times, in the projects, they lived in a housing project, yeah, I think three times.

25 LC: Now, how were you doing kind of socially in high school?

26 JC: I didn't, I had, kind of, small little clique of friends that I hung out with and I
27 dated the same girl from the seventh grade all the way through, we went to the prom and
28 everything. Actually, the only girl I dated from middle school to high school. I had, just
29 this small clique of three or four friends that I hung out with for the same time.

1 LC: Were these, were these friends of yours, were they super smart people who
2 didn't quite fit in or were they kind of on the edge people or how would you classify your
3 little group? Or is it not, maybe it doesn't lend itself to that.

4 JC: Oh, it was pretty just, kind of scraping by, average students and none of them
5 played sports. Only one was kind of into sports, this kid named Paul Smith and he didn't
6 really hang out with me that much, but he was just very, he kind of, I don't know,
7 adopted me. He was just kind of the Fonzie type, he played a guitar in a band and we just
8 really looked up to him. He, I think it was in the seventh grade when kids were throwing
9 eggs at me, he came over and just said something to a couple of them.

10 LC: Really?

11 JC: Yeah and said he was my friend and it was like, wow, nobody ever, nobody,
12 nobody ever really bothered me again in junior high.

13 LC: Were you being threatened?

14 JC: Yeah, yeah.

15 LC: Like is it, I mean, I mean, I get that you were, you know, taking the brunt of
16 some bullying probably, but did it go beyond that, was it threat—I mean, were they
17 actually threatening you?

18 JC: They would bring eggs to school and throw eggs at me, during the, recess.

19 LC: Really? That took some planning, I mean, they couldn't just, that wasn't like
20 a spur of the moment thing.

21 JC: No, I pretty much on a regular basis was targeted. It was—but that, you
22 know, that kid I was talking about, Paul Smith, getting involved really kind of changed
23 things, when he, when people saw me hanging out with him, and he—I'm not even sure
24 really, he was just, I'm not even sure why, but he just seemed to you know, take to me.

25 LC: Sounds like he was a good young man who didn't want you roughed up or
26 hurt, sounds like.

27 JC: That's actually really about it and he used to come over. He gave me guitar
28 lessons for a while but I kind of never—

29 LC: That wasn't your, going to end up being your thing.

30 JC: No, I wish I had kind of stuck with it, but I didn't have the money for a guitar
31 and I kind of got into other things. In fact, I'm thinking about now taking guitar lessons.

1 LC: Are you? Good for you.

2 JC: I would like to make some music to go with my poetry.

3 LC: Your poetry, yeah.

4 JC: But he, anyway, after that he quit high school, in fact he didn't even go up to
5 the high school. But by the time I got up to high school, things just kind of quieted down
6 and I, for a little while and it got more into just a couple incidents because by that time, I,
7 it was going into the 60s, '67 and '68 when a lot of the long hair and the hippie stuff and
8 you—the harassment was just more anybody with long hair was called a faggot and I
9 think it was more generalized than personally, than personal.

10 LC: I see, I see.

11 JC: I, and I was just one, real quick, I was one of the first people to jump on that
12 hippie stuff.

13 LC: You were?

14 JC: Oh yeah, because that was cool, you could dress up like a girl and—I mean
15 really, it was, even Kate Bornstein, I don't know if you're familiar with her or not.

16 LC: No.

17 JC: She's another transgender person that wrote a book called *Gender Outlaw*.

18 LC: Called *Gender*—?

19 JC: *Gender Outlaw*.

20 LC: Oh, *Gender Outlaw*.

21 JC: A fascinating book I highly recommend.

22 LC: Okay.

23 JC: But in her book should talks a little bit about that same time frame and she has
24 a very similar comment that I think kind of cracked me up.

25 LC: That's interesting.

26 JC: Dealing in her gender during that time frame was a lot easier because you
27 could run around with shoulder length hair and beads and be to a certain degree feminine
28 and people just say another one of them damn hippies.

29 LC: Right, you kind of, there was a group that you could kind of be seen to be
30 part of even if, whether you were or not.

31 JC: Exactly.

1 LC: Interesting, uh-huh. How aware were you of the war at that point? Were you
2 just kind of vaguely aware that the United States was involved in Vietnam?

3 JC: No, because I was extremely aware because I'm trying to think of at what
4 time—by this time, by second year of high school, I was working in Harvard Square, just
5 working in Harvard Square in Cambridge.

6 LC: Oh sure.

7 JC: With all of the protesters going on and the big, every Sunday in the
8 Cambridge Commons, there were these big peace rallies and Timothy Leary. I remember
9 hearing Timothy Leary speak once.

10 LC: You did?

11 JC: And what a space shot he was.

12 LC: Can, what else can you say about it? Anything?

13 JC: He definitely was experimenting with LSD too much and too long. I mean,
14 this was, he, Timothy Leary is alright by me, but he kind of, I think he lost touch with
15 reality a lot earlier than people realize.

16 LC: I think that was, that was kind of his goal in a way, wasn't it?

17 JC: Yeah, you know, he was still teaching at Harvard. But he, for the most part,
18 the, there was such an aura of welcomeness and kindness at these Sundays that people
19 that were, you know, everybody was stoned and against the war but it was more, I think
20 for the most part, the accurate reason was that nobody really knew anything, it was just a
21 fun place to go on a Sunday. You know, listen to music and I really think the most of the
22 people really were clueless what was really, they didn't really care.

23 LC: It was less about politics.

24 JC: More about a good place to get stoned and meet girls or boys or whatever.

25 LC: Right.

26 JC: It, but by—it was my junior or, I still get confused on this, it goes freshman,
27 sophomore, junior, is that how it goes?

28 LC: Yes.

29 JC: It was in my sophomore or junior year, one of my, most of my friends were
30 girls, I had two or three real good, I won't call them girlfriends that I was dating, just
31 girlfriends, that we'd have girl talk. It was strange, but this one girl I was really close

1 with, her boyfriend had graduated the year before, was a couple of years older, and he
2 was in Vietnam.

3 LC: Did she hear from him?

4 JC: Yes, she used to get letters and she used to read them to me.

5 LC: What did you make of that?

6 JC: From that I was already getting scared because realizing that, for all practical
7 purposes, I was male.

8 LC: Right.

9 JC: And, you know, I was going to get called up for a physical, so, even '67,
10 already in my mind I was trying to realize that I might end up there and was trying to find
11 out what was going on. I was reading everything that was available, newspapers and then
12 '68 and the Tet Offensive and our—we had already lost, I don't know what the figures
13 were, we had already lost several class members that should have been class of '69, kids
14 that had dropped out then joined the military and died in Vietnam. So by '69, we had
15 already had, you know, several class members that had died in Vietnam and some that
16 had come back and just weren't nowhere near the same person. I was aware on that
17 level, this is what made it for me just so complex, I guess complex is the word.

18 LC: Right.

19 JC: I had all these issues about my gender by that time that I was just holding and
20 keeping secret and there was just absolutely nothing masculine about me. I was five foot
21 five, weighed about 110 pounds soaking wet, had these big horn rim glasses and just
22 couldn't, you know, any attempt to try to do sports was just a total disaster and the
23 thought of me going into the military was just scary.

24 LC: Right, and not just the military, but you're staring down the barrel of a full-
25 fledged war and being put in the middle of it.

26 JC: Yeah, but by that time, there was just so much internalizing about what, who I
27 was and even—I was dating this girl, and we never had sex which was nice because it
28 worked out well for both of us.

29 LC: Right.

30 JC: We went to all the dances and everybody thought, you know—

31 LC: Everybody thought you were normal couple going steady, blah blah.

1 JC: Yeah, exactly, you know, she ended up, in fact she married, I don't know if
2 she's married or not, but she's living with the same girl for almost thirty years now.

3 LC: Is that right?

4 JC: Yeah, she lives up in Maine, she's been in the same relationship, she didn't
5 come out till a couple of years after high school, but—

6 LC: Are you in contact with her much?

7 JC: Not, I'm trying to think, I lost contact with her about six or seven years ago. I
8 think it was about the time that I started transitioning.

9 LC: Okay.

10 JC: I think her girlfriend was jealous.

11 LC: Oh boy, that's complicated.

12 JC: Yeah, well she didn't mind it when I was a guy.

13 LC: Right, I'm just thinking that one through. Okay.

14 JC: I really think something went on, I think her girlfriend was—

15 LC: Probably.

16 JC: I went from just being you know, a male friend to possibly competition.

17 LC: Yeah, that's interesting, I'm sure that your intuition is correct. That that's
18 probably what was going on. That's unfortunate, because if you know somebody that
19 long, it's—

20 JC: Oh, it is and it's, you know, if they ever did break up and, because they've
21 been, that's just kind of, we all have our fantasies.

22 LC: Okay, I'm with you, I am actually. Janice, let me ask you a little bit about
23 some timeline questions. You mentioned earlier that you, you know, it was something of
24 a blow to you when, when John Kennedy was shot and I wonder if you remember much
25 about 1968 and did you have any feelings about, for example Dr. King being shot or
26 Robert Kennedy. Were those people who were in your, kind of mind and in your life in
27 someway?

28 JC: Yeah, totally, I mean, the whole, 1968 I think, anybody in my generation and
29 even—but personally it just seemed like the whole world was going crazy. It just, it was
30 just constantly, constantly something and any, anything that seemed good just seemed to
31 get killed and the stuff and I, especially the racial stuff, because I for a while lived in a

1 housing project across the bay in south Boston, Columbia Point Housing Project and I
2 had Irish kids in south Boston throwing rocks at me calling me nigger because I lived in a
3 housing project.

4 LC: Wow.

5 JC: And they, I mean you, the insanity of it all and Louis A. Hicks was such a
6 screwball and all that was going on in Charlestown, having lived in all of these areas, I
7 lived in Roxbury by Dudley Station, the most predominant black area. One year I went
8 to a school where, I think I was the only white kid in class.

9 LC: So did that make you more tuned in, do you think, too—?

10 JC: Yeah, I think I had a really strong sense of the segregation in Boston because
11 even people who were so much into denial that you could see the huge difference
12 between the black schools in Roxbury and Dorchester and then go to the schools in
13 Charlestown, they were better kept; more money was going into them. It was subtle but
14 it was, even by '68, you know I had a sense of yeah, segregation does exist and it does
15 keep black people in, you know, in lower schools and it does keep them down. And it's
16 not just the South, it's Boston too.

17 LC: Was there a reaction that you remember in any, wherever you were in
18 whichever part of town you were when Dr. King was killed?

19 JC: Um, I got a sense that it didn't seem as important when it went out in
20 Somerville, which Somerville was 99.5 percent white at the time and I really got a sense
21 that it wasn't as, it didn't hit as hard as Robert Kennedy.

22 LC: Interesting, uh-huh.

23 JC: I really did, but the, the other factor of it though, by this time, in the Tet
24 Offensive really turned the tides.

25 LC: What do you remember about that, Janice?

26 JC: That the, it, seeing that much, you know, (coughs) excuse me, fighting on the
27 TV and really seeing that things were not in their control. By that time, there was still a
28 lot of thinking, oh we'll get, that this is going to be straightened out in a year or two, the
29 re-Vietnamization or whatever they were calling it, but all of the sudden it was just like
30 being hit by a brick, this war was just going to keep going on, there's so much more

1 going on than we think and we're not winning. I don't know if, was it '68 when Johnson
2 decided not to run?

3 LC: Yes, right after the Tet Offensive.

4 JC: That was the most vivid thing of that year.

5 LC: You remember that speech?

6 JC: Yeah, yeah, that still to this day, out of all this stuff, that look on his face
7 when he made that announcement that he just didn't know what the hell to do and said
8 I'm just not going to run and that's pretty much what he said. He just had this tired, tired
9 look and he just seemed to admit, I don't know what to do. To me, that was the ultimate
10 of even the president of the United States, he doesn't know to pull troops out he doesn't
11 know to pour troops in and he's just giving up.

12 LC: Yeah, and then, and then Robert Kennedy began to surface as a potential
13 candidate at that point.

14 JC: Right, right, and he—

15 LC: And he seemed to have an idea of what to do; did you feel that way?

16 JC: Yeah, oh yeah, I had a sense that he had a much better shot at getting elected,
17 he had some ideas, ideas and it just seemed everything that was good was dying and it
18 was going wrong. After he got shot and—

19 LC: Do you remember where you were that, that was in August I think, oh I'm
20 sorry, June of 1968.

21 JC: I just remember seeing it on TV, them showing him about to make the, what
22 was something, it was after a major speech and he was going toward a kitchen thing and
23 you could just hear a shot being fired and people screaming and I remember Rosie Greer,
24 I think he was a football player.

25 LC: Yes.

26 JC: It was just, even at that age and being, such a sensitive person, it, I remember
27 crying and just being so—what's wrong with this country? I didn't, and this is also when
28 I went up and got my draft physical.

29 LC: About that same time?

30 JC: Yeah, it was '68 because I graduated in '69 and—

31 LC: Yikes, and you were 1A for the draft.

1 JC: Yeah, and I couldn't, I just totally, I had a, my father at that time was in the
2 sanitarium for active tuberculosis and I was tested for tuberculosis and it came up
3 positive.

4 LC: Are you serious?

5 JC: Yeah, I'm dead serious. I was on the, I was taking medication for
6 tuberculosis and I had a letter from a doctor, I was legally blind in one eye without my
7 glasses, and like I said, literally five foot five, about 110 pounds if that and just had
8 absolutely no body hair at all, any facial hair or any body hair. I was just so feminine and
9 I just thought sure we'd come up with something. There ain't no way.

10 LC: What do you remember the physical? Do you remember that event and what
11 you had, what you went through?

12 JC: Oh yeah, it was in Boston, South Station and I just remember hanging onto
13 this letter from the doctor that I had tuberculosis like a piece of gold.

14 LC: Well I'll bet, yeah.

15 JC: You know, I had the medications that I was on and I was just, and all of these,
16 just being—we stripped down to like our underwear, our boxers, and just feeling so out
17 of place with all of these guys half naked and just not—just so scared. I mean that's
18 really, I just did not fit in in any shape, way or form.

19 LC: To what do you attribute the fact that they rated you out of there ready to go?

20 JC: The Tet Offensive. I mean seriously.

21 LC: Really, are you serious, you think that this was all politically and militarily
22 motivated and had nothing to do with your health?

23 JC: Yeah, I think after the Tet Offensive and the build up that everybody was
24 running, I think they just went nuts, they were so convinced that everybody was faking
25 this or faking that and outside of, you know, the college deferments or getting into the
26 guard units, anybody that, especially—I'm sure that they thought I was putting on an act
27 and you know, if I was—my femininity and they thought everybody, you know was
28 faking it and trying to use stuff to get out. In fact, one of Phil Ochs most famous songs
29 “A Draft Dodger Rag”, you know, got a purse, my ankles are wobbly.

30 LC: Exactly, well you were actually three deep, though, in reasons for them not to
31 send you into a combat zone.

1 JC: Yeah.

2 LC: Their own policies and then you're positive for tuberculosis and being treated
3 for it.

4 JC: Yeah, totally and I was hoping that I still kind of thought that they had kind of
5 like a height thing.

6 LC: And that was, that didn't work out either, this is quite extraordinary.

7 JC: No, none of it, because when I, even when I ended up in basic training it was
8 just, it was insane because they couldn't—the smallest size in everything was too big for
9 me. Because they only make like small, medium and large, you know in all the field
10 jackets and everything, which is what I'm saying about, they do have kind of a height and
11 a weight requirement. I really thought I was under the height, I thought, I still think it's
12 five foot six and you've got to be a certain weight.

13 LC: So small was, the small clothes were just hanging on you?

14 JC: Yeah, the smallest size issues of everything, even the boots, everything was
15 just too big for me, but it was, you know, the smallest they had.

16 LC: Well, let me ask a little bit about your thinking after you had been rated out
17 of there 1A. You mentioned earlier that you had some idea and that you had a
18 confrontation with your dad about this, some idea that you might just go over the border.

19 JC: Yes, this is going into, you know 1969 by, pretty much my senior year, I
20 knew, I was just an average student, it was, I mean, I had, I actually could have graduated
21 in '68 if I wanted to, I was like one, I needed something like two credits. I was an
22 average student but I was ahead in everything because I took, I just took a lot of classes
23 and I passed everything, but all with Cs, but I never flunked nothing.

24 LC: So you were, in terms of credits you were piling those up?

25 JC: Yeah, but I wasn't excelling in everything, in anything and everything was
26 just easy, I didn't want to interfere with what I was really reading.

27 LC: Right, so you just blew through the classes.

28 JC: Yeah, and I remember, I think it was my junior year, they handed out like a
29 list of required reading and I turned it back in and said I've already read all that stuff.
30 And it was, I had already read every book on the list.

1 LC: Was this like the hundred books you have to read to be an educated man or
2 something like that?

3 JC: Something like that, the required reading, I guess, for high school, it was
4 pretty standard, *A Separate Peace*—I don't think they've changed that, they may have
5 changed it in the last fifty years, I don't know. But they pretty much have the same
6 books and it was, yeah, I, there was just no way I was going to get any kind of
7 scholarship and we had no money for college and the counselor, the guidance counselor,
8 one of our advisors, they pretty much told me that, my senior year to take a business
9 course and to take typing and get real good at typing and then join the Army. He said,
10 "You know, chances are 100 percent that they'll just make you a clerk typer somewhere
11 and you'll never see any combat." That was, and I think that was pretty much what they
12 told a lot of the young, young people at the time.

13 LC: What, what did you think of that advice?

14 JC: Actually it sounded kind of good. That's pretty much what I did and my
15 senior year I took all business and typing and all of that stuff. But at the same time the
16 politics it was a question of did I even want to serve and I got into a lot of things about, I
17 tried to join VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) which was the equivalent the
18 Peace Corps while you were staying in the country.

19 LC: Yes, right.

20 JC: Had all the paperwork in and everything and I went to talk to one of their, I
21 don't know whatever you call them, the counselor and everything and he pretty much
22 called me, saying I was trying to dodge the draft and said he's not going to accept me, but
23 he said if I do three years in the Army then come back and want to join, he'll talk to me,
24 which was pretty weird. I still don't understand his logic.

25 LC: I don't either.

26 JC: I mean, if I was joining VISTA to avoid it—

27 LC: What difference does it make?

28 JC: Is that a bad, is that a bad concept? Because if I had gone into the VISTA
29 program, I don't know if it was, I think it was like a two year program, I would have gone
30 somewhere in the Appalachians, somewhere in the country working with the real, real
31 poor for two years and that actually would have got me through—that would have kept

1 me out of the draft through '69 and '70 and probably even into '71. But that didn't work,
2 and then I tried filing for, what do you call it, what do you that peace status?

3 LC: Conscientious objection.

4 JC: Yeah, yeah, I tried that, that didn't work out too well.

5 LC: What was required for that, do you remember what you had to, did you have
6 to interview with somebody or—?

7 JC: Yeah, it was an interview when, there's one question where they ask if you if
8 somebody, if, I forgot how they put it, but if somebody, if I come up to you and punch
9 you in the mouth, will you hit me back? I said, "Of course." (Laughing) Wrong answer.

10 LC: Yeah, next. (Laughing)

11 JC: That's how I got out of there.

12 LC: Well, tell me about your high school graduation if you can, at that time did
13 you feel pretty clear that you had exhausted the other avenues and were going to be
14 drafted?

15 JC: Yes, by the time, it was '69 when I graduated, they were, a key thing was we,
16 our high school, our senior class, we, the school wanted us to use the class funds to buy,
17 they had two things they wanted us to buy for the school, a po—what do you call those
18 things that they speak on?

19 LC: A podium?

20 JC: A podium, yeah, there was a podium or some other thing; I forgot what the
21 other thing is, that we hopefully would be because every class buys something, it's a
22 tradition.

23 LC: Sure, right, yes.

24 JC: We bought a tombstone and they went nuts. We bought a tombstone that we
25 wanted to put in front of the high school with a list of our class that died in Vietnam.

26 LC: Are you serious?

27 JC: Yes, and this was 1969.

28 LC: And the principal or the powers that be, were like, "Uh no."

29 JC: Yeah, they tried everything in the world to stop it.

30 LC: What happened?

1 JC: They couldn't, we voted on it and the majority of the class wanted it and it
2 was our choice, they couldn't—

3 LC: Did it get set up and put out in front?

4 JC: Yeah, it got set up and after about six months it was gone, somebody stole it.

5 LC: Oh my gosh.

6 JC: Which was a pretty heavy thing.

7 LC: Very.

8 JC: So—

9 LC: That whole episode sounds pretty heavy.

10 JC: Yeah, we, we think this, we felt pretty sure the school just didn't want it there
11 and just kind of got rid of it.

12 LC: Gosh.

13 JC: But by that time, going back to, everything that happened at Tet, and my
14 experience with having the physical, and just everything that we talked about with
15 Kennedy and Martin being killed and Gene McCarthy's campaign. It just seemed
16 completely insane to go to Vietnam and there was no, I mean I, there was no question in
17 my honest opinion by that time that it was just a class war, it was just all of the poor kids,
18 you know, it was all just the poor kids from the inner cities fighting this war and that's
19 why nobody gave a shit. Even by the time I had graduated high school I had reached,
20 totally reached this point and it, and I weighed the options I had, it was either I was going
21 to be drafted, or I could join and get into the Medical Corps, or go to Canada. My
22 grandmother wanted me to go to Canada.

23 LC: Really?

24 JC: Yes, she had sisters, going back to what we were talking about, my parents; I
25 talked a little bit about my father.

26 LC: Yes.

27 JC: My mother was born in Redding, Mass. And her mother was born in Nova
28 Scotia, which is my grandmother and she actually had sisters there on the farm up there
29 and she wanted me to go up there and live with them.

30 LC: Did you consider that?

1 JC: Oh yeah, I really did and that's the one of the things I mentioned to my father
2 about a month after I graduated and that's when I caused all those arguments, that he was
3 fed up and everything, he just really exploded on me about the way I dress and the way I
4 walk and everything.

5 LC: Everything just kind of came together in one big outburst.

6 JC: Yeah, and the next day for about the third time in my life, I got rid of all of
7 my woman's clothes and donated them and just totally psyched myself up that I'm going
8 to get over this, I'm a man and I know it and I went out and I joined the Army. But I
9 joined, the compromise I made to myself was, I joined getting into the Medical Corps.

10 LC: How did you find out that you could do that, you could kind of; if you
11 enlisted you could *a.* avoid the draft. Was this kind of well known?

12 JC: Oh yeah, it was very well known, if you wanted to, if you wanted to avoid,
13 they pretty much—even basic training, if you went into basic training, you go, if you go
14 in as a draftee, there are two categories when you're drafted. When you report in, and my
15 brother told me this, both of my brothers, you report to, my case I was in the center at
16 South Boston, you would an order on the day that, if you get a draft notice, you would get
17 an order to report that day and you don't even know what MOS (Military Occupational
18 Specialty) they're going to give you, you only serve two years instead of three, but you
19 don't know what MOS, you don't know what branch of the service, they could put you in
20 the Marines, Army, they could put you anywhere.

21 LC: Right, you have no control at all.

22 JC: Right and chances are pretty much 100 percent it's going to be combat. But if
23 you join you serve three years instead of two and you can reach a contract agreement for
24 a certain school, you know certain training.

25 LC: So after this episode with your father and you threw all of your clothes away
26 and you were deciding what, that you were going to just go ahead and do this and you
27 had to do it, but you wanted to do it the smartest possible way.

28 JC: Yes, I didn't want to get into combat or have to kill anybody.

29 LC: Absolutely.

30 JC: And that was the big thing with me, I wasn't afraid of dying, far from it and I
31 really think I actually had a death wish more than anything and if I got into the Medical

1 Corps, even if I ended up as a field medic, you don't have to carry a weapon, it's your
2 private option.

3 LC: Right, so you wouldn't be put in a position where you had to kill somebody.

4 JC: Right. But, I learned quickly though that just because you have a contract for
5 the Army, there's a lot of loopholes.

6 LC: Yeah, they moved you around didn't they?

7 JC: Well, yeah, what happened, I mean I ended up going, let's see, I had my basic
8 training at Ft. Dix, which wasn't too bad, the worst part of it was the cold, I mean, basic
9 training in New Jersey in January and February and then I went to Sam Houston where
10 they follow the obligation and I had signed up to go to X-ray tech school. I think it was a
11 fourteen week, I think is what it was, and if you complete that then I would have been
12 assigned as an X-ray technician. And a couple of things happened. There was a lot
13 going on, this was in San Antonio, Texas and there was a lot of drugs and a lot of fun, but
14 you had to pass this test once a week at the end of each week, you had to read an X-ray
15 and get it right and a written exam and I just got into trouble. I got arrested once for
16 drinking and the drinking age in Texas is twenty-one.

17 LC: Yes.

18 JC: I wasn't twenty-one and they arrested, there was a whole bunch of us that they
19 arrested.

20 LC: This was in San Antonio?

21 JC: Yeah, it was in some park, we were playing softball without a softball and it
22 was all park police, and you know, rednecks, we're just lucky we're all in the military,
23 otherwise they would have really—but they were just pretty adamant, the law is the law,
24 even though you're good old boys and you're in the Army and all that, but in Texas the
25 drinking age is twenty-one.

26 LC: That's right.

27 JC: You boys aren't men.

28 LC: Yikes.

29 JC: I also had gone to a peace rally in signed a petition against the war.

30 LC: Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that.

1 JC: I think that was a smart move, it seemed like a good idea at the time. But it
2 was after I did that, I was half way through the course, I think and the week, the Friday
3 after I signed that petition—there was a whole bunch of us and we were all like in
4 different schools at that rally and we all got, we all flunked our tests that week and we all
5 got real quick orders throwing us out of the Medical Corps and we all got reassigned to
6 Ft. Polk, Louisiana.

7 LC: Before I ask you a little bit more about that, let me just go back to Ft. Dix for
8 a sec, and this would be basic training for you at the beginning of 1970. Janice, let me
9 ask you about the atmosphere there at Ft. Dix. You mentioned in some of the paperwork
10 that you provided for us that there were some abuses going on there during basic training.
11 Do you remember anything that you can share about those?

12 JC: Yeah, actually, and I, Ft. Dix was really the country club of the Army, that
13 was the easiest basic training you could get.

14 LC: Why is that?

15 JC: Because it was so close to New York and it was just like the showcase.

16 LC: Okay.

17 JC: A lot more shit was going on in the bases down south, a lot more. But still
18 there was stuff going on. What I was talking about a little bit and I kind of got away
19 from it is when you reported in, you got, you were classified as either a draftee or a
20 regular Army and that stuck with you for your whole time you was in the service and
21 especially in basic training. That was adamant from the minute you got to center where
22 you got your assignment. If you was a draftee, they just went—I don't know how many
23 there were in a room, I don't know, maybe seventy, eighty, roughly—and we would all
24 just kind of line up and they were teaching us what attention means, what shut the fuck
25 up means. A lot of little things that we had better pick up on fast.

26 LC: Right.

27 JC: The first field sergeant that came up that was a DI (Drill Instructor), the first
28 thing he said was, “All RAs take one-step backwards.”

29 LC: So that's Regular Armies?

30 JC: Right, and I was classified as RA because I had joined, but he knew, he knew
31 he couldn't touch us but he had, he had first pick of the draftees that were going to be

1 assigned to the corps and that's pretty much what he did. He went up and down and just
2 kind of said, "You, one step forward, you one step forward." And I was thinking about
3 how many he actually picked but these guys are sweating bullets. (Laughing)

4 LC: What did he make them do?

5 JC: He informed them all that they were being drafted in the Marine Corps; they
6 were going to Paris Island.

7 LC: Oh, uh-huh.

8 JC: Which—

9 LC: Yeah, you didn't want to hear that.

10 JC: Right, nobody did but I think a lot of them didn't even realize, I think a lot of
11 them assumed that they got drafted meant they were going to go into the Army and they
12 didn't realize and then after that the rest of us, I don't think they sent any to the Navy at
13 that time, they were just—well the Marines and the Navy are the same, actually,
14 technically.

15 LC: Technically, yeah.

16 JC: But after that the rest of us I think we were just bused to Ft. Dix and it was,
17 you know, from that point on, from when we got there at night and all the running around
18 and everything, just from different comments that the drill sergeants made, right away I
19 got a sense that they were much more harsher on the draftees; that to a certain degree
20 they did have more respect for people that joined.

21 LC: You mentioned that there was, that there were a couple of people at boot
22 camp with you who actually were, eventually they were let go because they didn't make
23 it in some way. You mentioned, these are your words, "a big awkward, mentally slow
24 trainee." Do you remember that, do you remember him? Can you tell me what happened
25 with him?

26 JC: Yeah, they were, actually two people that were draftees, one was this real tall
27 kid that did, it was quite obvious, he was lucky if had about a sixth grade education.

28 LC: Okay.

29 JC: And there was another one, this real 100 percent hillbilly.

30 LC: Hillbilly, uh-huh.

1 JC: Yeah, he was definitely from the back, he was from real backwoods
2 Tennessee somewhere and it's the same thing, I doubt if he had more than a fifth, sixth
3 grade education.

4 LC: Probably.

5 JC: But how he ended up in is totally, but the thing with the big kid is he was just
6 so big that they expected him to do things and he wouldn't do it, he was just so awkward
7 and he just couldn't do things, the physical stuff and the fighting. It was kind of like—
8 they would, both of these were draftees and I was just as bad, I think the three of us were
9 probably the most likely not to make it through basic training. I mean I couldn't, I
10 couldn't stay in step, I could barely make it over the field stuff, you've got to climb that
11 wall and all that stuff. I could barely just by the skin of my teeth do it. But the hillbilly
12 got, they did a blanket party on him one night.

13 LC: Can you explain what you mean for somebody who doesn't know that
14 reference?

15 JC: Well he pretty much we're told—it's broken down when you go through basic
16 into companies and then I even—it's been so long ago I even forget the, then you're
17 companies then your platoon and then your squad?

18 LC: Right.

19 JC: And I don't know if it was at a platoon level, I think it was at a platoon level
20 that we were about the worst, I was the only one that hadn't qualified with an M-16. I
21 ended up, I was the last one in the whole battalion, I just didn't qualify, couldn't, I was
22 just, I couldn't even hit the target. But, the one, the guy we call the hillbilly, one night,
23 we pretty much were told—he just, the guy wouldn't shower.

24 LC: Wow.

25 JC: He didn't know how to make a bed, he had his uniform kind of rolled up in a
26 ball and everything looked—and he just couldn't pass an inspection and he just obviously
27 just did not care and we were pretty much told that if we don't do something about him,
28 then something was going to be done to us. I had nothing to do with it, you can take my
29 word for it, but one night a bunch of guys went into his room when he was sleeping and
30 just, what they do is in the dark, they just put a blanket over him and beat the crap out of
31 him.

1 LC: Right.

2 JC: After that was taken to a hospital and I never heard from him again, I don't
3 know what, I'm sure he got some kind of discharge. But it wasn't, nobody got, I mean
4 nobody got punished for it or anything, that was what was so weird.

5 LC: But it's almost like they sort of were bated into it.

6 JC: Yeah, yeah, that you've got to find some way to get rid of him or we're going
7 to flunk and then something's going to happen, something bad is going to happen to all of
8 us. That's, I'm sure I'm putting it in a much politer terminology. The other one, the real
9 big kid, the drill sergeants were just constantly picking on him and it was one weekend,
10 they had this training, a lot of indoor training, I think there was a blizzard or something
11 and they did a lot of training in the barracks and this one drill sergeant was just really,
12 really ragging on him.

13 LC: Kind of picked, kind of singled him out?

14 JC: Yeah, and he kept on having him fight with the Punji sticks, I don't know if
15 you're familiar with those.

16 LC: Can you describe them?

17 JC: Yeah, like a big stick with like boxing gloves on each end.

18 LC: Oh, okay.

19 JC: I don't know what they call them but you fight with them.

20 LC: Okay, yep.

21 JC: Until somebody's either knocked down or gives up.

22 LC: Right.

23 JC: And they just had this one kid fighting everybody and they kept on saying
24 he's going to stay in there until he beats somebody. He just couldn't, I mean anybody—
25 and the drill sergeant just kept on hitting him, and I remember seeing his back at the end
26 of the night, he had the big red mark of the drill sergeants whole hand and he was just
27 crying and crying and the same thing, somebody called the MPs (Military Police) on that
28 though.

29 LC: Oh yeah?

30 JC: And he ended up, they ended up taking him out with the MPs and even the DI
31 after, going into Monday was gone, transferred.

1 LC: Really?

2 JC: It was kind of hushed up but he—we got, we got read the riot act from our
3 company commander, that if he ever found out who made the phone call.

4 LC: Really?

5 JC: Yeah, I mean they weren't bullshitting because somebody called the MPs and
6 somebody, somebody called the congressman and it ended up in a congressional
7 investigation.

8 LC: Do you know anything more about that investigation?

9 JC: It went nowhere, all it meant is that the person involved, some representative
10 from the congress, some aid or something just came to the base and asked some
11 questions. They don't, it's really rare that they go anywhere at that level.

12 LC: Oh, sure.

13 JC: But the message we got is that we, whoever called their congressman or
14 whoever called the MPs, you know, you were a traitor to your unit, that you were the
15 scum of the earth.

16 LC: How did you feel? I mean just you yourself, I mean you were already in a
17 pretty vulnerable position as you've described with regard to these other guys. How did
18 you feel when you saw somebody being humiliated and hurt?

19 JC: I just couldn't deal with it, I couldn't believe it was going on, I mean I was
20 just so isolated and it was bringing so much stuff from my childhood and the names that
21 they were calling me all the time. I was almost convinced by the time I got out of basic
22 training that my name was either sissy or faggot.

23 LC: So you were getting emotionally abused as well, you yourself?

24 JC: Oh yeah, continually.

25 LC: Others in the company also? Getting called those kinds of names over and
26 over and over and over like you were or—

27 JC: We were all—the best I can remember, the three main misfits and I was the
28 only was that ended up making it through basic and that's going back to what I was
29 saying about how the other two were both draftees.

30 LC: Right.

1 JC: I was regular Army and I also requested training to go into the Medical Corps
2 and do two things that the drill sergeants looked up to. That's people that joined, weren't
3 drafted, and field medics.

4 LC: Is it too much to say that you kind of saved yourself by having enlisted?

5 JC: Oh, yeah, I have no doubt in mind that the abuse to me probably would have
6 been much more physical and I don't think I ever would have made it through basic
7 training, if I had been a draftee.

8 LC: Janice, let me ask you a little more about the events at Ft. Sam when you got
9 down to Texas. You talked about going to the peace rally and stuff can you tell me how
10 many guys went to that and was it just kind of for fun because it was a big outdoor
11 happening or was there more behind it in your own political thinking?

12 JC: Well, I think mostly it was out of curiosity, you know (Indiscernible at this
13 time. First session 1:24:36) but roughly and it was more out of curiosity and trying to,
14 those of us that still believed we had rights even though we were in the Army, which, you
15 know, they try to drill into you that you don't have those rights anymore.

16 LC: Right, yep.

17 JC: I think we took it more as a personal challenge; we were standing up for our
18 rights.

19 LC: You and how many other guys.

20 JC: I think they, I don't know, I'd say at the most a dozen, there may have been
21 nine or ten and it was like a—it just was weird and the Friday after that when I was told
22 that I flunked my test and I had to pack and they had sent orders for me to get a bus ticket
23 and they literally sent me by bus from San Antonio, Texas to Ft. Polk, Louisiana.

24 LC: Just like that?

25 JC: Yeah, and going from Sam Houston, you know, San Antonio to Ft. Polk,
26 Louisiana is—(Laughing)

27 LC: Well tell me about that; tell me about arriving there in Louisiana.

28 JC: With the, they call Sam Houston the country club of the Army and they call
29 Ft. Polk the armpit of the Army, yeah. Common terminology, yeah, because, but I, you
30 get there and you're just going through miles of swampland when you get to, actually the
31 base. There's a small town, miles out, Lake Charles, not Lake Charles, I can't think of

1 the name of the town, Lake Charles is further up. But it just, one real small town that's
2 got a couple of bars and a couple of tattoo shops and you know, that's—

3 LC: That's it.

4 JC: And then you go through miles of swampland to get to Ft. Polk and just all
5 these old World War I barracks, old wooden barracks that were built in World War I as
6 temporary housing.

7 LC: Still there.

8 JC: I was shocked to find out not long ago, I was reading some articles
9 somewhere and seeing DS-2 actually using it, there are troops in Iraq that have been
10 trained there and it's, I mean, temporary housing built for World War I and the Army is
11 still using them?

12 LC: It's unbelievable.

13 JC: And there were just these old wooden barracks and it was just so hot, I mean
14 the, it was the closest they can actually probably get in this country to getting you ready
15 for Vietnam as far as weather wise. They got you used to all of the humidity and the heat
16 and mosquitoes.

17 LC: What months were you down there then, May, would that be?

18 JC: May, I think it was something like May or June.

19 LC: May, June.

20 JC: Somewhere around there, July.

21 LC: Hot.

22 JC: Yeah, because I went June—because I went home I think the end of June,
23 thinking of what I had, I had like a week, a week or two, it was right around that time
24 frame because then July is when I reported out to Oakland to Vietnam.

25 LC: And that week that you went home after finishing at Ft. Polk, where, I should
26 just for the record confirm that you finally emerged with specialist training as what, do
27 you remember?

28 JC: Well, I was trained, technically I had completed the field medic training in Ft.
29 Sam Houston because that's, you've got to do the field medic training before you go to
30 any of the specialty schools.

31 LC: Right, that's the pre-req.

1 JC: Right, so I had the field medic training and half of the X-ray tech, so
2 technically my MOS should have been field medic, but when they sent me to Ft. Polk
3 they taught me clerk typing which I already knew anyway. Typing and filing which is, I
4 mean, they're trying to teach these guys the alphabet and for some of them it was awful
5 painful. It was sad actually.

6 LC: Were you actually relieved though that you had, because remember, you had
7 told us the high school counselor said, "Look, if you've got typing and filing, you're
8 probably not going to see action."

9 JC: Oh yeah, I mean, it was kind of, I was so nervous and pissed off at first, you
10 know, when they said I was going to Ft. Polk I didn't know what, they do the tiger
11 training and they have a lot of infantry training.

12 LC: Right.

13 JC: I didn't know what—technically you know when he said I flunked the test,
14 technically as far as the contract goes, I broke the contract by not meeting the standards
15 that he could have done anything he wanted with me. I still had to stay the three years
16 though, which I still—

17 LC: Well that's rough.

18 JC: Yeah, but the, so when I got to Ft. Polk and these drill sergeants, they made
19 the drill sergeants I had up at Dix look like teddy bears. I mean these guys were nasty,
20 they were just brutal.

21 LC: Can you tell me any instances that you remember?

22 JC: It's, once, they were just the same, as soon as they heard my Boston accent it
23 was like I was re-fighting the Civil War.

24 LC: Oh yeah, right.

25 JC: "We've got a Yankee here!" It was just so totally, and it got through the same
26 crap when the formations, once again in the duration, I was the shortest guy in the
27 battalion and you all line up by height the way company—and then it goes down the
28 shortest guy and it was the same crap. I was at the end and just couldn't, kind of skipping
29 along whenever they had these field parade things and the drill sergeants would just go
30 nuts.

31 LC: You made them insane.

1 JC: Yeah, “What is wrong with you?” You know, I’m just being me, I never, I
2 mean I can laugh at it now but I could never stay in step, I just kind, I just skipped.

3 LC: But at the time, I mean, this was serious business, I mean these guys were in
4 your face, I’m sure.

5 JC: Yeah, yeah.

6 LC: Were they, did they succeed in scaring the hell out of you or?

7 JC: Totally.

8 LC: I can imagine.

9 JC: Just, I mean, and it got into the kind of the same thing but when they saw,
10 when I got into the training during the day, you know—I don’t know what this was, it
11 was like a three or four week thing’s all it was to get you a general clerk MOS.

12 LC: Yes, right.

13 JC: When they saw right off the bat that I knew how to type and I knew basic
14 filing systems, it goes a little bit beyond the alphabet but I was being a little—

15 LC: You could handle this; this was way within what you could do.

16 JC: Yeah, they saw me day one, I was one of, you know, had a high school
17 education which at that time most of the draftees didn’t even have a high school
18 education, so it kind of.

19 LC: Again.

20 JC: They kind of again laid off me, I was regular Army and I was, I had some
21 kind of a skill, so I didn’t have all those headaches of them, they were going nuts with
22 some of these people, trying to teach them to type.

23 LC: Did you get, beyond the things that you’ve told us already, were you being
24 targeted because people perceived you not as, not only as not being able to do the
25 marching and so forth, but as effeminate? I mean, were there specific thing that were
26 coming at you because of that?

27 JC: Oh yeah, totally, to all of it, I think all three, they were a lot more accepting at
28 Sam Houston because the medical corps has a lot of, they had a lot gays and lesbians.

29 LC: Yes.

1 JC: And they're much more tolerant, but from Dix, yeah, the, I was constantly
2 getting it, I think they assumed that I was gay more than, they were clueless to all this
3 transgender stuff.

4 LC: Oh, I'm sure, yeah.

5 JC: Yeah, I was constantly getting it and that's why I say if I wasn't regular
6 Army, if I hadn't have joined, there's no way I would have ever made it through.

7 LC: Were, did you pick up on other, other men whether they were gay or had
8 identity issues that may have paralleled some of yours, did you pick up on those other
9 guys that were around that may have been getting some of the same kind of, you know,
10 attacks or abuse or headaches or whatever that you were getting? Did you see this
11 happening to other people too?

12 JC: Yes, I think it was common practice and I think it still is that if you, if you
13 come across appearing—some people, people are born gay, there's no doubt in my mind
14 that and the same thing with transgender people that's it the way your born and these
15 characteristics that you just cannot—some gay men can get so used into acting, and I'll
16 call it acting, like a typical macho guy. But a good portion of gay men just have a way of
17 talking and expressing themselves and it's obvious. Those are the ones that got picked on
18 and there weren't that many but we seemed to get, could tell from each other and it was,
19 that was one of the things that fascinated me about Sam Houston. It just seemed so
20 many, more open and people that were a permanent part of there and so much more
21 leniency, but as soon as I got to Polk, it was right back to. You know anybody that
22 seemed a little swishy or not quite up to that masculine, automatically. It carries over to a
23 lot of straight men, I won't say a lot, but a fair amount that are totally straight but still,
24 they ain't all that masculine.

25 LC: Right, right.

26 JC: And then it gets into the assumption, you know, perception.

27 LC: That's the interesting part, isn't it, that this is all kind of being judged, you
28 know the judge and jury are all, they're operating on perceptions and that information.

29 JC: The whole, I mean, it goes even too that murder— that soldier in Kentucky a
30 couple of years ago.

31 LC: At Ft. Campbell.

1 JC: Yeah, which is, that's my unit, 101st Airborne, that's who I ended up actually
2 serving with that that happened and that was about perception. I mean, it can, I know I'm
3 kind of out here—but that's the thing, the guy they killed, he was dating a transsexual, he
4 was dating a woman and she ended up actually, she's had surgery now.

5 LC: Has she?

6 JC: Yeah, she's, a couple of years ago, she's, I can't think of her name, she
7 actually belongs to TAVA, she was a veteran too, she served in the military.

8 LC: I didn't know that she was veteran too.

9 JC: Yeah, she was a veteran and she was working doing, she was doing drag at
10 one of the clubs near the base when she met the soldier, but she identified as transsexual
11 and she did end up, she's had complete surgery now.

12 LC: Wow. Let me just clarify that, what is TAVA, just for someone who doesn't
13 know.

14 JC: Oh, TAVA is the Transgender American Veterans Association.

15 LC: Right, when was that actually organized, Janice, do you know?

16 JC: About two years, we're about two years old now.

17 LC: A couple, two years, okay. Janice, let me just ask your departure from Ft.
18 Polk and you said you had about a week or so that you went back up north.

19 JC: Yeah, I forgot, I think, I don't remember how much leave time I had, but I
20 went back—

21 LC: Do you remember being back up at home, if you were, do you remember that
22 week of leave or whatever it was, a couple of weeks?

23 JC: Yeah, it was a lot of drinking. (Laughing) I remember it was just kind of, so
24 strange and my mother was having a hard time dealing with it. I mean, that's when you
25 really, when it hits hardest that you're going to Vietnam and the whole thing, you know,
26 you're watching the news and everything. Some of my friends were still telling me that I
27 should go to Canada and not go.

28 LC: Right.

29 JC: Right to the day that I left. I actually ended up, technically I was AWOL
30 (Absent Without Leave) one day.

31 LC: What happened?

1 JC: Well it was when I got San Francisco; I had a change of heart. But when
2 they, probably one of my closest friends ended up going to the airport with and nobody in
3 my family went.

4 LC: This is at Boston?

5 JC: Yeah, when I went to Logan Airport to fly out to California.

6 LC: Nobody in the family would go? Were they too broken up or were they
7 hacked off at you or what was it that was—?

8 JC: I don't really remember what all the circumstances were, but I, you know, I
9 just said goodbye at the apartment we were living at the time and just shook my father's
10 hand. And this friend of mine, we took the subway out to get to Logan Airport from
11 Boston and it was just surreal I think is the word.

12 LC: Had your dad kind of come around? I mean by this time you've gone
13 through boot camp, you've, you know, you've got an MOS.

14 JC: Yeah, I mean he had a certain amount of pride. I had the green uniform on, I
15 was a private, I was an E-2 and in six months I had the same rank it took him three years
16 to make. Kind of—never mind.

17 LC: Well, what about your mom, how was she doing?

18 JC: She was real emotional, really having a hard time dealing with it and you
19 know my two little brothers and my little sister, especially my little sister was real
20 emotional.

21 LC: Well, I'll tell you what, let's take a break there.

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Interview with Janice Josephine Carney
Session 2 of 4
June 6, 2005

5 Laura Calkins: This is Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
6 University continuing the oral history interview with Janice Josephine Carney. Today's
7 date is the sixth of June 2005. I'm on the campus of Texas Tech in the Special
8 Collections Building and Janice is on the telephone at her home in Florida. Good
9 afternoon again, Janice.

10 Janice Carney: Good afternoon.

11 LC: Thanks for your time. If you don't mind, Janice, I'd like to ask a couple of
12 questions that pick up just about where we left off on our previous session and that was
13 covering the time period of your arrival in Vietnam. But before you actually arrived
14 there, you had been describing a number of events and training experiences that you had
15 and I wanted to kind of put alongside those a time-line question that will maybe help
16 people get a good sense of the time period when you actually were finishing your training
17 and moving out to Southeast Asia. The question that I have is whether you actually recall
18 your feelings when you learned about the United States deployment of forces into
19 Cambodia or the immediately subsequent shootings at Kent State University. Do you
20 remember that Janice?

21 JC: Oh yes, very vividly because it all—that stuff all happened while I was going
22 through my training.

23 LC: Yeah, and I remember you said there had been, there were some protests that
24 you had actually attended, a peace rally and then you signed the petition. Was that all
25 part of the reaction to Kent State and so on and Cambodia or was it, do you think it was
26 separate?

27 JC: It was a reaction to Kent State. It was kind of, there's a huge, huge, huge
28 distinction when you're talking about Kent State and Cambodia. Obviously I was 100
29 percent against Kent State, but the feelings on Cambodia were kind of mixed. I mean I

1 felt, I was in the service at the time and obviously I felt, well, if we're going to fight the
2 war, we have to go into Cambodia.

3 LC: For tactical reasons.

4 JC: Right, I mean, for several years, I was aware of this and even more going
5 through basic training by this time and when that happened, I was actually going for my
6 AIT (Advanced Individual Training) with the medical training in Texas and I knew the
7 chances were really, really, really, really, extremely really good that I was going to be in
8 Vietnam within a couple of months. So the idea of finally going into Cambodia to cut
9 down the supply lines, it was either doing that or leaving Vietnam, one or the other. If
10 you follow, you know my thinking. It was either, a decision had to be made to finally go
11 in and fight the war or leave.

12 LC: And so, if I can, just pursue that piece for a minute, your thinking at the time
13 was that, if we were going to fight the war, President Nixon made a good decision then?

14 JC: Yes, if he, totally.

15 LC: I mean, we were committed to fighting the war and he wanted to make sure
16 that the safe havens for Communist insurgents inside Cambodia were not being used to
17 hurt American troops.

18 JC: Right, I mean there was no question from the—that the Ho Chi Minh trail
19 which, you know, runs right along Laos and Cambodia, from day one of the war this is
20 how all of the supplies and the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) troops were coming
21 down and the absurdity of, you know, South Vietnamese Army and the United States
22 Army, you know, chasing the enemy to the border and then once they got across the
23 border, we stopping and staying, well, you know, we've got principles, we can't, we can't
24 cross this line. The NVA on the other side of the line laughing their asses off.

25 LC: Right.

26 JC: Saying, "Boy, aren't Americans stupid?" I mean, that's the, you know, if you,
27 I've equated it a number of times to the Normandy invasion.

28 LC: How so?

29 JC: If we fought World War II the way we fought Vietnam, we never would have
30 invaded France because France was a neutral country. Just because Germany invaded
31 France didn't give us a right to. It's the same logic, exact same logic. That's the logic

1 we were using, just because the NVA went into Cambodia, that doesn't mean we are,
2 that's the exact same logic.

3 LC: And then, I mean, your emotions then must have somersaulted when you saw
4 what happened in Ohio.

5 JC: Yeah, exactly, I mean, Ohio was more of we should just leave, totally, that we
6 were just so out of control. What were, you know, guardsmen doing on a campus with
7 loaded M-16s?

8 LC: Yeah, that's a good question. That's a good question.

9 JC: I mean, I've learned, a lot of this stuff you, in hindsight for me, because all
10 together I put thirteen years in the military, counting all of my reserve time, for
11 psychological reasons I stayed in the Reserves and guards.

12 LC: Okay.

13 JC: I wanted to be ready in case we went back to Vietnam, I had some serious
14 issues. But I—

15 LC: You personally wanted to be ready or you wanted the United States to be
16 ready.

17 JC: I wanted to be ready.

18 LC: Okay.

19 JC: I mean, after the fall of Saigon, I had a hard time dealing with the concept of,
20 that we just deserted the South Vietnamese people.

21 LC: Okay.

22 JC: I had a lot of just very mixed feelings that, you know, don't make sense to a
23 lot, don't make sense to me, let alone a lot of people. When I got out of the regular
24 service, I actually completed my six years with the three years inactive; I got called up a
25 couple of times, snow emergencies in the blizzard of '70. I was actually activated when
26 the Pope came to Boston as part of an honor guard which that was interesting.

27 LC: Wow. What year was that?

28 JC: Oh, '78 I think.

29 LC: Okay, I'll ask you about that later, sounds interesting.

30 JC: But—and, I'm trying to think, when, the busing, the riots in Boston was my
31 connection to riot training because we—I got activated as an inactive reservist and we

1 had a bunch of riot training where the station outside of Boston in Redding, which is a
2 suburb of Boston where there's a big Massachusetts National Guard training center. We
3 were issued the full riot gear which were the big shields and the riot sticks and all that.
4 And we had all this riot training and it really looked like it was going to get extremely
5 ugly at the time, this is when they just first started the busing.

6 LC: Yeah, I remember it, it was, Boston was the worst place in the country.

7 JC: Oh, it was and I'm Boston-Irish and I knew these people and it was like I was
8 going out to fight against my brothers and sisters because the Boston-Irish sadly were the
9 dumbest, most prejudiced people, their protection of South Boston, and you know, we
10 don't want no—was enough. I'm trying to stay focused, but the training we had and the
11 equipment that we were going out with was riot, we had tear gas, we had shields, we had
12 the batons. We were not issued M-16s and ammunition. This is America, you're going
13 out, and this is what went wrong at Kent State, and I believe they never made that
14 mistake again, that the National Guard, I think all the states never ever again sent out
15 reserve, you know, guard units for riot control.

16 LC: With live—

17 JC: With loaded, you know, loaded weapons, they issued riot gear.

18 LC: Did you, when you were going through that training and when they were
19 parceling out the material and equipment that you would have to use if you were actually
20 in that situation, did you ever think back about Kent State and—

21 JC: Oh yeah, I did 100 percent because I asked questions about it, you know,
22 about the policy and stuff.

23 LC: Did you?

24 JC: Yeah, that's pretty much what we were told, that after Kent State that was it,
25 that the from very, very top levels it came down, that, and whatever studies were done
26 and whatever reports, that was a mistake. Especially in a college campus where the
27 worse that you're going to get at the time is maybe have some rocks thrown at you.
28 There was no reason in the world for them to have had gone to like they were going to
29 war. You know, tempers rise, they flare and at the time, at that time there really was a
30 huge feud, I mean the military and the anti-war protestors had been building up and
31 building up by 1970.

1 LC: Oh yeah, sure.

2 JC: And there was this us against them mentality. But, the situation on a college
3 campus was really, I mean, as far as I know, there never have been any college riots
4 during or protests during the Vietnam era that involved protestors using weapons outside
5 of rocks and stuff that you could have protected with even riot gear that they had at the
6 time.

7 LC: Right.

8 JC: It was just a huge, unequivocal error to put their troops in that situation with
9 loaded weapons, loaded .45s and loaded M-16s.

10 LC: Yeah, it's shocking, it's just a shocking incident and it must certainly have
11 felt that way at the time.

12 JC: Yeah, I can, I have no way of knowing how I would have acted if I was in that
13 situation. I spent 366 days in Vietnam and I never fired a single shot. But if I was on a
14 college campus and I had, say, a loaded .45 and I had an angry mob throwing rocks,
15 rocks at me, I may have been t-ed off enough to fire a round. I don't know.

16 LC: Let me ask then about your, actually going out to Vietnam. Last time we left
17 it, you had had a home leave just before deployment and then, Janice if you can just
18 retrace your path overseas.

19 JC: Well, from the time I got my orders at Ft. Polk?

20 LC: Yes.

21 JC: Oh, I think I had about two days from the time I got my orders at Ft. Polk and
22 got a flight back up to Boston.

23 LC: Okay.

24 JC: And I was just dealing with the inevitable. I don't even remember what I
25 have, it probably was a thirty day leave, I think that's what they gave you. It was either a
26 thirty or a fourteen; I honestly don't even remember, you know, the amount of days.

27 LC: Where, you went to Boston.

28 JC: Right.

29 LC: Where did you go? Did you go—?

30 JC: Well, I flew from, I think it was Lake Charles or something to New Orleans
31 and then from New Orleans to Logan Airport in Boston.

1 LC: Did you spend time with anybody in the family or—?

2 JC: A little, mostly with my brother David who had just got back from Germany.

3 LC: Yeah.

4 JC: He and I talked a lot.

5 LC: He wanted to go to Vietnam right?

6 JC: Yeah, he wanted to and I'm trying to think, he, but my father never, you

7 know, never said much from what I can remember, he was just very, for him, very, very

8 quiet and introverted. From, you know, from the discussions we had when I, before basic

9 when I decided to join the Army, from how adamant he was about me going into the

10 military.

11 LC: And now he was very quiet.

12 JC: Yeah, now that I was home and actually had orders for Vietnam and he, it

13 was, I don't know, I think it was kind of a shock, you know, for both of my parents to see

14 me with that typical military haircut and in the uniform. It just wasn't their flamboyant

15 little son. (Laughing)

16 LC: And did your, did your father make any effort to, I don't know, meet you half

17 way, congrat—you know, kind of, I don't know, tell you you'd done good or wish you

18 well or any of that or was he just shut down?

19 JC: He had just shut down and—are you still there?

20 LC: Yes.

21 JC: Sorry, I just hit the call-waiting thing, if it doesn't go away in a minute, I'll—

22 LC: Okay. We can take a break if you want to.

23 JC: Can you just sit there for one second?

24 LC: Sure.

25 LC: So Janice you were telling about getting ready to leave Boston for Vietnam

26 and that, and what was kind of going on in the family, but you said you were talking to

27 your brother, David.

28 JC: He was just the most adamant and worried about me. But he wanted to go

29 and he was always just, he was just kind of, you know, tough, he was the tough one that

30 could fight and he was the one that was always standing up for and he knew that I had

31 this thing for wearing my sisters clothes (laughs) and that I'd never want to fight in my

1 life and it was just—and he was just trying to give me pointers and stuff. I could just tell
2 that he really was concerned.

3 LC: He sort of took up for you?

4 JC: Yeah.

5 LC: He wanted to do what he could to keep you safe. Is that fair?

6 JC: Yeah.

7 LC: What was—he was in communications?

8 JC: Yeah, he ended up doing all of his time in Germany and he was, he had
9 Kryptonite code, something like that I think they called it. Which was, it was like a top
10 secret and I guess it involves a lot of training and that particular MOS he was at the time,
11 he was needed in Germany and they wouldn't let him transfer out of, out of, he wanted,
12 he had actually put in a transfer to want to go to Vietnam.

13 LC: But he was too valuable where he was?

14 JC: Yeah, yeah, they wanted to keep him.

15 LC: How long did he stay in the Army?

16 JC: He served three years, all of it in Germany.

17 LC: Oh, okay.

18 JC: He had just; he had just got home not too long from the time that I came back
19 from my training.

20 LC: And was that the end of his three years?

21 JC: Yeah.

22 LC: Did he consider extending his active service?

23 JC: No.

24 LC: Okay.

25 JC: No, he wasn't that—

26 LC: He wasn't that far gone.

27 JC: Yeah, into reenlisting for it.

28 LC: Now, what, what path did you take over to Vietnam? Do you remember, did
29 you go through California or—?

30 JC: Yeah, to the old Presidio in San Francisco, ended up with, I went to the
31 airport, I took the Boston subway to Logan Airport with a friend of mine that I went to

1 high school with and nobody from my family went with me. I really don't remember
2 why, honestly, I guess they all were too busy or what, I don't remember the
3 circumstances. But it was just me and this friend and we just kind of joked a little bit but
4 mostly it was quiet and that was it, he just kind of wished me good luck when I went
5 through. It was just really, from that point on just this very quiet; lonely is the only way
6 to describe it. You're sitting on a plane, you're flying from Boston to San Francisco with
7 an Army uniform on, I think most people on the plane kind of figured out where I was
8 going. But yet, nobody, it was still, even at that point, there was nobody, nobody wanted
9 to make eye contact with you or talk to you.

10 LC: Nobody came up, sort of; you know, hit you on the shoulder and said good
11 luck or anything.

12 JC: No, even at that level it was just kind of like—yeah.

13 LC: Wow.

14 JC: They're afraid they might catch something.

15 LC: Had that pariah thing. Wow. How were you inside, I mean can I ask, were
16 you anxious, were you resigned, somewhere in between, both?

17 JC: Just somewhere in the middle, you know a lot of fear and still contemplating
18 deserting to be honest with you. (Laughing) I mean, you know, in 1970 to finally get to
19 San Francisco, I wanted to go down Haight Ashby put a flower in my hair and disappear.
20 I still had that fantasy.

21 LC: Really?

22 JC: Yeah, right, you know, right to the bitter end. You know, why, I ended up
23 staying in San Francisco one night and I, technically I was one day AWOL. You know,
24 when I reported to the Presidio and which, that still kind of pisses me off that the,
25 because I was twenty-four hours late in reporting in that they gave me an article 15, they
26 gave me a fine and took my stripe away from me, I had, you know, the private and they
27 busted, they busted me and gave me a fine.

28 LC: How much was the fine?

29 JC: I don't remember, because the pay was so small, what they paid a private
30 back then a month was kind of ridiculous.

1 LC: What did you do for that day when you were supposed to be on the way over
2 there, what did you actually do, do you remember?

3 JC: Oh, I wandered around San Francisco.

4 LC: Just kind of walking the streets?

5 JC: Yeah.

6 LC: Thinking?

7 JC: Yeah, and I really was giving a serious consideration to deserting.

8 LC: Did you have a plan as to what you would, how you would actually do it?

9 JC: Just throw the uniform away, throw it. There were enough, I mean, San
10 Francisco in 1970, I could have gone up to just about anybody and said, “Look, I’m, I got
11 orders for Vietnam, I’m not going, can you help me?” I would have had a small army
12 saying, “Yeah, sure, here’s some food, have something to eat, come over to my place.”

13 LC: I’m sure your right. Do you know even—do you even know now or can you
14 say what decided you on what you should do?

15 JC: Probably John F. Kennedy. I mean I still, I still, there was a part of me, I
16 think that really, that really bought into, “Ask not what you can do for your country, ask
17 what you can do for your country.” Actually, I messed that up. (Laughing)

18 LC: I’m not sure, I think you came through.

19 JC: Did I get that right or—I, there was just this part of me, I think, that believed
20 that it was the right thing to do, that we were stopping communism, communism and we
21 were trying to promote democracy in the Republic of South Vietnam, I think, I think that
22 is really, more than anything kind of. It didn’t, it didn’t take me very long in Vietnam to
23 realize well, that was wrong.

24 LC: That is was what, a fantasy?

25 JC: Yeah, the whole concept of democracy in South Vietnam, it was just, boy I
26 learned fast, there was just so much corruption it was, a puppet government, you know,
27 the majority of the South Vietnamese people, all they wanted was the foreigners out.
28 Even at that time, before, I didn’t—had very little knowledge of the whole colonial thing
29 and the French influence that after being in-country for a while, especially being up north
30 in Hue and driving through the cathedrals and really getting this sense of what France had
31 done to the culture in Vietnam that. And they did not, the South Vietnamese and the

1 North Vietnamese for that matter, but neither one of them wanted an outside country to
2 come in and dominate their military and force and influence them. I think they wanted a
3 democracy but it was never going to work by us being a military force, I don't know if
4 that makes sense or not.

5 LC: Do you remember a particular incident or observation that you made when
6 you arrived there? You said you got this pretty clearly pretty soon after you got there.

7 JC: When we arrived in Tan Son Nhut they were rushing us to bus that took us to
8 the training center or whatever we called it and the buses all had, you know, mesh nets to
9 protect the window and it was the driver—somebody said, "That's to protect you from
10 them throwing rocks at us." And it was just like almost automatically, it was kind of like
11 this thing, you know, "Oh, you mean they don't really want us here." They're not exactly
12 welcoming us with open arms.

13 LC: Right, in fact you're in danger.

14 JC: Yeah, and this is from the people we're supposedly protecting. That was a
15 message from day one in-country.

16 LC: You mentioned corruption too, did you see that? Or did you hear about
17 things that—?

18 JC: Well, I, from what I saw and knew with supplies disappearing and I saw the
19 same thing over in Germany with a lot of supplies from the mess hall disappearing and
20 meals of leftovers substituting for what was supposed to have been a steak meal for 1,500
21 people just kind of disappearing and that, and I saw a lot of that kind of stuff in Vietnam.
22 How stuff from the PXs (Post Exchange) and different things were ending up on the
23 black market. Even in the—and just the way certain officers lived, very, with air
24 conditioners, especially in Saigon and all that.

25 LC: Sure.

26 JC: And to me, this is what I label as part of their corruption and with a lot of the
27 enlisted men living in just hooches with no air conditioning. There was this—there was a
28 huge class thing between the officers and the enlisted men, it was nothing like what, from
29 what I know from World War II and even Korea where the officers actually led and you
30 know, actually led the charge not phoned it in, from a few miles in the rear.

31 LC: From the air-conditioned comfort of the—yeah.

1 JC: "We're right behind you."

2 LC: And, what would you say, morale generally was like when you first arrived?
3 I know you went up to the, you went up near Phu Bai, is that right?

4 JC: Yeah.

5 LC: For the first week or so.

6 JC: Yeah, what happened, I went, I arrived at Tan Son Nhut, which seemed much
7 happier and safer, I mean it was big and just well grounded. From there I was sent up to
8 Da Nang and Da Nang too seemed a certain more, it seemed more open and more, more
9 was going on as far as fighting a war. But the same thing, I was only there for one or two
10 nights, I'm not even sure if it was two nights, I think it was two nights. From there I was,
11 at that time my training had consisted of the field medic training and the clerk typist
12 training, that was the sole training I had, the general clerk and the field medic and I
13 thought all along they were either going to sign me as a field medic or some kind of clerk
14 and in Da Nang they assigned me to 101st Airborne, the 39th Transportation Battalion to
15 one of their line companies. In fact I was assigned to Trooper Six Transportation
16 Company to drive deuce and halves and one-ton, well, three-quarter ton trucks.

17 LC: And of course, you'd never even sat at the wheel.

18 JC: Yeah, never drove, never had a driver's license, never had any training and I
19 was, and that's what I was really petrified of, what are these people doing?

20 LC: I mean what; I mean really, what message did that send to you?

21 JC: That was the ultimate message that these people just do not know what the
22 hell they're doing, I mean, I'm laughing but it was—

23 LC: A little scary.

24 JC: I mean, I'm sitting talking to the sergeant and he just sits by and pulls out the
25 regulations and looked up, I think it was 71B with the clerk typist and just goes across
26 71B clerk typist, regulation says you can drive, it's your problem, get out of here with a
27 few swear words and that was it. His attitude was take it up with your top when you get
28 up there and I go out, they had like this big map, everybody was racing out to this map,
29 you know, after they got their orders to see where they were going and you know, I'm
30 looking up Camp Eagle and I'm saying jeez, that's kind of a ways up there ain't it? The
31 next day, they put us on a plane, I don't remember how many there were, there were,

1 eight or nine, maybe ten of us and they put us on this, I don't know what they called the
2 planes, the prop planes with the two propellers and all the seats were those net seats, it
3 was basically the plane—

4 LC: The transport?

5 JC: Yeah, the transport and for jumping and we still weren't issued any M-16s,
6 you didn't get issued a weapon until you actually got to your unit.

7 LC: Right, so—

8 JC: And so none of us are armed and we're on this plane that's really bouncing all
9 over the place and sitting in these nets things and all the way up the only thing I was
10 hoping is that I didn't throw up.

11 LC: I can believe it.

12 JC: I came close a couple of times and hoping I didn't throw up and what the hell
13 are we supposed to do if it gets shot down? I mean, the, I'm sure if it was the pilot or
14 copilot, I don't know if there was any—I think there was one other person on the plane
15 that was sitting in the back with us, so there may have been three, but I imagine the pilot
16 and the copilot had, they probably just had sidearms, you know, handguns and—

17 LC: And that's it?

18 JC: Yeah, if the other guy may have had an M-16 but we would not have been in
19 great shape if for any reason we got shot down.

20 LC: That's right, sounds like it.

21 JC: The absurdity of that, I never, and that was one of the first things in my mind,
22 we should have been issued weapons right away and this is a war they're telling us.

23 LC: And they're flying you right in the middle of it.

24 JC: Yeah, yeah, yeah, we should have been issued M-16s and ammunition and at
25 the point in Da Nang, this is the way I was thinking.

26 LC: So your first week, you've had the incident with seeing the mesh screens on
27 the bus, you've been told that you're now going to drive a truck, which you've never seen
28 before and that it's your problem to sort out and then you're on this plane ride with
29 obviously over combat zones with no, no equipment that's appropriate to that. So you're,
30 I mean, were actually taking all of this in at the time, Janice? Were you really processing
31 this, I mean?

1 JC: Oh yeah, I mean, we talked the other day about being, you know, an avid
2 reader and kind of, I don't know if you call it, a deep thinker is a way of putting it.

3 LC: Well, certainly an intellectual, no question about it.

4 JC: I mean, I was processing a lot of this stuff and this does not seem—
5 (Laughing)

6 LC: I mean, you're chuckling now, but I know this was probably extremely nerve
7 racking at the time, beyond nerve racking.

8 JC: Yeah, yeah, it's just right from the beginning, this whole process of coming
9 in-country, it was like whoa, this doesn't seem like this, this is not logical. And when we
10 landed in Phu Bai, it was kind of the same thing that we were told, when they got close to
11 the airport, they circled a couple of times and we were told that they're going to keep the
12 engine running and as soon as the plane lands, evacuate as quickly as possible, that they
13 just, they're opening up the back and they were going to unload some supplies and real
14 quick with like a forklift or whatever and then they just were going to take right off.

15 LC: And so the message there was also pretty clear.

16 JC: Yeah, you know, they were worried about, you know, possible rocket attacks,
17 you know, the plane being targeted and they wanted just in and out as quickly as they
18 could and that's pretty much what they did and the Phu Bai airport was just this small,
19 old airport, there wasn't much going on, a small airport and our duffle bags and, were just
20 thrown out by the side, and we went out, you know, real quick, grabbed our duffle bags
21 and went in to their just, very small old wooden terminal and there was a few people
22 there and we were, we were just asked where we were assigned and anybody going to the
23 Thirty-ninth Transport to go over here and there were I think three or four of us that were
24 all assigned as truck drivers. And I don't know, we waited for our—finally this deuce
25 and half pulled up with a couple of drivers and a guy just jumped out and asked us if we
26 were the new truck drivers and they said and he just told us to get on board and he just
27 kind of laughing saying we need some victims, we're getting killed, he said something
28 about we're losing them as fast as we're getting them in.

29 LC: Great.

30 JC: Made some comment like that and that was it. We drove up from Phu Bai,
31 which is a short distance up to Camp Eagle to this little village and it was just—

1 LC: What did the camp look like when you got there?

2 JC: It looked kind of secure, it looked big but it was nowhere as big as, you know
3 what I had seen in Tan Son Nhut and in Da Nang. There was a lot of space all around it
4 that. I didn't know at that time, but obviously that open, defolilized, is that a word?

5 LC: Cleared, it had been cleared, yeah, sure.

6 JC: So you could see for I don't know how many miles, anybody coming in case
7 of a ground attack and it was kind of hilly and it was all, just all these wooden hooches
8 with these tin, tin roofs on them and, and I was assigned to, they just dropped us off at my
9 company, the Triple Sixth—I don't know if we all were assigned to that same company
10 or not, but I just remember being dropped off there and you know, going into what was
11 their, you know, company headquarters and giving my orders to the clerk and explaining
12 to the clerk that I don't know how to drive and him just giving me this really
13 dumbfounded look, kind of going "Huh?" (Laughing)

14 LC: Now, just to clarify, did you stay there very long?

15 JC: I was assigned to the Triple Sixth for about three days.

16 LC: And did you get changed out of there because of action you took or what
17 happened?

18 JC: The first sergeant was going to kill me I think.

19 LC: Because, why, you didn't know how to drive a truck or he didn't like the look
20 of you or what?

21 JC: I, he didn't like the look of me, besides I drove a truck. The first night I just
22 reported in the office and he wasn't around and he just assigned me to a barrack and he,
23 oh, they assigned me to this barrack and it was all these serious redneck, tough enough
24 redneck people. But there was just all this country music playing and all these truck
25 drivers, because it was a transportation unit, and a refrigerator full of beer. And I had a
26 couple of beers and somebody gave me some pills, I didn't know what they were, he
27 obviously saw that I was very nervous and he said, "Take some of these, they'll help you
28 sleep." And they were downers, they weren't any uppers, they weren't speed, whatever
29 they were. After a couple of beers, I just passed out and all I remember was the next
30 morning then, somebody coming and waking me up and saying the top wants to see me
31 and I got up and stepped on my glasses.

1 LC: Oh jeez.

2 JC: So, when I reported to the first sergeant, I had a pair of broken glasses, with
3 one of the lenses cracked and he just totally went nuts on me. I had the necklace that my
4 sister, my younger sister made for me with beads and he just ripped that off my neck and
5 said what the fuck I was doing wearing that.

6 LC: Now and when had she made that for you?

7 JC: Um, just before I left, a couple nights before I left for Vietnam.

8 LC: Was it something you liked or—?

9 JC: Yeah, because I was always wearing, you know love beads and stuff.

10 LC: So he got rid of that.

11 JC: Yeah.

12 LC: Did he give it back to you?

13 JC: Oh no, he just ripped it off; it was just like a string thing.

14 LC: Yeah, and he just tore it off you.

15 JC: Yeah, just pulled it off my neck and made some comments about, you know,
16 being a faggot.

17 LC: Being a faggot.

18 JC: Yeah and just started, you know, screaming about what's this shit about you
19 don't know how to drive, that I better learn, you know, damn fast and then, you know,
20 when he saw my glasses and I had asked something about getting them fixed and he said
21 well, they have to send them to San Francisco. And he just totally went ballistic on me
22 and he told me to go back to the barracks, shine my shoes, get a haircut, I mean it was, I
23 couldn't believe it, it was like basic training. I could not believe that he actually said get
24 a haircut and shine your shoes.

25 LC: Right.

26 JC: We're in a—

27 LC: Right, in the middle of, right.

28 JC: Yeah, that was Ft. Polk; I thought I was over that.

29 LC: Exactly.

1 JC: They did and the next day I got a haircut which was an experience from the
2 company barber, I can't remember his first name, his last name was Whitehead and he
3 used a straight razor.

4 LC: Really?

5 JC: Yeah, and I got, I actually to be good friends with him, I really liked him, he
6 was quite a character. He would ask all the white guys while he was sharpening the
7 straight razor how they felt about black women, kind of—I don't know what answer he
8 was looking for, but you know.

9 LC: Now just to clarify was he an African-American guy?

10 JC: Yeah, and I think he used to say something along the line, if you had a choice
11 between, I think it was Kate Smith and Diahann Carroll, who would you date. It was
12 something bizarre like that. Diahann Carroll of course. (Laughing)

13 LC: Oh absolutely.

14 JC: But, you know, he occasionally would get these rednecks that would say, Kate
15 Smith, ain't dating no—he'd start, you know, shine, sharpening that straight razor and get
16 them thinking. At that time, I was, you know, learned that a lot of what was going on in
17 Vietnam was that there was a big muu muu, muu muu, or Mau Mau I forgot how you
18 pronounced it, which was a loud black radical organization.

19 LC: The Mau Mau.

20 JC: The Mau Mau and he had, and this was at, you know, obviously 1970 after
21 the Martin Luther King assassination and a lot of the black soldiers just felt it wasn't their
22 war, their considered themselves political prisoners.

23 LC: Did—

24 JC: So it was—

25 LC: Did, was he one who felt some of that too, do you think?

26 JC: Oh yeah, very strongly.

27 LC: Yeah.

28 JC: That he was very, yeah, very political and he, and that was going back to what
29 I was saying, but a lot of the truck drivers in the transportation unit were stereotypical
30 hardcore rednecks, you know, from the South. They had, you know, the Confederate
31 flags on their trucks and it didn't take him long for conversation with me from growing

1 up in Boston and growing up in housing projects and I was used to being around black
2 people, there was no big thing for me.

3 LC: Right, he knew from that alone that you were different from most of the other
4 guys there.

5 JC: Yeah, we got a quick sense of my experiences and even, you know as a guy
6 likes and stuff.

7 LC: You said you saw him and kind of, you know, bonded a little bit with him
8 anyway.

9 JC: Oh yeah, like I said, I gravitated more, there was a few separate things at the
10 time and I gravitated more to the black guys than the white guys. I mean if you went to a
11 hooch with a lot of black guys, that's where you were going to hear The Temptations and
12 all that kind of music I liked.

13 LC: And how did most of the black guys take to you?

14 JC: Alright, I didn't have much of problem, it was just, I don't know how to put
15 it, there was just a sense of sincerity.

16 LC: This didn't help with your popularity, I'm sure among the truck drivers, the
17 guys you're describing.

18 JC: No, I did not get along with, I don't want to use the term hillbilly, but I will. I
19 mean it was just a whole different cultural in reality, I was more black than white by their
20 standards.

21 LC: So what was life like in the barracks for you then?

22 JC: Oh, it was horrible, that's I planned it—it only happen like two days, the third
23 day when I was supposed to start driving lessons and he, by that time they had sent out
24 my glasses.

25 LC: They had sent them out?

26 JC: Yeah, but literally, they had to send to, I don't know, they could have had
27 them done privately.

28 LC: Right.

29 JC: They were Vietnamese, but I don't know, they had to send them—because
30 that's way they do things, they could have just gone down to Phu Bai, because when I got

1 around and learned what was going on, there were Vietnamese people there that sold
2 glasses that could have fixed them.

3 LC: Of course, of course.

4 JC: But these, by regulations had to send them to San Francisco.

5 LC: Now, Janice, can I—go ahead, go ahead.

6 JC: So, you know, when a lens was replaced, they took a couple of weeks.

7 LC: Now I'm going to, you don't have to say, but it might be interesting to know,
8 were you near-sighted, meaning you can see up close but not far away?

9 JC: Yeah, to a certain degree, I was legally blind in one eye.

10 LC: Right, I remember that, but your other eye.

11 JC: Yeah, I couldn't, you know, I couldn't read. I could see far away, but I
12 couldn't read any signs.

13 LC: Yeah, this isn't going to be good for truck driving.

14 JC: No, and that third day when they realized the—my understanding from the
15 company clerk is that the first sergeant sort of called him and said, "Which one?" Called
16 the battalion commander and they got into a huge, huge argument that he was pissed, you
17 know, what the hell are they doing sending up these people that can't drive and that he
18 needed, you know, he didn't need another clerk, he needed a truck driver and somehow
19 they just transferred me to the battalion headquarters.

20 LC: Which was where?

21 JC: Well, it was on Camp Eagle, it was just actually you know—

22 LC: Oh, just a different part.

23 JC: Yeah, the battalion headquarters was kind of like in the center and the
24 battalion was broken down into five or six companies that, you know, with their support
25 companies, excuse me, I mean the line companies.

26 LC: So, the, of which the 666th would have been one?

27 JC: Yeah, they were broken down into one company had five ton trucks, then
28 another one had deuce and a half, I think they had two deuce and half and two five ton
29 companies and another one that had three quarter and jeeps, they were just kind of broken
30 down like that. But when they were in, whenever they were running convoys to how they
31 would do it, they would all just be mixed in.

1 LC: Was this then the Thirty-ninth Battalion?

2 JC: Yeah, the Thirty-ninth Transportation Battalion, which is the first logistical
3 division. That's the whole, you know, support unit of the 101st Airborne, the way it's
4 broken down and so, they reassigned me to battalion headquarters and somebody from
5 battalion headquarters was none too happy because apparently they took somebody that
6 knew how to drive and assigned him to the Triple Sixth company to kind of appease their
7 commander.

8 LC: I mean, this sounds like a circus.

9 JC: I mean, when you've got your commanders calling each other assholes and
10 screaming at each other and saying who's running this and nobody seems to really know.

11 LC: And your new assignment then was as, what, a clerk?

12 JC: Yeah, the, I was assigned to battalion headquarters, which is where, under Lt.
13 Col. Elvin C. Ellis who was affectionately known as Ace, which I always liked. I was
14 one of the few people that called him Ace and he just kind of hated me from day one.

15 LC: He hated you?

16 JC: Yeah, you don't call a Lieutenant Colonel Ace.

17 LC: Yeah.

18 JC: That didn't come over too good, but I had an attitude problem.

19 LC: Okay, and he was, what exactly was his position within the battalion?

20 JC: He was a Lieutenant Colonel, he was the battalion commander.

21 LC: Battalion commander of the Thirty-ninth.

22 JC: Yeah.

23 LC: And was his last name, just for reference, E-L-L-I-S?

24 JC: Yeah, I believe it was, Elvin with an E, Elvin C. Ace. We, what was it—at
25 first they assigned me as a filing cab—a filing clerk and I think I, I don't know, for about
26 a month and it was interesting because I got to see, I got to play with all of the files and
27 get to read everybody's 214 at the headquarters, which was the, I found out that I had a
28 higher, I think it was a GT score, you have like an IQ thing that you take and I it was
29 called GT or something like that, I had the highest score in the whole battalion
30 headquarters company. I found that out, which was kind of funny that kind of boosted
31 my ego.

1 LC: I bet it did.

2 JC: Yeah, because they had wanted me to go into the West Point prep thing when
3 I was in basic, but I wanted nothing to do with it. But—

4 LC: Did you actually decline that then?

5 JC: Oh yeah.

6 LC: Was it actually offered to you or just discussed or—

7 JC: It was offered to me because I took all these tests.

8 LC: The tests, right.

9 JC: Yeah, and the thing with it was I had seriously considered it, obviously I'd
10 rather be doing silly training than going to Vietnam, but the deal was you go to the prep
11 school for two years and I don't remember exactly where it is, but there is a West Point
12 prep and if you complete that, then you're committed to going to West Point for four
13 years.

14 LC: Right, and if you go there, then you're committed.

15 JC: To doing six years of active duty afterwards. If your nineteen years old, that's
16 a lot of math.

17 LC: Yeah, that's a lot of commitments.

18 JC: You're signing your life away more or less.

19 LC: And especially since you had no, you just weren't wired for interest in that.

20 JC: No, I just wanted to do my three years and get out.

21 LC: Right, right.

22 JC: But if I could have just done like the two year prep to kind of avoid going to
23 Vietnam and thinking of maybe by then—that's what I was kicking around in my head,
24 but in the end I just said no. But all this stuff was in my DD-214 that I had taken all these
25 tests and was qualified and I think that the, the run-in that I was close to having with a
26 commanding officer was more of an intellectual thing. Because even in Vietnam, I was
27 reading a lot, I always had access to books and it was almost, it was kind of like a radar
28 thing.

29 LC: Really?

30 JC: Yeah, the way people kind of looked at me and, but the basic job I had was all
31 filing and keeping records up and making copies of stuff and you know and typing. And

1 I did that for about a month and then battalion, they lost their battalion mail clerk
2 suddenly.

3 LC: Uh-huh, unexpectedly?

4 JC: Really unexpectedly and they needed a replacement real quick and it had,
5 even in the Army at the battalion mail clerk level, you've got to take the postal exam.

6 LC: Oh, is that right?

7 JC: Yeah, another one of those strange regulations. So you've got to pass the
8 standard postal exam.

9 LC: So they had to find somebody who could pass it quickly.

10 JC: Yeah, and then you're authorized to pick up mail for your battalion at the
11 Army Post Office and there was, and people were going nuts because they had, there
12 should have been an executive officer. The way it works, you have an NCO (Non-
13 Commissioned Officer) who is your battalion mail clerk and he's supposed to be our
14 NCO and then you have an executive officer, those are the two people that are qualified
15 and you're supposed to always have those two and they somehow and I don't know how
16 they screwed up without having an XO (Executive Officer), so they had no lieutenant and
17 when I took it, I was a PFC (Private First Class), so they had to automatically give me
18 another promotion.

19 LC: Otherwise you couldn't do the job.

20 JC: Right, I had to fulfill a, they gave me a promotion of spec-4 which is
21 equivalent to corporal and put me in an E-5 slot and I, you know, took the exam, the
22 exam was nothing, it was piece of cake and real quick I got the qualification and that's
23 what I ended up doing the rest of my tour, I was a battalion mail clerk.

24 LC: Let me ask you just a couple of questions before we go on with that and it's
25 interesting Janice, you mention that you always had access to books, where did the books
26 come from?

27 JC: My brother would send them to me, you know, my mother, or when I could
28 get down to, we had a PX in Phu Bai that I even; I even had copies of the *Rolling Stone*
29 all the time.

30 LC: I was going to ask what kinds of things were you reading.

1 JC: Uh, I actually was—read *Love Story* when I was in Vietnam which was really
2 weird, because, I mean that the—

3 LC: But I think it was the biggest book of 1970 or something like that.

4 JC: Yeah, and it was all dealing with Boston, which is what I like about it,
5 because it reminded me of home. I actually read it about three times, it was really weird
6 actually. What happened, as the battalion mail clerk, I would be assigned a truck and a
7 driver that didn't drive every day and I would be the shotgun. Where I was supposed to
8 be lock and loaded and paying attention, I would be reading a book. But, *Love Story* is
9 the main thing I was reading and we used to have access to the *Rolling Stone* which my,
10 which my commanding officer called a communist newspaper and took it from my desk
11 and tried to tell me that I couldn't read communist trash like that in his office.

12 LC: But you got the next issue and continued to see it on a regular basis?

13 JC: Yeah, I used to like reading it in front of him.

14 LC: So, was there some kind of, would you say, intellectual competition thing
15 going on there or you mentioned before, radar, can you clarify that? What was actually, I
16 mean now that you think about it, what was going on there?

17 JC: Well, it—

18 LC: Or can you say?

19 JC: Well it was an intellectual thing and it was a power struggle because he felt
20 that I kind of had him, he, at the time he had nobody else, he needed somebody with a
21 decent education and to fill these guys spot and believe me, nobody wanted to be the
22 battalion mail clerk. You were driving everyday through dangerous roads and back. It
23 got worse when, I'll talk, how about when we moved up north and you had to get all this
24 mail together from the six or seven companies, from the company mail clerks; you had to
25 inspect their mail room and make sure they were following, you know regulations; you
26 had to do inventories for people I would—the truck drivers that were killed in all of the
27 line companies, you know, and pack their belongings and make sure that you got an
28 officer to sign a letter. It ended up that they never, they never got the lieutenant that I
29 was supposed to have that should have done a lot of that stuff.

30 LC: So you just continued to do it?

1 JC: Yeah, and he, he knew that I basically was filling a lieutenants slot and what
2 should have been an E-5 slot. He didn't, he just didn't like my attitude, that I was
3 disrespectful, I never saluted him.

4 LC: And was that, why did you not do that, I mean was it him or was it the
5 situation?

6 JC: It was him and it was the situation. The—they were running a lot of night
7 convoys where a lot of people were getting killed and I was totally opposed to it, that
8 they could have ran a lot of these supplies during the daytime and this is going back to a
9 lot of the class stuff. A lot of these supplies that they were, you know, pushing to Quang
10 Tri and these so-called priority night convoys where things like beer, air-conditioners, not
11 essential supplies for the PXs, a lot of stuff that really was not, you know, a priority one
12 that they could have gone up in small convoys during the day that wouldn't have been as
13 dangerous.

14 LC: How many guys were being lost, do you have any clue?

15 JC: The—

16 LC: How many attacked?

17 JC: You know, just above, if they were doing two or three night convoys a week,
18 they would lose two or three drivers, maybe a couple just to injury, but at least one killed,
19 on just about every convoy, they were getting ambushed every time going through the
20 rock pile. He, you know, had all these charts with statistics and saying well, this ratio
21 and this percentage, you know, we're moving so much supplies and it was, it, to me it
22 was insane.

23 LC: Just didn't make any sense. And day convoys would have had a better
24 chance.

25 JC: Yes, you could have a lot of these supplies, it would take you longer, because
26 the road was being used, you're not running them up as quick and you can't have big
27 convoys, but they could have got a lot of supplies up that way and it would have been
28 safer.

29 LC: Janice, let's stop there for a minute
30
31

Interview with Janice Josephine Carney
Session 3 of 4
June 7, 2005

1 Laura Calkins: This is Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University continuing the oral history interview with Janice Josephine Carney. Today's
3 date is the seventh of June 2005. I'm on the campus of Texas Tech and Janice is on the
4 telephone in Florida. Janice, thanks for continuing this afternoon, I really appreciate your
5 time, as you know, and let's, let's start today, if you don't mind, with some kind of
6 routine issues really about what daily work was for you as the battalion mail clerk. You
7 described a few of the duties that you had but before you went up to the border and
8 beyond of Laos, what was a, what was a day like for you once you had that new
9 assignment?

10 Janice Carney: At first it was really easy, it was a really good, relatively good
11 duty, I got assigned a driver every day. At that point they were kind of, a lot of times it
12 was the same driver.

13 LC: Was this a Vietnamese driver or American?

14 JC: Oh no, this was from our unit, from our, because the, normally the battalion
15 mail clerk would have drove himself and had a shotgun, but it didn't, I just took the
16 position of the shotgun because I didn't drive.

17 LC: Right.

18 JC: But the rules were at all times you needed a driver and a shotgun, so it really
19 wasn't that, if they had assigned me a vehicle from the motor pool everyday and for a
20 while I had a Jeep that I had access to anytime I wanted, which was kind of neat in
21 Vietnam.

22 LC: Yeah, that would have been almost a status symbol in some ways.

23 JC: Oh, it was, believe me, I was constantly having people ask me if I could, if I
24 could do them a little favor. Run down to Phu Bai and pick something up for them, yeah.

25 LC: Did you actually do that sometimes or did it depend?

26 JC: I did it, there were times and one time I let somebody borrow my Jeep and I
27 never did that again, I almost got court-martialed, in fact I should have.

28 LC: What happened, what happened?

1 JC: He was down in the village getting some OB, which was obesitol, which was
2 a drug a lot of us used. It was a product made in France for losing weight and it was like
3 a little bottle, but it was like per, liquid speed, one little bottle of this stuff and you were
4 out for a couple of days and it was commonly used the way OB, we called it.

5 LC: O-B?

6 JC: Yeah, it stood for obesitol and I let them take the Jeep because I was the only
7 one that had the key because we used to keep that locked up at the headquarters and the,
8 all I got was that hell, that there was, somebody was shot. First the rumor was that I got,
9 that I was shot, because I was the only that was supposed to have, in theory—

10 LC: Right, in theory.

11 JC: To have to Jeep and it turned out that the person that got shot lost a hand.

12 LC: Really?

13 JC: Yeah, and it, I don't think we ever, nobody really knows what happened, but
14 they wrote it up that it was an accident, that a round went off from the heat of the engine,
15 that's how they finally ended up writing it and they wrote it off as non-combative related
16 and an accident and shipped him back to the States.

17 LC: And they, I presume this was done because he was on some illicit mission
18 that wasn't authorized.

19 JC: Yeah, he was, yeah, he was off the base; he was in civilian clothes, a couple
20 of very highly no-nos.

21 LC: Was this a friendly doctor, would you say, who kind of managed the situation
22 or do you not know that part of it?

23 JC: Well, medically he, it was just, it was a typical medical evacuation as if
24 anything had happened, but it was when it got to the command, when he found out that it
25 was my Jeep but I wasn't there and it wasn't in official capacity, it's very similar where a
26 lot of things in Vietnam, they tried to limit our casualty rates and differently exaggerated
27 the enemies casualty rates.

28 LC: And this fits in that category?

29 JC: Right, anything that they could list, and I'm sure 100 percent sure they're
30 doing the same thing in Iraq, that anything they can list as non-combative related, you
31 know, or an accident, then it wasn't in on the casualty reports.

1 LC: Right, what did you hear about what had actually happened?

2 JC: I heard he got shot in the hand from a Vietnamese type person; something
3 went wrong during the drug deal.

4 LC: Okay, so it wasn't a sniper by the side of the road, it was, somebody was
5 involved in a drug deal.

6 JC: No, somebody was, a lot of the people that we were dealing with the drugs,
7 any of the black market stuff, a lot of them were really Viet Cong. You know, anybody
8 with a half a brain, you have no idea where that money was going. I think it's the same,
9 on the whole when you're dealing with any kind of drug deal.

10 LC: Right.

11 JC: I never got to talk to him, so I don't know exactly what, you know, what went
12 wrong. I mean, he may have been, he may have tried to rip off the Vietnamese.

13 LC: Did any kind of sales continue after this incident, do you know?

14 JC: Oh yeah, there was always a lot of, I mean, I was over there, like I say in '71
15 and there's heroin use and marijuana use and OB use, which was just very high.

16 LC: Was OB the most popular thing, do you think?

17 JC: Yeah, for a lot of the situations. I, there was a point later on when I was up in
18 Vietnam, I mean on Vandergrift when I was really going back and forth and just not
19 sleeping, I couldn't have functioned without it. There was a point where I think I was up
20 there three days.

21 LC: And you, can you describe for somebody who doesn't know the situation up
22 there why you were in such a way that you were not getting sleep at all. I mean, was it
23 the amount of work, was it stress of the situation you were in or all of that?

24 JC: It was a combination of all of it, because this is going, I'll get up to that, the
25 original question where, in Phu Bai, I had a very short distance I was driving from Camp
26 Eagle, a very short mail run, very, and twice a week I had to go down to Da Nang which
27 is where we would get sniper fire occasionally, but it was a lot, it wasn't as dangerous
28 and it was much more, but when we up to Camp Ea—the firebase.

29 LC: Vandergrift.

1 JC: Vandergrift, yeah, and I was going across Highway 9 to an area called the
2 rock pile and down through Hue and down through Hue I was going to areas that were, I
3 was driving through every morning when they were still hand-spraying Agent Orange.

4 LC: Did you say hand spraying?

5 JC: Yeah, they used the hand-sprayer on the side of the road about the side of, the
6 areas along the rock pile and coming up from the firebase.

7 LC: Yeah.

8 JC: It was the last year that they did it, at least that's what they claim and the—
9 and in through the rock piles and the land mines and every day was a different driver and
10 by this time, I was adamant, I did not want to know any of the drivers, just didn't want to
11 know them. Even if they asked or told me their first name, I would just ignore them, I
12 just did not want to know anybody, I mean I had just crossed that line.

13 LC: Where you didn't want to like invest in knowing them because something
14 might happen.

15 JC: Yeah, yeah, between seeing drivers shot and seeing a few, the worst ambush I
16 went through was where the truck in front of us, both guys got killed and it was just a
17 matter of seconds that it would have been my truck that hit the land mine.

18 LC: So the incident that you're referring to, the truck that was in front of you did
19 hit a roadside land mine, or in the road.

20 JC: Yeah, and the whole time period when I was doing this, near the end, I would
21 get up in the morning and I would be the first vehicle off the firebase, what they would
22 do is the, every morning they have land mine sweepers go through this area, Highway 9
23 that connects down to Highway 1 and when they got it clear, that it was clear for mines, I
24 would get a go sign and I would go and I would usually have a gun truck behind me with
25 a couple of M-60s on it and when I cleared that section of Highway 9, they would radio
26 back an all clear and then open it up for all traffic.

27 LC: So, I mean, is it fair to say that you were the guinea pig for the first run of the
28 day kind of thing?

29 JC: Yeah.

30 LC: And this was this standard for mail carriers?

31 JC: No, this was just, I demanded it.

1 LC: Why?

2 JC: Because I wanted, I wanted to get out as early as possible in the sun, in
3 daylight because I had to get all the way down to Camp Eagle, Phu Bai and sometimes
4 Da Nang. I had to pick up all kinds of orders and documentation, I was going to forward
5 battalion command headquarters, so I had to connect with battalion headquarters to
6 orders and any written directive with division headquarters and get and then pick up the
7 mail, because I wasn't just the battalion mail clerk, I was a courier too.

8 LC: And so, in the course of one day, you might be all the way from Camp Eagle
9 down to Da Nang?

10 JC: Yeah.

11 LC: And out, how far in-country, how far inland?

12 JC: I honestly don't remember the miles if you, the clicks.

13 LC: Sure, that's okay.

14 JC: But it was, it can be done expediently and just doing what I had to do and not
15 hanging around and then I could get back before dark.

16 LC: But you had to get up early to do it?

17 JC: Right, because the thing is, under no circumstances did I want to be out in the
18 road once the sun set and the second part of it is, after doing all that, you know once that
19 driver got me back, he was done for the day, but I actually had that, I actually had a
20 whole other job I had to do. When I got back, I had to get all the line company mail
21 clerks to come and pick up their mail, drop off the outgoing mail for the next day and we
22 had several, you know several companies. I had to, any kind of paperwork involving you
23 know, folding mail and people that would, I actually had a rubber stamp that said
24 deceased on it, that when I got mail for soldiers that were deceased, I would have to
25 stamp it deceased and send it back.

26 LC: How did you find, what list were you working from, how did you get an
27 official or updated list of who could no longer receive their mail because they'd been
28 killed?

29 JC: I would have to get a daily report from every company mail clerk and that was
30 the other side of it, where, when the companies had casualties, I had to go as the battalion

1 mail clerk go with the company mail clerk and insure that all the persons belongings were
2 packaged.

3 LC: You personally had to?

4 JC: Yeah. It should have been a lieutenant, but I got caught up in doing it because
5 we didn't have an executive, you know, officer for—

6 LC: Yeah, you mentioned that there was no XO for these kinds of duties.

7 JC: Yeah, and that's who should have been doing it, you know, that part of it. So
8 I, you know, I, at a point in this was literally, from the morning going out and back and
9 then mostly when I got back I still had all these other duties and then would have to have
10 everything set to go in the morning and then if you had to it that we were constantly
11 getting rocket attacks and ground attacks at night.

12 LC: Was, this was in Camp Eagle still?

13 JC: This is all in Vandergrift. This is why I'm saying there's a huge difference.
14 On Camp Eagle, we would occasionally get, you know, isolated rocket attacks, but I
15 don't think we did, had any ground attacks while I was on Eagle.

16 LC: What kind of a base was Vandergrift, was it a fire support base?

17 JC: Yeah, it was what they call a fire support base, it really, there was just a whole
18 chain of them along the Laotian border and this was going to the end of February, March
19 and April of '71 when you had the Operation Lam Son 719 which was the invasion into
20 Laos, this is what the operation—

21 LC: Some of those operations were moving out from Vandergrift.

22 JC: Right, what it was was the, all the United States Army had up there was
23 support units, all the combat units were ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) which
24 was the whole concept of the separation. It's all along the Laotian border, there were
25 these support fire bases, the best known one was Mary Ann which is the one that got
26 overran, but they were just a whole chain and the, the Thirty-ninth Transportation
27 Battalion was, it's assignment was the supply, we were the transportation link to all these
28 bases.

29 LC: Vandergrift was?

30 JC: Well the whole—

31 LC: Your unit.

1 JC: Our battalion, that was their function as a transportation battalion and this is
2 why we were right along the Laotian border, because we were, any supplies that were
3 coming in by truck, you know, we were bringing in.

4 LC: So, was Highway 9 the principal route up there or were, had other roads been
5 cut?

6 JC: That was the only road, you had Highway 1 which literally ran from Saigon
7 up to Hanoi, which was an ancient old road that just went straight up through the city of
8 Hue and once you got up to Hue, there was this other highway called Highway 9 that cut
9 through, I guess it would be west inland and that just eventually would go right into Laos,
10 into Laos.

11 LC: And it's up near Khe Sanh and so on?

12 JC: Yeah, if you, Khe Sanh and Camp Carroll, have you ever heard of Camp
13 Carroll?

14 LC: Carroll, C-a-r-r-o-l-l?

15 JC: Yeah.

16 LC: Yes.

17 JC: When the Marines were in Khe Sanh in '68, Camp Carroll was the base just
18 southeast of Khe Sanh, Vandergrift was Camp Carroll.

19 LC: Oh, I didn't know that.

20 JC: Yeah, they reopened it and they renamed it.

21 LC: But same location, okay, wow.

22 JC: They had sent, what they did is what the, when they started Operation 719,
23 there's actually a fairly decent book out about the operation called Lam Son 719, Ken
24 something Knowles.

25 LC: Nolan?

26 JC: Yeah.

27 LC: N-o-a, N-o-l-a-n, yeah, Keith Nolan, Keith Nolan I think, uh-huh.

28 JC: Yeah, he wrote that and there's some stuff about me in that book, you'd have
29 to go buy my, the name I served under, John Joseph Carney.

30 LC: You're actually mentioned in the text?

31 JC: Yeah, he, we did some interviews.

1 LC: Okay, do you know what happened to those interviews, Janice, do you know
2 where they are or he still has them?

3 JC: He, if he, I don't know if he recorded them or not, they were all done over the
4 phone.

5 LC: Okay.

6 JC: But, if you have any contact with him or, I don't even know if the book is still
7 in print or not anymore. I looked for it—

8 LC: I'm pretty sure we have some copies here.

9 JC: Yeah, it was that Presidio, Presidio Press.

10 LC: How did he find you to interview you? I mean that's really interesting that he
11 spoke with you.

12 JC: I think it was through, he just got my number from the service, he'd done a
13 lot, a lot of research and he, my name had just come up as a, as a—(Laughing)

14 LC: Somebody who was around.

15 JC: Yeah, somebody who was a little over the edge. There's a book, oh, there's a
16 line in the book where he was talking about me, you know, on the verge of a breakdown
17 and he described me as being too sensitive to deal with it.

18 LC: Is that, is that essentially accurate?

19 JC: Yeah, it's accurate, but at the time, when the book came out, I was extremely
20 upset.

21 LC: Did you call him?

22 JC: Oh yeah.

23 LC: And let him know?

24 JC: Yeah, but he just kind of said that's how he saw it and years later, I'd just had
25 a lot of therapy and I can now agree with him, but I kind of took that as an insult to my,
26 my manhood back when I had a manhood.

27 LC: And those days are gone now.

28 JC: Those days are gone, but today—you can be a sensitive man too.

29 LC: Yeah, that's true, that whole thing has shifted, but you've done your own
30 transitioning, right.

1 JC: I forgot where I was going with this, but he, I really was amazed the first time
2 he called me.

3 LC: I'm sure you were.

4 JC: And he said that he'd got my name from somebody, he mentioned somebody
5 and I ended up sending him a bunch of pictures and we talked about a dozen times over
6 the course of the year.

7 LC: Wow, wow.

8 JC: I think he was out of Montana, anyway, but it was interesting at the time,
9 because, I'm trying think, where was I? Yeah I was just starting in the veterans program
10 and having a lot of, you know, a lot of issues.

11 LC: Roughly, when would this have been? In the eighties sometime?

12 JC: Yeah, early to middle eighties.

13 LC: Did, actually, did talking to him kind of help you at all, did it crystallize what
14 you'd been to and make you focus on it, or—?

15 JC: Yeah, it was kind of like therapy at the time, because he was following it
16 through and the different people that he had talked to and he had actually talked to
17 Colonel Ellis, who I think was retired at that time and that kind of cracked me up, I was
18 trying to get him to give me the colonel's address so I could go harass him. Where's he
19 these days, I'd like to continue—anyway, no, but it was, it kind of, I don't know how to
20 put it, it helped me at the time struggling with if it was all worthwhile, if what I had done
21 was worth it, he, especially when the book came out, it kind of, I can't get, I'm at a lost
22 for the actual words to describe it, that, it made me feel that I was part of something and
23 it was an attempt to finally do something and that people did, people did respect me. The
24 fact that other people, whatever levels they were in the unit, they'd have enough respect
25 to say, "Well, you should call this person."

26 LC: Yeah, on some level, actually on a number of levels, I can see it might have
27 been validating.

28 JC: Yeah, because I always, I just always felt slighted in a lot of ways, when you
29 get into that macho stuff, you know, with the wars and stuff, that I, the level of what, you
30 know, what I did, I just thought I never really got any recognition for it.

1 LC: Well and this is, this was from everything you've said, a very high risk
2 position, that I think people, perhaps when they hear the word mail clerk, don't have any
3 clue about what the reality for you in that position was. Because you've mentioned that
4 you were both a mail clerk and a courier, so this was time-sensitive stuff that had to move
5 in a pretty risky environment and you mentioned the land mines, let me ask you a little bit
6 more about that, and Janice, if you don't want to discuss this, that's fine. There were two
7 men who were killed in the truck in front of you; can you tell me anything more about
8 that incident?

9 JC: Well—

10 LC: Was it early in the morning?

11 JC: Yeah, it was early in the morning, we were actually going to the section called
12 the rock pile and the truck, I don't know how it got on the road, it was unauthorized, it
13 was coming from the opposite direction, from Hue.

14 LC: Okay.

15 JC: And there should, there should have been nobody cleared until I had gotten
16 down through the section on the other side of the rock pile, where the mine sweepers
17 ended, a checkpoint. There shouldn't have been nobody on that road but me until I
18 cleared that checkpoint.

19 LC: Yet you saw this truck coming at, coming toward you, oncoming.

20 JC: Right, yeah.

21 LC: What kind of a truck was it?

22 JC: It was a deuce and a half and I was my usual laidback self and just kind of
23 sitting there stoned.

24 LC: You were stoned?

25 JC: Yeah, I think so. I had, you know, my M-16 and I had my camera, and I got,
26 it's one of the pictures I have somewhere, I took a picture, because I saw the, and as we
27 were going around the corner, we heard like an explosion and just as we came around the
28 curve, the truck was in front of us all in flames and I took one picture where you could
29 see the star on my truck and the truck in flames with both of the doors off and I still have
30 that picture somewhere, besides in my mind.

31 LC: Yeah, I'm sure that it's there anytime you go to look for it.

1 JC: And the driver and the shotgun were both just blown over the side of the road
2 with their arms and legs blown off. The impact must have been right under the hood
3 when it went off, literally. We, we pulled over and the driver immediately was much
4 more efficient than I was, he had the sense to get out of the truck and get over by the side
5 of the road, in case of sniper fire or—because we didn't know, we didn't actually know if
6 it was an RPG (Rocket-Propelled Grenade), it could have been a rocket or, even if it was
7 a land mine that could have been, I forgot what you call them, I forgot what they call
8 them, the ones that they set off with a switch.

9 LC: Yeah, with a remote.

10 JC: The Claymore, we didn't even know if that was it, because we.

11 LC: Yeah, you had no way of knowing.

12 JC: Yeah, there very easily could have been a small contingent, and we were up in
13 the heavy area where NVA (North Vietnamese Army).

14 LC: Yes.

15 JC: And he got over, you know, real quick, out of the truck and over by the side
16 of the road, with, you know, and got his head down. But I was just sitting in the truck
17 crying, I'm not sure how long. I just completely lost it and all I remember is all the
18 sudden hearing helicopters with a Medevac coming in and then by that time, they had
19 dropped off the, some combat units and ARVNs and they were just, there was screaming
20 everywhere and somebody just, you know, told me to get the truck going and get going
21 and the driver came back. We ended up going down and finishing what we were
22 supposed to do.

23 LC: You did finish.

24 JC: Yeah.

25 LC: So you continued on.

26 JC: Yeah, but it was after that that I just, I just never was the same after that.

27 LC: About, about when did this happen in your tour? Any, any idea?

28 JC: This would have been, I'm trying to think.

29 LC: In the spring of '71 or something?

30 JC: March, yeah, because it was after—I turned 21 in Vietnam and that was, we
31 were still in Camp Eagle and it happened in, in March when we were, I'm not sure

1 exactly, but that's, I think the reference that Ken Nolan used in the book, he just called
2 me flaky.

3 LC: He called you that in the book?

4 JC: Yeah, yeah.

5 LC: That's a bit unkind.

6 JC: Yeah, well probably true. (Laughing) But he, I think flaky and how, it's just
7 like a couple of paragraphs, but he describes how I was losing it and I think actually
8 somebody else had told him about that incident, I don't know if he had talked to the guy
9 that actually drove the truck or not, because I don't remember who exactly was driving.

10 LC: Right, right.

11 JC: But he just, after that I just was, I started doing more drugs and I was crying
12 all the time, it was, I was still functioning and doing the job and that's all anybody cared
13 about, but I think under any other circumstances I should have been pulled off it. She's
14 not all there, anyway

15 LC: Well, the company mail clerks that you worked with, just to change gears a
16 little bit, did those guys come to, did you come to sort of have a, any kind of good
17 relationships with those guys? You would, these are people you would see presumably
18 every day or so.

19 JC: I never really got close to any of them, because I would always seem them,
20 you know, for short periods, you know, getting their mails and even the company mail
21 clerks were constantly being replaced.

22 LC: Really?

23 JC: Yeah, the company mail clerks weren't required to take the postal test.

24 LC: They were not, right.

25 JC: No, because they, they weren't qualified to pick up mail from the Army Post
26 Office.

27 LC: Only, only you could do that.

28 JC: Right. They would bounce clerks around and if they needed, you know, if
29 they needed more truck drivers, it was pretty much the people that they would give the,
30 any of these clerk jobs were people that for some reason couldn't drive trucks, be it for
31 physical or you know—

1 LC: But command could swap them in and out of the company clerk, mail clerk
2 position with no, there were no restrictions on that?

3 JC: No.

4 LC: Okay, so you wouldn't, you wouldn't in fact then really always be seeing the
5 same guys, you, there might be somebody for a week and then somebody else.

6 JC: Yeah, that's, yeah, it was kind of, it would change and, and even with the
7 rotations, you know, with people leaving, where everybody was on a different, "I'm out
8 of here," schedule.

9 LC: Yeah, how would, how disruptive was, was that? I mean was that something
10 you think probably shouldn't have been done?

11 JC: Yeah, that is with, without doubt the dumbest and biggest, at all kinds, all
12 kinds of levels. There just never was any real unit coercion.

13 LC: No cohesion.

14 JC: Cohesion, right, isn't that what I said?

15 LC: I think you said coercion; there probably was some of that.

16 JC: Yeah.

17 LC: But yeah, I get what you mean, that people couldn't hang together because
18 they were, everybody was moving at a different speed in a way.

19 JC: Yeah, they were, I mean, people that, you know, people that, newbies or
20 people that were shot, the—it was in a way, in a way, especially at, I think it was, the real
21 hard is for the real, you know the combat infantry, infantry men. I mean if you, you're
22 sitting with a friend and he gets shot in the head and you, and all you see is the dust off
23 come in and them pulling out a body bag, take your friend, put him in the body bag and
24 just fly off. They didn't, you know, another plane, you know, another helicopter come in
25 with a new guy and you were supposed to just say, "Hi, my name's Ted," and just go on
26 like nothing happened. But I, it's beyond anything and it's—

27 LC: Do you think, sometimes, Janice about how things were different in other
28 wars, especially of course World War II, where units went over, there was no kind of end
29 date to service, but—

30 JC: What I was, that's part of what I was saying, you know, previously, with the
31 concept of World War II, they were going through France, they were going to go through

1 any country in the way to get to Germany, but yet, yet in Vietnam we were not going to
2 cross this line, or we weren't going to go into that country and the whole thing of World
3 War II, all these units that were trained together and all these divisions that stayed
4 together and you were going to stay together, the goal was to defeat Hitler and you were
5 going to go home when you defeated Hitler.

6 LC: Right, there was, yeah.

7 JC: Or, you know, Mussolini or if you were in the islands with Japan, there was a
8 set, there was a conclusion.

9 LC: A goal.

10 JC: A goal, yeah, and you were going to stay together win or lose.

11 LC: And from what you're describing, the dynamic in Vietnam was just
12 completely different in terms of relationships among the guys that were there.

13 JC: Yeah, yeah, you know, in Vietnam, and it got worse and worse as it went on,
14 from 1959, I think it was the first soldier killed.

15 LC: Yes.

16 JC: The advisor. So you're going from, literally from '59 to '75, would have been
17 when the last was killed, I think, you know, what year General John Vann was killed?

18 LC: General John—?

19 JC: John Vann?

20 LC: Oh, '72, early '72 maybe?

21 JC: Was it '72, so it must go beyond that, with the fall of Saigon, I don't know
22 who.

23 LC: Yeah, yeah, I can't remember immediately right now, I, out of interest I—

24 JC: He was kind of a crazy guy, but he was one of my heroes.

25 LC: How did he, how did you come to know about him?

26 JC: I know some people that had served under him, told me quite a lot about him.

27 LC: Oh, is that right?

28 JC: Yeah, and I read *A Bright Shining Lie* which I think is probably the best book
29 ever written about Vietnam.

30 LC: Really?

31 JC: I think *A Bright Shining Lie* I think is the name of it.

1 LC: Yeah, Neil Sheehan.

2 JC: Yeah, he, he had a lot of flaws; he had a weakness for young girls.

3 LC: Yes he did.

4 JC: And he had a little bit of a drinking problem, but as far as being a military
5 leader with ideas and conceptions of what Vietnam was about, he fell with the culture, he
6 fell in love with the people and he really wanted, you know a democracy there and he
7 wanted the Vietnamese Army to win it. I didn't meet too many officers like that.

8 LC: Did you know anything about him when you were in country?

9 JC: When I was in country I knew a little bit about him, I had this sergeant, he
10 was an E-6, I think it was his third tour in Vietnam.

11 LC: Wow.

12 JC: He was a really crazy guy, he was really having a hard time this time,
13 because, I'm not too sure what years his first two tours were, but when he was over there
14 in 1970, it was different.

15 LC: Different than—

16 JC: I got to know him fairly well and he was constantly saying there was none of
17 this drugs, none of this rebellion when he was over in his other two tours.

18 LC: Yeah, earlier on.

19 JC: Yeah, and so much had changed, I mean, I was a classic example; he could
20 not believe some of the stuff I would do.

21 LC: Such as?

22 JC: I mean, I was just, absolutely totally refuse to salute our battalion commander.

23 LC: Right, and that.

24 JC: And just could not believe I had the, I'll use a good word, gumption to do
25 that.

26 LC: You had so many choices there.

27 JC: Yeah, but I used, yeah—

28 LC: Right.

29 JC: I had the ovaries, no, I mean, I, but even he changed, I don't know, I'm pretty
30 sure that he, after that tour, his mind was made up to get out of the service and he had a
31 lot of years invested.

1 LC: And you think that was because of this kind of deteriorating—
2 JC: Yeah, to him the whole, you know, the whole army had deteriorated. There
3 were all these special offices; there was all this open rebellion.
4 LC: You told us some about the race issues.
5 JC: Yeah the race issues going on.
6 LC: Right.
7 JC: It was just, it was just, everything, everything was just totally out of control.
8 LC: Along that line, did you hear of or know about any fragging incidents or was
9 that kind of stuff even talked about?
10 JC: Do you mind shutting off for one second please?
11 LC: Sure.
12 LC: Janice, I was asking whether you had any inkling about fragging incidents or
13 talk of doing that, and we were talking about like loose discipline and all of that and how
14 things were deteriorating and of course there have been reports about this and I just
15 wondered if anything like that ever passed by you?
16 JC: I did nothing.
17 LC: No, I know you probably didn't.
18 JC: I did absolutely nothing, I heard rumors from, from the first I could, once
19 again, I hate laughing, but looking back on it, that first week whenever I was in Vietnam
20 when I was with the Triple Sixth Transportation Company, that lovely first sergeant that I
21 talked about.
22 LC: Yes.
23 JC: That was such a loving, caring, man.
24 LC: Yes, he seemed to be, yes.
25 JC: He was the, I think it was the second or third night, they had this big outside
26 area where had the NCO club, enlisted men's club where you could get beer and wine.
27 LC: Sure.
28 JC: And they showed outside movies on, you know, like a wooden screen and
29 they had all these, like wooden stools that went down hill, kind of, and I was sitting there
30 watching something, I don't remember, and all the sudden we hear this loud explosion up
31 at the top in one of the hooches and everybody gets up and they're all cheering and you

1 know, so what the hell's going on? And the guy sitting next to me goes, "Oh, they just
2 blew up the top's hooch again, I hope they got him this time."

3 LC: Really?

4 JC: And literally, somebody had thrown a frag at it, and I guess, and he, I guess
5 he had been around enough to know that the one place he never slept was in his hooch,
6 who knows where he slept. But he and he ended up actually, when he was, when his unit
7 was up on one of the firebases, somebody fragged him and he lost both of his legs.

8 LC: And you, did you hear about that when you were in-country then?

9 JC: Yeah, because I had to know because, you know, I'd seen the list of names of
10 the medical records in our unit and from the companies had their list of mail that was
11 being forwarded, you know, once people were Medevaced, so I would have a list of
12 names.

13 LC: To forward to whatever hospital in country or beyond.

14 JC: Yeah, yeah. Because they had their records, but as the battalion mail clerk, I
15 had to have a copy of all their records.

16 LC: Got it.

17 JC: So it was kind of like, some kind of like a back up system.

18 LC: Right.

19 JC: And I heard, you know, when I saw that one, I asked what had happened to
20 him, and it was kind of fifty-fifty, "Did Charlie get him or was it one of us?"

21 LC: Oh my gosh. So he was pretty much universally not liked.

22 JC: Yeah, pretty much the way he treated me was the way he treated everybody.

23 LC: It sounds like it, when everybody was laughing when the explosion went off,
24 all had already known, you know, what that meant. That's really diagnostic of what was
25 going.

26 JC: Yeah and that was, once again, this was 1970 and we had openly discussed, in
27 fact I had a tape that I, I left it at the war memorial quite a number of years ago, we used
28 to, when I was on Camp Eagle, I used to hang out in the communication bunker and we
29 had one of those old reel to reels that was constantly playing music and sometimes you
30 could dub over it and they would tape conversations going on and we were in there one

1 night talking about different ways of getting rid of Ace. We all were pretty stoned
2 anyway.

3 LC: Right.

4 JC: We were talking about; we were talking about wiring a Claymore to his
5 phone.

6 LC: Oh shit.

7 JC: And when he picked up the phones, I said, “My office is like next to his, don’t
8 do that.”

9 LC: Yeah, no, don’t do that.

10 JC: That’s not good; make sure I’m not in there. But it was that blatant and he
11 used to kid about on the night convoys, if he actually, if he was in, sometimes he would
12 ride in the command vehicle and he used to always have stories that if they thought he
13 was in the command vehicle they’d be shooting at the command vehicle at any hour.

14 LC: So you weren’t the only one who thought that Ace was kind of a—?

15 JC: Yeah, he was not well liked on the whole as the battalion commander.

16 LC: Well let me ask you about other, other people who, other Americans who
17 might not have been very well liked. Did you see any kind of harassment of gay men or
18 men who appeared to be gay or were thought to be gay, or yourself? I mean, was there
19 that kind of stuff going on too? And if this is tough you don’t have to.

20 JC: It was, it was going on and it’s hard to explain, when I was on Camp Eagle, I
21 was right next to a dust-off unit and it wasn’t as bad because half, half the male nurses or
22 medics were you know, were pretty gay, there were a couple of them that were really
23 flamboyant.

24 LC: Flamboyant like, like really apparent, obvious.

25 JC: Yeah, there was this one black guy, I actually got a kick out of, I don’t know
26 how he managed to do it, but he had perfectly, perfect nails and he painted them.

27 LC: Really?

28 JC: Yeah, and he, but he was going, he was going out on the dust-off jobs and you
29 don’t, you can hate anybody for any reason, but nobody in combat is going to screw
30 around with a medic that’s going out on dust-off calls or any sort of medic.

1 LC: No, I mean, yeah, they love those guys, they loved them beyond love really,
2 they—

3 JC: Yeah, and that was what I had been trained for and so I kind of, on that side
4 you didn't, but in the environment in the transportation unit, it was just like in basic
5 training, you'd always hear comments, you know, fucking fags, this or that and but
6 always, you know, always try and be as macho as you can.

7 LC: That's what you were trying to do?

8 JC: Yeah, and just—

9 LC: And Janice, was that like a way of coping with being in the situation and
10 trying to not have everybody looking at you or was it, was it something that you were
11 also just trying to do for yourself? Do you, can you talk about any of that?

12 JC: I can only talk on this subject about, you know, my experiences.

13 LC: Yes, absolutely

14 JC: Because I don't know what it would have been like if I was actually out in an
15 infantry unit. That intimate, because if I was that close with a bunch of guys, I think they
16 would have picked up on things about me and I would have been very nervous and there
17 were guys in that position.

18 LC: Yes, yes there were.

19 JC: But, and even, even the period of time when I was at the hooch with all of
20 those truck drivers, I was just petrified that somebody would pick up something about my
21 characteristics or something that something bad might have happened to me. But I, when
22 I got transferred over to the headquarters company, in that environment, you know,
23 especially with dealing with warrant officers and other specialists in these fields, I think
24 at least two, at least two of the people I was dealing with every day, I was pretty sure they
25 were gay. One guy, we used to joke about, I don't know how this guy would do it, this
26 guy was just so, so gay, he always, everyday would have on a perfectly, perfectly pressed
27 without a wrinkle in it pair of dress greens, the camouflage greens.

28 LC: That's just unbelievable, I mean—

29 JC: I mean, this guy had an iron and he had starch.

30 LC: I can't imagine how that could even be managed, how that could even
31 possible.

1 JC: This is all in Camp Eagle, we couldn't have done it on the firebase and he,
2 hair perfectly combed, a perfectly thin, little trimmed blond mustache. It's stereotyping
3 but you know, I believe in my gaydar.

4 LC: And that's what you saw and this is what actually, you know was, what you
5 experienced, what you saw.

6 JC: Yeah, and he took, actually a lot of harassment but it was on, it was kind of
7 more on a friendlier level because it was on a situation where it was like working, you
8 know, it was just working in an office, you know, with the other officers, I don't know
9 exactly even what his title was, he was a warrant officer. And then there was, my friend,
10 Jay, these are the probably, two of the people that I shared my hooch with, there were like
11 four people in a hooch and actually, maybe, we could have, I never thought of this before,
12 they kind of had us all together. (Laughing)

13 LC: Makes you wonder doesn't it.

14 JC: That's the first time this has ever hit me.

15 LC: That's interesting, so, and Jay was, was he a warrant officer too?

16 JC: He was a spec-4 like me.

17 LC: Okay.

18 JC: But he, he was another that was just immaculate, and usually he'd copy his
19 *Gentleman's Quarterly* in the mail.

20 LC: Really.

21 JC: We used to dine together, I had a couple of little hot plates and stuff, we
22 would take turns cooking, I think a lot of people thought we were the *Odd Couple* before
23 the *Odd Couple* existed. But neither one, I mean it was like, I don't think none of us
24 ever, ever asked the other one or ever even, you know, approached if you were gay or I
25 was gay.

26 LC: Right.

27 JC: Because it just was too, scary or the thought of crossing that line, everybody,
28 there was a lot of psychological shit I think.

29 LC: And fear?

30 JC: Yeah, and fear.

31 LC: And all that goes with that.

1 JC: Yeah, but Jay was really the one I was close to, he was the one I learned a lot
2 about Colonel Ace, because he was the colonel's assistant. He was the one that used to
3 tell me, because they would come in at all these weird hours in the night to wake him up,
4 that the colonel was having these meetings and they wanted him to do, to make all these
5 charts and stuff, that's how I knew a lot about what was going on.

6 LC: Oh, okay.

7 JC: With all these figures and everything and even he couldn't stand it either, he,
8 all he, all he did was make the charts and you know, kind of stand there.

9 LC: Where was he from?

10 JC: He was from Philadelphia. Julius Hangele, I wish I had known how to spell
11 his name, he was Greek.

12 LC: How do you say it?

13 JC: Hangele, it began with an h.

14 LC: Hangele.

15 JC: Hagele was how he used to pronounce it. Julius and I used to, you know, he'd
16 just go by Jay.

17 LC: Yeah, and your, and your kind of persona that you were putting out there was
18 trying to be tough, well maybe not tough, but kind of macho.

19 JC: A typical, a typical guy when I was in that environment with the truck drivers,
20 but in that, you know, that small environment, especially when I dealing, any direct
21 contact I had with the colonel, that was, I was putting on this, you know, real hard
22 persona that, "You think you scare me?"

23 LC: Right, but with, with the guys in the hooch that you were more comfortable
24 with, could you let that down a little?

25 JC: Oh yeah, totally, I mean it was a whole, a whole different person, really at
26 times. I mean I was always, like I said, I had these two hot plates and I would get what
27 stuff I could get from the PX or, I would always get food, the food packages from home,
28 I would always ask them to just send me, you know, cans of spaghetti sauce, or, you
29 know, spaghetti. I was always cooking these spaghetti, you know, spaghetti dinners,
30 because all you had to do was boil water and with a pre-cooked sauce, just warm it up.

31 LC: Sure.

1 JC: We'd sit around, you know, and we'd get wine, we'd just sit around and drink
2 wine, we had two real glasses and chat, and talk about things besides the war, pretend we
3 were somewhere else.

4 LC: Right.

5 JC: It was different, I really—

6 LC: You could be more who you kind of were internally.

7 JC: Yes.

8 LC: You could let more of that out.

9 JC: Yeah, just at the time, there was just something, something feminine about
10 cooking a meal for a man and having a glass of wine. It just kind of, you know, going
11 back to this time too, I honestly didn't even know what I was, with all the gender issues,
12 I mean this in on a more, on a personal level. I honestly didn't know, I mean, I was
13 sexually attracted to women but I just was so more inclined that I was a woman and I was
14 trying, and I thought the only answer to it was that I was gay and I better deal with it.

15 LC: And that seemed to be like the only available option?

16 JC: Yeah.

17 LC: I mean I'm sure, you had no, how would you have information about
18 anything else?

19 JC: Yeah, back in, you know, yeah.

20 LC: Back in the old days.

21 JC: Really wasn't, really until the late 70s and 80s when a lot of, with the internet,
22 a lot of stuff about gender issues came out and there was a lot more information. But
23 that, I remember we got into this habit, when we were on Camp Eagle, one of the first
24 rocket attacks we had, when I was there, whenever we'd get, you know sirens went off,
25 you'd have to go out and go in these bunkers and the first time I went in, I just came
26 running right out and everyone was looking at me and I said, "There's a rat in there!"
27 And there was this big huge rat. Their all looking at me like I was totally out of my trees.
28 "What the hell, what's up with that?" I don't think they used that expression back then,
29 but it had something.

30 LC: Right, right.

1 JC: I ended up, whenever they and Jay kind of caught on with me, whenever the
2 sirens went off and everybody was grabbing, you know, their helmets and their jackets
3 and running for the bunkers, we would get up and go in and pour a glass of wine and just
4 sit in the hooch.

5 LC: Did you?

6 JC: Yeah, and we would say “Hey, you know, we’ll have a toast, if it’s a direct
7 hit, goodbye.”

8 LC: I mean that’s, that’s really going to be hard for people to kind of picture, I
9 mean, was that defiance, was that kind of fatalism, was that, “To hell with this?” All of
10 that stuff?

11 JC: Combined with all of that, I mean, I was not going to go crawl in a whole with
12 rats, I just was not. The odds of, I mean, the odds of a direct hit on the bunker killing
13 everybody or the odds of a direct hits in the hooch killing us were probably about the
14 same.

15 LC: So, let me ask you about this, the wine that you got, how easy was it to get?

16 JC: Oh, very easy, on, it was harder when we up north, but on Camp Eagle there
17 was a big PX in Phu Bai.

18 LC: Could you get just as much as you wanted?

19 JC: Yeah.

20 LC: No limits?

21 JC: Well, not really, there was supposed have been but they really, there was, I’m
22 trying to think back, they had some kind of control on hard liquor.

23 LC: But beer and wine—

24 JC: Yeah, beer and wine was just pretty—

25 LC: Where was the wine from? Any idea? Was it American?

26 JC: Yeah, predominantly, you know the basic California wine.

27 LC: Oh, okay.

28 JC: There was a little more, but it was just basically your basic, you know, cheap
29 wines and domestic beer.

30 LC: So, red or white?

31 JC: Depends, red with Italian.

1 LC: Okay, so there was some rules that were in place?
2 JC: Yeah, you never had white wine with Italian food.
3 LC: Okay, good enough.
4 JC: I try to tell that to people, I still do.
5 LC: Good enough, I'm with you. You mentioned when we talked yesterday
6 Janice that I should ask you about the holidays and especially about Thanksgiving. Do
7 you remember what you were thinking of?
8 JC: Well, Thanksgiving, I remember was kind of—
9 LC: Thanksgiving dinner I think.
10 JC: Kind of, I remember because I got into, I crashed, I crashed a party, they were
11 trying to figure out what was going on at the lieutenant, at the commander's big hooch.
12 Thanksgiving he was, I think it was the night before Thanksgiving, actually, there was
13 some kind of big party going on and a lot of stuff was brought in and he had air-
14 conditioning too.
15 LC: Yeah, okay.
16 JC: We were just going to have, you know, the typical canned turkey and some
17 instant potatoes on paper plates.
18 LC: Sure.
19 JC: The usual big—and I think, I don't know what possessed me, but for some
20 reason I went up and knocked on his door and the sergeant major answered and I could
21 see they were all sitting in there and they were drinking in fancy glasses and I just saw a
22 big table set up, you know, with china and I just kind of got pissed off (laughs) and I just
23 crashed my way in and got into an argument with the sergeant major and I just kind of
24 started screaming that this just ain't right when everybody else is eating out of paper
25 plates and just having this and you guys, our so-called leaders are having cocktails on
26 china and I don't really remember what I said, but I really got—and they ended up
27 dragging me out. I got into a big discussion with the sergeant major over it and I said
28 especially with him, that he shouldn't have even been in there if, you know, all these
29 officers that are supposed to be. You know the concept of a sergeant major?
30 LC: Go ahead and explain for other people who might not.

1 JC: He is the highest-ranking enlisted man or the NCO in the unit, that's the
2 highest rank you can reach and at least one sergeant major of the Army one, which is the
3 absolute highest rank you could reach as a non-commissioned officer. At that level, you
4 are representing your enlisted men and your NCOs and you, for him, instead of being out
5 with us somewhere eating at the mess hall on paper plates, for him to have been in an air-
6 conditioned hooch with all of these officers eating out of china, I just took it as some kind
7 of betrayal of his position. I don't think I articulated that well at the time, but—

8 LC: But you felt he personally should not have been there?

9 JC: Yeah. It was more, in that, it was more personal between the two of us.

10 LC: What, what penalty did you have to pay for having spoken your mind?
11 Anything?

12 JC: Not, he didn't do nothing to me, which was—

13 LC: That's interesting.

14 JC: It is, to this day, I thought sure I was going to, I finally—

15 LC: Oh yeah, I'll bet you were too.

16 JC: I'm sure it was because of the sergeant major that he interceded. It was, that,
17 that and the incidents over the papers earlier and some other stuff, right up to the end
18 when we came back, when we came back from the firebase and we only had a couple of
19 months left, we were in Quang Tri on stand down and we had a ground attack and I was
20 having a barbecue at the time with a couple of friends and we just kept on with our
21 barbecue, just didn't bother going to the bunker or anything and the next day, that was the
22 final one, when he finally decided to go after me.

23 LC: Okay.

24 JC: He said immediately that I was transferred back to our line company and he
25 transferred me back to a line company and he assigned a line company mail clerk as the
26 battalion mail clerk and that lasted forty-eight hours because he really, I don't know, he
27 forgot to check the regulations and when he found out the company mail clerk could not
28 pick up the battalion's mail—

29 LC: Crap.

30 JC: —He wanted me to go pick up the mail and I refused to, I said, "I'm
31 incompetent, I can't do it, I'm too incompetent." He ended up transferring me back and

1 sending the mail clerk back, but they went like three or four days with no mail for the
2 whole battalion.

3 LC: Until he realized that he had to have you.

4 JC: Yeah.

5 LC: I mean this sounds like, I mean this is a war of nerves between you guys for
6 many months, I mean, you know, more than half a year it sounds like.

7 JC: Yeah, pretty much. He rotated before me, I'm trying to remember, when he
8 rotated back, actually it was before then, he, yeah, because they had the big ceremony
9 when he rotated, because could bring in the commander.

10 LC: Right, because of his rank.

11 JC: Yeah, it's so, it's so many years ago, some of the stuff, I have to admit is a
12 little foggy.

13 LC: Well, it's pretty clear to me that this was an on-going struggle but when you
14 were, can you tell me just a little bit about being up at the line company for that day, two
15 day period or whatever? What happened to you, what did you observe? Where were you
16 sent? Any idea?

17 JC: Oh, I was on the same base, it was just over in some other hooches.

18 LC: Oh, okay.

19 JC: I had a much easier job.

20 LC: Which was—?

21 JC: The company mail clerk you just—

22 LC: You just, yeah.

23 JC: You just pretty much got the mail in the morning, had a little paperwork to do,
24 you pretty much just sat around all day, there wasn't a lot of stuff to do.

25 LC: Whereas the battalion clerk, you had all these different responsibilities.

26 JC: Yeah, yeah.

27 LC: You mentioned yesterday very briefly that if any of those mail clerks
28 themselves were killed, you had to take over their duties, did that ever happen?

29 JC: No.

30 LC: Or was I, maybe I misunderstood you.

1 JC: The, I don't know, the, what I had to do on a lot levels was with, when people
2 were killed in the company units, I would have to assist the company mail clerk to make
3 sure that all their valuables were properly packed.

4 LC: What was the protocol for that? I mean did you have to sign a bunch of
5 papers and inventory everything and all that?

6 JC: Yeah, exactly, I was—all their personal belongings had to be accounted for
7 and documented and properly packed and whoever they had listed as their next of kin, the
8 stuff had to have been sent to.

9 LC: Okay.

10 JC: And the commanding officer, the company commanding officer was supposed
11 to, you know, write a letter of condolences and make sure that was sent out.

12 LC: And so you had to handle those letters.

13 JC: Yeah, to make sure it was done that, you know, the company clerks would
14 just say, "Oh yeah, I'll do that tomorrow. I'll get around to it."

15 LC: Did you, how did you process that duty? I mean I would think that would be
16 a very, something I would attach a lot of personal importance to making sure that that
17 actually did get done, but how did you feel about having to do those jobs? I mean that
18 would have been hard, to say the least.

19 JC: I mean, I just reached a point where I was so cold and just so cold and angry
20 at, it just, I was almost like a robot, these things had to be done and I think part of it was
21 as long as I could take all of my frustrations out on the colonel, I was happy. I mean, it,
22 as long I had him for a whipping post, I think I was alright. I don't know if he, he may
23 have been smarter than I thought and figured that out, who knows.

24 LC: And so one way of coping with it would be to try to kind of disconnect from
25 what you had, from what it actually meant and another way would be to kind of, you
26 know, be a screw-up or be a pain in the ass to the higher-ups and make them know that
27 life wasn't easy, all those things together?

28 JC: Yeah, if you put that all together, yeah, I just felt like, you know, it was all
29 worthwhile as long as I was pissing off the battalion commander or somebody, some high
30 ranking officer.

31 LC: So, so your anti-authority stuff was just in full bloom.

1 JC: Yeah, I believe that was pretty much in my records that I was anti-social.

2 LC: Uh-huh, all that.

3 JC: From their view of me.

4 LC: Well Janice, let me ask you about, about the enemy and maybe the enemy
5 was the people who sent there, I'm not sure, but in terms of the Vietnamese, you
6 mentioned in the forms that I asked you to fill out before we did the interview that you
7 were very clear on the difference between the VC and the NVA and especially when you
8 were involved in the Lam Son 719 operation, I mean you were up in what was essentially
9 NVA country, can you offer any observations about the enemy and what you thought
10 about who the United States was actually in conflict with?

11 JC: It's, it, it was all the same, you know, enemy but it was just a different method
12 of fighting. The Viet Cong, you know, the guerillas which were pretty much
13 predominantly South Vietnamese and were farmers and local people that just they pretty
14 much, all they wanted was for the American Army to leave, like the same reason that
15 they wanted the French colonists to leave and they just wanted to be left alone. Their
16 tactics were occasional sniper fire and you know, the land mines or RPGs, it was kind of
17 fighting a different, from a different perspective, but in Quang Tri province and going up
18 north when actually fighting what I call hard core North Vietnamese Army, it was much
19 different, I mean you just in number alone, we were massively outnumbered. At least in
20 the end when they took out our units and sent them home and we were just using the
21 South Vietnamese, the ARVN units, we're talking about hard core experienced army that
22 had been fighting for what they perceived their freedom from communism, this is the
23 same army that defeated France and chased them out.

24 LC: Yes, absolutely.

25 JC: And they, they had been organized mean, fighting machine, you know, from
26 the 50s. So well trained and with a very defined mission and not, and just in massive
27 numbers, they were so dug in up north in the rock pile and their supply lines along the Ho
28 Chi Minh trail were just so well dug in and so fortified that they were just a well, I don't
29 want to sound corny, a well oiled, highly well-trained fighting machine and we for the
30 most part were a bunch of kids out of high school who didn't give a shit, to put it bluntly.

31 LC: Even with our high-tech stuff and our command of the air.

1 JC: Even with our high tech and our high—we were there, the average soldier for
2 365 days and that was it and we were fighting against an army that had been fighting for
3 their freedom since the 19—early 50s.

4 LC: One thing that you mentioned in the paperwork that you filled out that caught
5 my eye was just a brief mention that you made about seeing some Russian, information
6 about Russian tanks, I think you said intelligence pictures, do you remember that? What
7 did you see?

8 JC: When, in the waning days of Lam Son 719, after Mary Ann got overran,
9 which was the firebase not too far from where I was.

10 LC: Mary Ann? Uh-huh.

11 JC: Yes, there was a whole division that just went through that base like it was
12 nothing, just totally wiped it out. The message was—and they completely defeated the
13 South Vietnamese Army, pushing them out of Laos and getting them on the run.

14 LC: Yes.

15 JC: We were getting rocketed every night, ground attacks every night and it was
16 just a question, we knew that we basically were in this valley and all these chain of
17 firebases were completely surrounded, completely, anytime they want to, they could have
18 wiped out this whole chain of firebases. But the message was, “Hey look, you know we
19 can do it, we don’t want to kill no more Americans, just leave.” And this is when the
20 Paris peace talks are going on.

21 LC: Right.

22 JC: And this was kind of, we were nothing but puppets, we were a message, you
23 know, to Kissinger. You know, “Checkmate, you going to surrender or are do you want
24 us to kill the rest of the Americans that are here?” And the average, anybody that was in
25 Vietnam at the time that was really aware of what was going on, you know, with the Paris
26 peace talks, and the whole situation but—anyway, I’m kind of, we were waiting and
27 waiting for orders to leave these firebases and the mission pretty much was over, it was a
28 disaster.

29 LC: Lam Son 719 or more broadly the war?

30 JC: Lam Son 719, I mean, they went in and they destroyed a lot of stuff, but they
31 got pushed back and we, they were not going to bring up any units, what our commanders

1 wanted for them to bring up what was left of the Americal Division, I think Americal
2 Division and the 1st Cav was still in the middle in the south.

3 LC: Yes.

4 JC: If we had brought them up to back the ARVN units and gone into Laos, the
5 operation would have been a complete success, I think we could have fought back the
6 NVA, but they didn't do that. Instead they just let the ARVN units get overwhelmed, and
7 this is all just my personal opinion.

8 LC: Sure.

9 JC: That, and—

10 LC: And this is interesting.

11 JC: We, we just more or less said, "This didn't work, tough shit. We're not going
12 to sacrifice anymore American lives." As far as combat units, but all the support units
13 like I was in, we were just left sitting, sitting ducks in this ploy.

14 LC: Right, with the ARVN pretty much crushed and on the run, the fire support
15 base personnel up on the border area were just sitting ducks.

16 JC: Yeah, and everyday I was coming back and I had all these orders from
17 division and our battalion headquarters and it was well, we've got nothing on the radio,
18 what are we doing, when are we pulling out and I had nothing, no direct orders, but I was
19 a direct link because I was down there everyday and I would get into screaming matches
20 with Colonel Ellis and people would hear it. I mean, I would calling him and saying,
21 well, and I would be down at division to colonels down there saying, "I've got to go
22 back, when in the hell are we pulling out?" And they were saying, "Well we need orders
23 from Saigon." And it was just totally, totally out of control. At some point we just, I
24 think there were rumors going around that we had orders to leave and it, one morning,
25 people just started, on the firebase I was on, they just started bringing in the deuces and
26 the five tons and saying, "We're going back, we're going south." I don't think there was
27 actually any orders given from Saigon. But what happened when we got back, we went
28 back to Quang Tri province, we didn't actually go back to Camp Eagle, throughout, I
29 mean, we went to Quang Tri, no we went back to Phu Bai, we didn't go back on Camp
30 Eagle, but in Phu Bai we had an area where we were put for stand down, all the—our
31 whole battalion.

1 LC: Somewhere near Phu Bai.

2 JC: Yeah, and somewhere along from that point on, I was still going back and
3 forth, we, I was no longer with the forward command post, I was with our battalion
4 headquarters and I was still going down to Da Nang and Phu Bai, which was close, for
5 the mail and somewhere around along this time, I think it was stuff from battalion with
6 something that was going to division and I saw, they had all these pictures of, from , I
7 think they're from one of our warrant officers, our WO or something, I forgot what you
8 call it, it was our battalion, you know, intelligence.

9 LC: Yes, yes.

10 JC: Had taken all of these pictures from the air and you could see, right after we
11 left all of these firebases, we left all kinds of shit up there.

12 LC: Equipment?

13 JC: Yeah, you know, heavy equipment, artillery equipment and stuff and we just
14 saw, they had all of these pictures of them just plowing this road from Laos, they actually
15 created a road with all the bulldozers and they saw all these tanks coming in with these
16 brand new, they looked like they were brand new, they all had the Russian's signals on
17 them, symbols and them and that. And I said, "Wow!" (Laughing) If we had stayed up
18 there, that's how much they had built up, you know, coming across the Laotian border.
19 We never could have stopped any kind of attack like that.

20 LC: So just to clarify, the thought was that some of the heavy equipment or a lot,
21 all of it that had been left, that had been abandoned in the withdrawal had fallen to NVA
22 and they were using it for road construction and making the way for the tanks.

23 JC: Yeah, they had come in literally had taken all of that equipment and were
24 building up and if you follow, you know, after that, it was not, I left July of '71.

25 LC: Right.

26 JC: And I'm not sure how long I was home, five or six months, before all of, they
27 abandoned all of Quang Tri province. Which is falling all the way back to Da Nang and I
28 forgot the other main base. But they gave up, all of the military; everyone just retreated
29 all the way back, not too long after I left. That was all the equipping and eventually
30 became all the staging areas for them to eventually come all the way down to Saigon.

31 LC: Yeah, for the eventual spring offensive.

1 JC: Yeah, when you saw that when they came in with all of those tanks, they
2 literally had all of that equipment from Russia in '71 at that battle of Lam Son.

3 LC: And when you saw those photos and you kind of, you put together what it
4 was you were seeing, I mean, did that take you to a whole new level of kind of despair
5 about the United States was doing or were you already kind of pretty much on the
6 basement floor already?

7 JC: No, that, you know, that really was just another unbelievable and the concept
8 of, I mean tanks is World War II stuff, I mean the concept at that time of, it's something
9 that totally, never, I just could not have envisioned when I was on that firebase if we got
10 attacked, I just could not have pictured having a big ground attack and actually seeing
11 tanks coming at us, you know, Russian tanks.

12 LC: Yeah.

13 JC: I mean, it was beyond my imagination that the—

14 LC: That that was going to be introduced.

15 JC: Yeah, while we were winding down our Vietnamization program and we were
16 kind of falling back, I mean, where the hell was our army intelligence that they, I mean,
17 what would, I mean, did—it carries over to me with, I have some very hard feelings
18 about Henry Kissinger and what was going on with the peace talks and what—

19 LC: How much did you know about it?

20 JC: Why—

21 LC: When it was going on? When you were there.

22 JC: Well I know in the early days that the first six months they were arguing over
23 if they were going to use a round table or a square table.

24 LC: Yes, that's right, that's right.

25 JC: And I thought that was important, that, because I understood, I mean, I know
26 from the beginning where there priorities were at.

27 LC: I mean, some people have gone so far as to say that president, or that, sorry
28 Dr. Kissinger was actually, should be seen as, viewed by history as a basically a war
29 criminal, I mean does that sound right to you?

30 JC: I don't know the war criminal, but he, I think he was a buffoon and a bubbler.
31 A bobbler, a bubbler.

1 LC: Really, do you still think that?

2 JC: Yeah, that he—war criminal is a very strong term.

3 LC: Yes it is.

4 JC: If he should be tried as a war criminal then so should I.

5 LC: Because?

6 JC: I participated in the war.

7 LC: Okay.

8 JC: I followed orders like any other good Nazi. I mean if you want to, I mean you
9 get into the Nuremberg Trials it's very, it gets very heavy and complicated.

10 LC: Yes, it is very complicated.

11 JC: Who, you know, at what level—do you just trial the generals, are the generals
12 just war criminals, all officers, where do you draw the line? And it is, it's very hard, but
13 Kissinger as a diplomat was a complete, complete, complete buffoon.

14 LC: Do you think he was out of his league with dealing with the Vietnamese and
15 the Chinese?

16 JC: Yeah, I think they ate him up and spit him out.

17 LC: Wow, he would spin if he knew anyone in America thought that about him,
18 because you know, he's worked very hard to brush up his image over all of these years.

19 JC: Yeah, well too bad.

20 LC: I thought that probably would have zero affect.

21 JC: Yeah, I mean he, I still cringe every time I see him on any news program,
22 where they look at him as a respected diplomat or whatever they want to call him, you
23 know.

24 LC: Elder statesman.

25 JC: Elder statesman, didn't he surrender, pretty much. I mean that's totally what I
26 call the, I call the Paris Peace Accords a surrender. He did everything but take his sword
27 off and put it on the table.

28 LC: And what about the position of the South Vietnamese government in those
29 negotiations? I mean of course, as you know, Kissinger talked directly with Hanoi and
30 sort of left South Vietnam out, I mean was that a betrayal of them as well?

1 JC: Oh yeah, it was a total betrayal of the South Vietnamese, what, the one thing
2 that I believed in is that there was a lot of corruption in the South Vietnamese
3 government and that was their own fault and that's what killed them, but a good
4 percentage—and I went to, I was invited to a dinner about six months ago in Tampa,
5 there's a real big population, Vietnamese population down here and they were having a
6 dinner to honor the history of South Vietnam and to honor the South Vietnamese, the
7 Republic of South Vietnam flag. I was invited to this dinner, one of the most moving
8 things I think I—right up there with one of the most moving things in my life. There
9 were all of these, a lot of young people and actually a lot of young people and a lot of old
10 people that had served in the South Vietnamese Army and the, they were trying to keep
11 the history of their country and what they considered their country was the Republic of
12 Vietnam alive and hoped someday that they could win their freedom. It's, you know,
13 that, that was what I saw with some of the people in South Vietnam, I think unfortunately
14 they were, I don't know if they were a minority or maybe they were even, they were just,
15 there was just too much corruption in their government, too much infiltration from people
16 that were, that were, that put unifying their country as a higher priority. I think that's
17 really what ended it all.

18 LC: Did you have much interaction at all over the time you were there with
19 Vietnamese civilians, lets say, who were not involved in the black market, who were not
20 officials but just civilians that you would see along the way, did you have much
21 interaction at all?

22 JC: Only with some of the young women, the hooch maids, as we called them,
23 they used to clean our hooches. There was one that really—I think she, I think she had
24 the hots for me.

25 LC: Really?

26 JC: Yeah, she had something and I just didn't want to go there. She—we talked a
27 lot and she, in fact she told me, I don't know, a couple of weeks before I had any official
28 news that we were going to be going up to the, up north, she told me that she heard from
29 people that there was this big operation and we all were going to be going up north.

30 LC: And when it actually came to pass, what did, what went through your mind?

1 JC: That if she knows, then the NVA know. I mean they were calling this a secret
2 operation. It was no secret operation, they were waiting for us.

3 LC: I mean I would, I wouldn't know whether to laugh or cry, to be honest with
4 you, I mean that's really actually a frightening moment, it must have been frightening.

5 JC: It was, but it just totally, you know, convinced that the—there was all of this
6 suspicion of, you know, the Vietnamese that were working on the base.

7 LC: Yes.

8 JC: Who amongst them were working for the Viet Cong?

9 LC: Right.

10 JC: And we knew some of them were, there was just no way of knowing who was
11 who.

12 LC: You didn't know which, which ones to—

13 JC: Yeah, who to trust or not to trust. I mean I trusted this woman, I mean I just
14 had a strong sense that she cared for me.

15 LC: An intuitive sense.

16 JC: Yeah.

17 LC: On some human level we're talking about.

18 JC: Yeah, you know, strictly on a personal level. I mean she, she just saw me, I
19 don't know, in somebody that really was an enemy or really fighting the war. I was
20 somebody that was either writing journals or reading poetry; I even used to read some
21 poetry to her every now and then.

22 LC: Really?

23 JC: I mean it was a different.

24 LC: Have you given her much thought over the years?

25 JC: Yeah, her and you know, what people, I mean, it's, what you—the whole
26 carry over on and this kind of goes back to what we were talking about Kissinger and
27 him, the way he ended it with, "Okay, just give us time to get all our troops out before
28 you invade Saigon." It was, it was total betrayal. The people, the people that got hurt the
29 most were the people, the people that, the South Vietnamese people that did believe in us
30 that did want a democracy. Those were the people that we left, that we left behind and
31 ended up either murdered or tortured or whatever. I mean, it was a brutal vicious

1 communist regime that moved in and took over that's there today. These people now are
2 just working and working for pennies more or less in slave labor.

3 LC: Right.

4 JC: But you can buy some of the products at K-Mart and Wal-Mart now.

5 LC: You sure can.

6 JC: I don't know if I did, did I tell you that story about when I was working at
7 Ames a few years ago?

8 LC: At where?

9 JC: At Ames Department Store.

10 LC: No.

11 JC: When I was up in southern New Hampshire, this was five years ago, I was in
12 the middle of my transitioning and it was very hard for me to get a part time job because
13 most places don't hire transsexuals.

14 LC: Right.

15 JC: And it was this chain of department stores in New England called Ames that
16 they're out of business now and they were like K-Marts and all that and they hired me
17 putting out stock. This was part time, like three days a week and you come in in the
18 morning and you have a cart load of stuff, some of the stuff you hung up and some you
19 went on shelves and I came in one, one day, it was the first time I ever actually saw it, it
20 was a box, and I'm not sure what was in it, clothing, and it had a big thing on it, you
21 know, imported from the, from Vietnam and I just took the box and the and this little, this
22 cute little feminine woman and took the box and picked it and threw it across the room
23 and said I quit and left. And there were about three or four people in the stock room and
24 they all were just looking at me, they couldn't believe it.

25 LC: And they had no idea.

26 JC: Oh, they were totally clueless. Oh, what the hell, yeah, I mean they all were,
27 "What hit her?" (Laughing) I did, I just walked out and I went home and this woman
28 supervisor that called me and asked, "What happened, did somebody say something to
29 you?" She thought maybe somebody had said something to me with the transgender
30 issue and she wanted to know if anybody was harassing me.

31 LC: That's actually very interesting in its own, in its own terms.

1 JC: Yeah, because she was the one that rooted for them to hire me, to give me the
2 chance, it was a big issue, believe me, they had—they wouldn't let me use the bathrooms.

3 LC: Really?

4 JC: Yeah, I, they wouldn't hire me unless I agreed to, they had one handicapped
5 bathroom that as long as I agreed to stay out of both the men's room and the women's
6 room.

7 LC: And like this all had to be negotiated before they would agree to hire you?

8 JC: Yeah, this is some part time minimum wage job.

9 LC: Okay, wow, this stressed them out in a big way.

10 JC: Yeah, and the job had very little contact with the customers, but it turned out
11 great though, because I ended up, I fixed up their whole, female underwear section.

12 LC: There you go.

13 JC: The place was a mess, I mean it was, the people ripped things open, I had, you
14 know, all the bras in the right order and everything and they ended up keeping me in that
15 area and I had customers come up to women asking me questions about bra sizes and
16 stuff.

17 LC: They knew, they knew who to ask.

18 JC: You know, for a transgender woman it was, "Wow, this is acceptance."

19 (Laughing)

20 LC: That's right, you take it where you can find it, I'm sure.

21 JC: But, anyway, what I explained to the woman, I wasn't sure that she knew that
22 I was a Vietnam veteran, that's kind of, I'm sure it was on my application somewhere,
23 but when I just told her, "I just couldn't deal with that, I'm not hanging up stuff from
24 Vietnam." And I, you know, I, and I told her, I wasn't sure if she knew or not that I had
25 100 percent post-traumatic stress disorder from Vietnam and I said, "I know it's been a
26 lot of years ago and stuff, but they idea after all these years for me to be, you know,
27 handling products from Vietnam." I just said I just had a hard time dealing with it.

28 LC: And did she listen to you?

29 JC: Yeah, she was kind of, you know, I think in a way fascinated, you are
30 complex aren't you? But—

31 LC: Right, and it's not all about gender.

1 JC: Yeah, yeah.

2 LC: I mean, which, actually it is part of why it is really great that you told that
3 story.

4 JC: Because, but it, I ended up staying there and she just, she had to have, her and
5 the other managers, what they would do is the trucks come in at night or in the afternoon
6 or at night and the night manager just would put together these little trucks that you pull
7 through the store, all these different boxes, so each person that came in in the morning
8 would have a load of stuff that they had to do, you know, put out. I think she just made
9 sure that nothing from, nothing with a Vietnam label was put on my truck ever again.

10 LC: And how long did you then, I mean clearly she invited you back and how
11 long did you stay there after this?

12 JC: Oh I stayed, I worked there for close to two years, I was working there when I
13 moved down here, that's the only reason I quit. I went through my whole transition
14 there; it was really neat when I came back from my surgery and stuff. I just, it was just
15 amazing how even the employees there, how they treated me from the beginning and how
16 they got to know me, especially after my surgery, the bathroom issue went away.

17 LC: Yeah, remarkable.

18 JC: It, yeah, and it was even, I'm trying to think, the last Christmas I was there
19 looking at these little stained glass angels, these little tiny things and I was going to buy
20 one, but it was too expensive and one of the employees was there, saw me looking at it
21 and she ended up buying it for me, gave it to me for a Christmas gift.

22 LC: Really?

23 JC: Yeah, and she said, she admitted that she was the woman that said she would,
24 she told the manager that she would quit if they hired me, if they put me in a woman's
25 job.

26 LC: Turned out she decided that you weren't so bad after all, huh?

27 JC: Yeah, yeah, I was actually human. (Laughing)

28 LC: Janice, let's stop there.

29

30

31

Interview with Janice Josephine Carney
Session 4 of 4
June 8, 2005

1 Laura Calkins: This is Laura Calkins of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University continuing the oral history interview with Janice Josephine Carney. Today's
3 date is the eighth of June 2005. I'm on the campus of Texas Tech in the Special
4 Collections Building and again Janice is speaking to me by telephone and good morning,
5 Janice. We've already been speaking a little bit, but I want to direct your attention right
6 now to the time when you were actually getting very short in Vietnam. Can you describe
7 what that was like for you?

8 Janice Carney: It was very, it was very—kind of stuttering here—it was
9 emotional. Kind of, they, the last two months after we came back down from the
10 operation up north we were on what they call stand down and, in Phu Bai, I still had a
11 function, obviously because we still had a lot of people with mail and I didn't have to
12 drive as much but I still had a, you know, fairly busy day. But the majority of the unit
13 really was doing nothing but smoking dope and getting drunk. We had just so much
14 damage to our vehicles, I mean, we just were not functioning, you know, a functioning
15 transportation battalion. Pretty much it was all just maintenance and repair work, but
16 they weren't, they weren't running any supply missions or any real—and it got more into
17 formal morning formations and police calls and so a lot of, there was a lot of frustration.
18 But, me personally, you know, it just, I was, once I cracked that ninety days and then the
19 sixty days and the final thirty days, I mean, I just, I didn't care about anything and I was
20 just, especially the thirty days when I was, they gave you somebody to train. I was just in
21 another worlds, I had all kinds of, I'll call them illusions, I mean, I had this, I think it
22 started when about my ninety days, I got this thing in my head that I was going to go
23 home and I was going to go back to school and finish high school. I had that totally
24 focused in my head.

25 LC: Did it help to have some kind of goal? I mean, did it help you?

26 JC: Yeah, it kept me, it kept me totally focused, but the thing was, I graduated
27 from high school.

28 LC: Yeah, that's right.

1 JC: And I had totally just blocked out anything doing with graduation and the
2 prom and all of that and I really, I totally had it fixed in my head that, “Good, I’m going
3 to go back to school and I’m going to finish high school.” Even when I got home, the
4 first couple of days, I said something to my mother and my brother and they both were
5 just kind of looking at me. Finally my mother told me, “You graduated, don’t you
6 remember?”

7 LC: That must have been a little frightening for them too.

8 JC: Yeah, they, oh they were just scared shit of me. I, you know, I didn’t find out
9 that, you know, all afterwards, that, I don’t know who my mother had talked to, but she
10 told all my brothers and sisters not to go near me if I was sleeping, not to go near the
11 room and to be careful that I might still have a weapon.

12 LC: Really?

13 JC: Yeah, I don’t know, she had talked to somebody about, you know. By 1971
14 there really was this, you know, partially true partially fiction, but there was this theory
15 that all of the veterans coming back were a little wacky.

16 LC: And potentially dangerous.

17 JC: Yeah, yeah. But I had that, that whole focus in my head that it was like, you
18 know, when this is over I’m just going to go back, like it never happened and I’m going
19 to go back to high school. And that was my, you know, my thing with going back to the
20 world, as we called it. When I finally got down to, you know, my last, you know, my last
21 days, I went down to, I had a friend drive me down to Cam Ranh Bay when I finally got
22 my orders and I flew home out of Cam Ranh Bay. But the, at Cam Ranh Bay when you,
23 you had to do a urine specimen the night before you flight and I flunked the first one,
24 didn’t have—

25 LC: So this was a drug test, right?

26 JC: Yes, it was like, leaving Vietnam in 1971 was a little bit like getting out of
27 prison. Actually it was a lot like getting out of prison. They wanted to make sure that
28 you had no, no drugs. They didn’t, if they found anything on you, they didn’t offer any
29 kind of counseling, advice or medical help.

30 LC: Alright, what did they do?

31 JC: They just cancelled your flight for 24 hours and said try again tomorrow.

1 LC: I mean, did—?

2 JC: And they, so there were a lot of, I was lucky that, you know, I smoked some
3 heroine off and on, but mostly I just did marijuana, so I didn't, I wasn't really heavily
4 addicted. It was no major thing for me to get it out of my system, but there were a lot of
5 guys that were seriously addicted to heroine.

6 LC: And so presumably they're going through withdrawal.

7 JC: Yeah, and all they were doing was trying to get them through a day, get it out
8 of their system, give them a meal and throw them on a plane.

9 LC: And there was no kind of treatment or follow up as far as you know for those
10 guys?

11 JC: No, there wasn't any, nothing, that's all they would do, except for extreme,
12 extreme cases if guys got out of control, they would put them in—but on a whole all they
13 would try to do is just get them straight enough to throw them on plane and send them
14 home.

15 LC: Wow, and so where did you spend that extra day that you had to wait? With
16 everybody else who was waiting?

17 JC: Yeah, just in the—

18 LC: Was it barracks or something?

19 JC: Yeah, they had a general, you know, open barracks, because that was just
20 your basic, that was all, you, most of the people that were, you know, rotating either way,
21 you would just stay for 24, 48 hours, three days maximum usually.

22 LC: Well some of those guys had to be sick; I mean they were, I'm sure they were
23 sick, ill.

24 JC: Yeah, they were some really messed kids and I'll say kids, I mean we're all,
25 you know, 20, I was 21 when I rode it back, but we all were in between, anywhere from
26 19 to 22 was the average age. Most of us were like me were just right out of high school.

27 LC: How, how easy, we talked a little bit about this before, but just to clarify, how
28 easy had it been for you to get, to obtain heroine as opposed to marijuana? Was it, was it
29 more complicated?

30 JC: Well, it was actually, for a while easier to get heroine than to get marijuana.

31 LC: Really?

1 JC: It was just, it was so cheap, I mean this is 100 percent, they called it cocaine,
2 is what they, but it was 100 percent pure heroine. This stuff was, wow, I mean, we, all of
3 the GIs would mix it with menthol cigarettes and smoke it, I think most of the brothers
4 did that, that's where I started doing it.

5 LC: Okay.

6 JC: I mean it just put you in this laid back mood, nothing in the world was going
7 to bother you, I mean I never, I'm not condoning it, I mean, it's, I'm just very blessed
8 that I didn't get seriously hooked on it.

9 LC: Yes you are.

10 JC: I think with me why I didn't get hooked on it, I, that it, it scared me because
11 you, when I was that stoned, I couldn't function. I couldn't read or think well or write
12 and I didn't want to be that messed up. With marijuana, you know, I still had, I was still
13 capable of reading and writing, maybe not as coherently as I thought.

14 LC: Janice, had you been writing much while you were there? And what kinds of
15 things, letters or were you writing things for yourself? Did you keep a journal?

16 JC: I was writing letters to home and I started, I started a journal, I was trying to
17 journal back then, I wasn't very, a lot of the stuff just didn't make any sense. I had, I had
18 all, a couple of years after I got out of the service, I had all that stuff that I wrote and I
19 had a bunch of maps, what I was doing, all the orders I saw, all the paper work that I saw.

20 LC: Yes.

21 JC: Everything that crossed my hands was in like quadruplet and I, what I did
22 was, this is slightly illegal. What I did is I took one copy, just of everything and I had my
23 own, I had my own record system of unbelievable stuff.

24 LC: What happened to all of that?

25 JC: When I was living by myself in Somerville, about two years after my
26 discharge, somebody broke into my apartment and that, the only thing they took was that
27 box, it was in a closet. Nobody knew, nobody knew I had it but me.

28 LC: So what, what year would this have been?

29 JC: '74, '75 somewhere around there.

30 LC: So someone broke in and particularly took those documents as opposed to
31 anything else they might have taken?

1 JC: Yeah, the only thing that was missing in my apartment was that box.
2 LC: That's a little suspicious
3 JC: Yeah, very.
4 LC: They must, I think somebody was watching you.
5 JC: Yeah, most definitely. I really was paranoid, I would put Scotch tape across
6 my door and stuff, little things where I could tell if somebody went in.
7 LC: Right.
8 JC: And when I say break in, I didn't mean, you know—they got in with a key.
9 LC: Oh boy.
10 JC: I mean this was, it wasn't somebody, you know, where the door or window
11 was smashed and things were turned.
12 LC: Right, it wasn't some kid looking for your stereo equipment.
13 JC: And all that, and I had, you know, journals and stuff in there.
14 LC: And they're all gone?
15 JC: Yeah, so I never really—
16 LC: Wow.
17 JC: And I didn't start really writing again until, you know, until I got in therapy
18 after, you know, I'm trying to think when it was, it was the early 80s when I finally got
19 into that program in Boston. The Veterans Improvement Program.
20 LC: The what, I'm sorry?
21 JC: It was called the Veterans Improvement Program.
22 LC: Okay, and this is the rap group that you were mentioning to me?
23 JC: Yeah, it was one, I don't remember the doctor's name, the very first one I was
24 in was in Court Street the outpatient clinic, I'm kind of jumping ahead here.
25 LC: That's okay.
26 JC: But I, after I got out, I mean, the trip home was just the typical, you know, a
27 plane full of people in total, total silence, it was like coming into the country. I'll finish
28 this story, but I want to—
29 LC: Sure.

1 JC: We, when I finally cleared that thing and I got on my plane and they frisk
2 you, shake you down, and you know, make sure you don't have any weapons or drugs or
3 anything.

4 LC: Right.

5 JC: Then, I had a AK-47 round around my neck, like a jewelry thing and a lot of
6 the guys had them because, you'd take, they made them into roach clips and an MP
7 ripped it off my neck and called it contraband and said if I wanted to discuss the issue, I
8 can catch a later flight.

9 LC: And what did you, what did you reply? I'm out of here?

10 JC: Yeah, I think I said, "Keep it asshole." Something along that line. I got my
11 flight home, the flight was just the same way that you came in country, you're on a plane
12 full of strangers, deadly quiet and we flew back through, we had a layover in Alaska then
13 down to Seattle and in Seattle we got to, you know, we were issued our new dress greens
14 and ribbons and were given to us. We had got a talk that was a laughing riot.

15 LC: I'll bet.

16 JC: I mean, they laughed that guy out of the room. Then they, before we left, we
17 had a guy come in, which is the hardest part, advise us to travel in civilian clothes, not to
18 wear the uniform in public.

19 LC: So this was in, this was an Army employee that was saying this?

20 JC: Yeah.

21 LC: An officer?

22 JC: Yep, I think it was a lieutenant that kind of said, "You may not be aware of
23 situation that a lot of Americans are protesting and they're not proud of our
24 accomplishments," or whatever, "We advise you for your own, for your personal safety
25 not to travel in a uniform."

26 LC: What did that make you feel like?

27 JC: You know, it was dangerous over there, it's dangerous here, what difference
28 does it make, I mean it was, I'm supposed to be afraid of the people that I was protecting
29 in Vietnam and then we're home and we're supposed to be afraid of the average citizen
30 and it was the same. I ended up traveling from Seattle to Texas in my uniform and it

1 was, nobody said hi, nobody talked to you, I tried to get a drink in Texas and they
2 wouldn't even serve me.

3 LC: Really, where were you?

4 JC: I was 21.

5 LC: And you were where? At Dallas or—?

6 JC: It was either Dallas or San Antonio; I don't remember which one we landed
7 at. That's where, I think it was San Antonio and I don't know what it was, I had a
8 military ID, I don't remember what the excuse was, they wouldn't serve me. I went in to
9 the men's room; I had a cap on with a pair of jeans and an old Jesus Christ t-shirt. *Jesus*
10 *Christ Superstar*.

11 LC: I remember it.

12 JC: And I went in to the men's room and I threw my uniform away.

13 LC: You just put it in the bin?

14 JC: Yeah, I still had, I ended up having to buy a new one, they were a little upset
15 when I didn't have a Class A when I reported to Germany. I put on the jeans and the t-
16 shirt and I went out and I sat at this bar and the guy didn't even ask me for an ID. I got a
17 beer, guy next to me said, "Hey, how you doing, where you from?" And it was like I
18 rejoined the human race.

19 LC: How much service did you have left on your commitment?

20 JC: A year, a year and a half, roughly.

21 LC: Wow.

22 JC: I was, I had orders, you know, for a thirty day leave and then I had orders to
23 go to Germany and I ended up staying home a week and then I flew to Germany, I
24 reported to Newark early and reported to Germany early. I was just fighting with
25 everybody at home, everybody, every old friend, everybody in the world; I was just in
26 physical fights with. I was doing heroine, I got some.

27 LC: In Boston?

28 JC: Yeah, and I was just, oh, Germany kind of saved my life because I got lucky,
29 I got an easy job over there for working at the civilian airport.

30 LC: Doing what?

1 JC: I was an information NCO at an information booth at Frankfurt Rhein-Main
2 airport.

3 LC: That sounds like actually a pretty good job.

4 JC: It could have made a career soldier out of me if I hadn't gone to Vietnam first.
5 I, people treated you with total respect, total respect. They honored the uniform, they
6 honored you as a person and for a year and a half it was kind of—I had problems sleeping
7 at night and I went through like four roommates and they all complained that they
8 couldn't sleep in the same room with me.

9 LC: Because—?

10 JC: Oh, I would up screaming.

11 LC: Okay.

12 JC: It was just, and even there they didn't—they put stuff in my records that I had
13 war neurosis, psychotic war neurosis.

14 LC: What kind of neurosis?

15 JC: Psychotic, I think it was psychotic war neurosis I think is what they had in my
16 records.

17 LC: Psychotic war neurosis.

18 JC: Yeah.

19 LC: Okay.

20 JC: It was something like that and, but I, you know, I had a good time and
21 finished my year and half and then I got back to the States. What were we talking about
22 when I was back in the States?

23 LC: You were telling me earlier about the outpatient clinic and the rap groups and
24 stuff.

25 JC: Okay, so what happened when I got out, I was unemployed, I went on
26 unemployment for a year. I couldn't get a job, I even tried to get a job, but I had, I went
27 on one job interview and this guy's looking at my brief resume. I had gone, I had worked
28 since I was twelve years old, started selling newspapers all through high school, right out
29 of high school I had a, I got a job in lock devices and I actually had that job when I went
30 into the service and when I got out of the service, I wanted to go back in lock devices but
31 they had moved, their offices had been in Cambridge, Mass. and they had moved way out

1 to the suburbs somewhere and I had no way of transportation of getting out there. On the
2 law they had to give me my job back

3 LC: But they were too far, you didn't have a car.

4 JC: Right, I never had a driver's license, I just had no way, they moved out at that
5 time which seemed like out in the middle of nowhere. So I went looking for jobs and I
6 went to some places that were the sleaziest minimum wage jobs and they just weren't
7 hiring that day. I went to one place and this guy's going over the resume like I was
8 telling me and what he says to me is, "Well you haven't worked in three years, I don't
9 think we can hire you." I said, "Wait a minute, I've been in the Army the last three years
10 that was." And he said "Well we can't consider that a job."

11 LC: Oh God.

12 JC: And I climbed across the desk after this guy and he—(Laughing)

13 LC: Right.

14 JC: And I just, after that I just, I got unemployment that I lived on and I started, I
15 got my own apartment, I was living with my brother for a while and I got my own
16 apartment and once I had that privacy, I just started living as a woman.

17 LC: So this would have been about what, '74 or something like that?

18 JC: Yes, '73, '74 and pretty much '73 and '74 I was just working as a transsexual
19 sex work as we call it today. Back then I think we used the term prostitute. Worked at
20 the clubs in Boston, I had a personal ad in the underground paper and I was just drinking
21 a lot, doing a lot of drugs, you know, prostitution. It was just, it's sort of what I talked
22 about a little bit earlier, I was just such this, I can't even think of a word to describe it. I
23 really, really looked good, I was you know, five foot five and real skinny, real effeminate,
24 I had this really, really nice blond, blond wig and I was making, I could have made all of
25 the money I wanted, I never lacked—but, I was just going back and forth, I was still
26 having trouble with nightmares at night and you know, even news from Vietnam,
27 anything to do with Vietnam I just would fly off the handle and people just, you know,
28 went crazy trying to figure me out.

29 LC: I'll bet.

30 JC: You know, I would be really dainty little female to this raving lunatic in a
31 minute.

1 LC: And during this time Vietnam was all over the news, I mean, the—

2 JC: Yeah, it was just building up into the fall of Saigon.

3 LC: Exactly.

4 JC: You know, I had seen when Quang Tri province collapsed and what was left
5 of my unit was all up there. When they retreated all the way south. So after that, this
6 friend of my little sister's who was eight years younger than me, moved in with me and
7 we ended up getting married and that's the one I was married to. I worked at a liquor
8 store for a while and then—that's a great place for an alcoholic to work.

9 LC: Yeah, that sounds like a, not a good, not a good—

10 JC: That was a good move, and then I took the unemployment, all this stuff, the
11 prostitution stuff even the liquor store was a part time, I was collecting unemployment
12 and when the girl's benefits ran out they were trying to get me a job and they gave me
13 some paperwork one time applying for an apprenticeship to be a ship fitter and I asked
14 them what a ship fitter and they said they weren't sure, some kind of trade and I didn't
15 know what it was either but I filled out this application for their apprenticeship program
16 at General Dynamics and they actually hired me.

17 LC: You're kidding, really?

18 JC: Yeah, it was, I think it was based on my high math scores which I later
19 learned that math is very important to be a ship fitter. A ship fitter is a ship's carpenter
20 and you're doing, you're building ships from the floor on up, you're doing, you going to
21 learn to read blueprints, you're going to learn every aspect of the ship fitting trade.
22 You're the lead mechanic at every level and everything has got to be within 1/32nd of an
23 inch when bulkheads and things are laid out. So it was very—the technical part of it I
24 liked, I liked reading, learning how to read blueprints, but I had a hard, real hard time, I
25 did that for four years, actually five years counting this time when we had a strike that
26 stopped me from ever finishing the program. The real masculine work I had a horrible
27 time, you know, lugging stuff and I was just not physically fit for that kind of labor. I
28 ended up after five years, but it was just a weird five years, I mean I was, it was like
29 being in the Army again. I was around all these macho guys in a hard hat and all of that
30 and all the drinking. There were a lot of Vietnam veterans working there and a lot of
31 veterans period and I just got into, you know a lot of just, I was drinking everyday. We

1 bought a house, I ended up getting married during this time frame and we bought a house
2 in Hal, Mass down by the beach and my wife got pregnant and that was with my son
3 Shaun and it was all just really a blur. We went out on strike, we had a big strike and
4 during the strike I took the postal exam and I got the, at that time I had, what was it, I
5 had, oh; I had ten percent service connected disability for lime disease.

6 LC: For what?

7 JC: For lime disease.

8 LC: For lime disease, okay.

9 JC: Yeah, I had, during this time frame I worked at the shipyard, I was in the
10 National Guard.

11 LC: Yeah, you had kept that up the whole time?

12 JC: Yeah, and I was in the unit out at Somerville, Mass which is where I grew up
13 and we had gone down for two weeks active training to Otis Air Force base down the
14 Cape. While we were there I got bit by a tick and I was sick the last day I was down
15 there I didn't know what it was. But when I got home I really was really bad, I had all
16 these rashes all over my body and a real fever, high fever and I went to Mass. General
17 Hospital and at first they thought I had Rocky Mountain spotted fever, they didn't know
18 what it was and it actually was about a month later when I got a phone call from some
19 doctor in Yale and she had read my case or something and there was a big article in the
20 New York Times about lime disease on the Cape.

21 LC: Oh boy.

22 JC: And they wanted some samples of my blood and that's when they diagnosed
23 it and they started me on a whole different treatment. So I was really, I couldn't, my
24 knees and my back, my spine and my neck, I was just in constant pain in the joints and I,
25 at the time I was petrified I was going to be like this the rest of my life and I quit work.
26 This is, I was still working at the shipyard but I had been out on sick for this and it really
27 looked like I was never going to be able to go back to work. But when I started the
28 treatment that they recommended it, you know, I started getting better. But I had taken
29 the postal exam and I ended up going to the post office and not going back to the
30 shipyard.

31 LC: So where were you working for the post office?

1 JC: In Boston, the South Postal Annex. Well I, the first year I kind of bounced
2 around, which is what you do, I worked in Cambridge for a while and when I got a
3 regular position a couple years after the Army, I ended up at the South Postal Annex,
4 that's where I worked for years.

5 LC: Until about when?

6 JC: '91.

7 LC: Okay.

8 JC: Yeah, it was '91 when I had my, the incident. But what, the, but I had been in
9 the postal office and like I said, with the lime disease I ended up going through,
10 somebody in the guard unit sent me to somebody at the VA to talk to and they actually
11 gave me a 10 percent disability from the lime disease because it occurred on active duty.

12 LC: What did that actually mean, I mean did you get.

13 JC: It cracked me up; I mean these people didn't get it why I thought it was
14 hilarious. I said a year in Vietnam that I don't get any disability but a weekend being
15 drunk down in the Cape and I get a service-connected disability. I thought it was
16 hilarious. I really did.

17 LC: Well it's ironic that's for sure.

18 JC: Yeah, but anyway they, because I had a ten percent, I joined the DAV, the
19 Disabled American Veterans and they also gave me the extra points on the postal exam,
20 the ten extra points.

21 LC: Sure.

22 JC: And, but the DAV because I gave them, you know, rights to get my records
23 and stuff when you call, when you sign over your rights to them and it took them a while
24 to get all of my medical records and by that time I was in the post office and one day the
25 guy that was handling my records asked me to come over and wanted to sit down and talk
26 to me. He asked me if I was aware that I had two zero percent disabilities and I said no.
27 He had my records and he showed me I had a zero percent disability for what they called,
28 I'm pretty sure the term was psychotic war neurosis, how they worded it and I had zero
29 percent disability for the hearing losses and he asked me if I still was having any
30 problems with Vietnam or nightmares or anything. I looked at this guy and said, "Are
31 you serious? Who the fuck doesn't?" My attitude was, "Doesn't everybody?"

1 LC: Right, exactly. Yeah, you didn't really know.

2 JC: Yeah, I started to say to this guy, "Were you in Vietnam?" And this guy was
3 a Marine and he knew, you know. Then he asked me if I had ringing in my ears and I
4 said, "Yeah, constantly." That was the thing, when I got the job at the shipyard, going
5 back to that, I flunked their physical because of my hearing and I almost didn't get the
6 job and I had to sign a waiver saying that my hearing already was damaged and that I
7 wouldn't hold them responsible for any hearing loss at the yard.

8 LC: It's sort of like when you were going through the physical for the army and
9 you're blind in one eye, legally blind and they just said, "Okay, good enough." Or
10 whatever to pass you through.

11 JC: Yeah, yeah, their attitude was as long as I wasn't going to hold them liable for
12 any damage to my ears.

13 LC: They could continue to damage your ears.

14 JC: Yeah, well you come in here and work five or ten years and when you're deaf
15 we'll let you go.

16 LC: Right, I'm seeing that, yeah. So with these zero percent disability things
17 already in your record, what options were open to you, did he explain to you?

18 JC: Oh yeah, he said that he, he just asked me to sign a paper to reopen both
19 claims. Right off the, it took, real quick actually at the time, I think it was about six
20 months I got a letter from the VA (Department of Veteran Affairs), they didn't even call
21 me in for an evaluation, which is really, just based on my medical records. I was lucky
22 because I had this stuff, I mean that the DAV got it and my records were well kept.
23 Because if this stuff was not in my records, you know, that I was treated for hearing in
24 Vietnam and there was some notes in there from doctors, you know, active duty saying,
25 implying that I had a problem, so I had all of this documentation. They gave me, I forgot
26 what it was at first, I think it was ten percent for post-traumatic stress disorder, that's the
27 first time they used that language and twenty percent for the hearing for tendonitis and so
28 I had, and I had, yeah, it was weird the way they did it, but they took away the lime
29 disease and said my arthritis was cured.

30 LC: But gave you ten and then twenty.

1 JC: And twenty, but they gave me, I was getting ten percent for the lime disease,
2 but they gave me a thirty percent disability, but both of these disabilities were service-
3 connected to Vietnam.

4 LC: How did, how did it happen that you later moved to 100 percent?

5 JC: Oh.

6 LC: I mean, I'm sure it's complicated, I know that.

7 JC: Well this gets into the post office and what happened.

8 LC: And you can either talk about it or not, Janice, whichever you prefer.

9 JC: Well, it builds up, what happened when I got into the post office in 1978, it
10 was '78 or '79, yeah that would be right, so we go into '80, the early 80s as I had been in
11 the post office a few years, I had, I was just missing a lot of time and I ended up one
12 night just totally burnt out. I was working nights, you know, and sleeping during the day,
13 doing a lot of drinking and I kind of liked that because I was in that pattern and then, I
14 liked working nights, but it was really hard, and sleeping during the day was a sense of
15 comfort because I had always had trouble sleeping at night. But I was just constantly, I
16 don't know, arguing with people, outside of Vietnam, by this time it was like, it was like
17 living in two worlds, I was doing a lot of cross dressing, had that side but I was very
18 secretive about it and in work I hung around with nothing but the Vietnam veterans and it
19 was like two different personalities both places. The image, I was just constantly, I was
20 in the Army and in the Reserve, the, it all just exploded, I ended up, they took me out one
21 night and brought me to the VA and they recommended that I get some counseling and
22 that saved my job. They reevaluated me and brought me up to fifty percent for the post
23 traumatic stress disorder and I started this group. That was the original group was in the
24 Court Street Outpatient Clinic in Boston and the, I forgot that doctor's name, there was a
25 doctor that was really pioneering in posttraumatic stress disorder, I really don't remember
26 his name, he ended up leaving the VA and he went to some college somewhere, but he,
27 he really seemed to have kind of, a program together and he managed to control us. He
28 was a veteran too. He left and some, a nurse's aid, I'm not sure what this guy's training
29 was, and a nurse took the program over, and neither one of them had ever served in the
30 military and I don't think either one of them knew about post traumatic stress either. But

1 it just got totally out of control and we would all meet before the sessions and get stoned
2 and just, you know, just make fun of them. They were—

3 LC: Were these mandatory sessions?

4 JC: Yeah, pretty much we all were threatened with the if we didn't show up we
5 would be locked up for, there would be ninety days observation. What they call, I forgot
6 what they call it, red-tagging or whatever, it happened to me, it only happened to me, it
7 happened to me a couple of times and I just didn't want to do it again. Well all they do is
8 just put you up in Jamaica Plain, what they called a flight deck and put you on Thorazine
9 is all they were doing.

10 LC: Put you on Thorazine.

11 JC: Yeah, for about ninety days.

12 LC: Cool you out.

13 JC: Yeah, that's was what they would do and that's the way they would, the main
14 treatment they would do for Vietnam veterans that didn't, you know, that weren't docile
15 following the program.

16 LC: Oh my god, yeah.

17 JC: Then one day, somehow my pants caught on fire, I think it was because
18 somebody was smoking a cigarette and I was so stoned I didn't even know it and I had a
19 pair of jeans on with like the strings coming down and that, after that the whole, they
20 realized that they just couldn't control us and they ended the program and they put us all
21 in individual therapy. They tried to keep us even from communicating with each other.

22 LC: Did you consider these guys who were all in the same boat with you
23 friends?

24 JC: Yeah, it was like, it was like my platoon. I mean, it was the, it was kind of
25 like the only safety net I had and that's when I learned a lot about, I mean I was, it's like
26 years later when I met up with trans people and realized I wasn't, you know, alone. This
27 was the same thing, I was finding out all these guys had the same problems, you know,
28 with drugs and alcohol and nightmares. That I wasn't the only one that came back with
29 all, with all these problems.

30 LC: And on some level was that kind of reassuring? I mean I get that the
31 problems were there but not being alone with it was pretty important.

1 JC: Yeah, there was this kind of, but what happened is over the course of I think
2 about a year, about half the guys in the program committed suicide, successfully. The
3 suicide rate was just phenomenal and I had one suicide attempt and they just didn't know
4 what to do. We all were just in individual therapy and they started a new clinic which
5 was the Veterans History Program that was also post traumatic stress disorder and drug
6 abuse and they put us all in that program and that program was much better. It was just
7 so organized and so much, it was a real program.

8 LC: Like there was structure to it?

9 JC: Yeah, very, very structured, there was drug patrol, you don't know when
10 you're going to be tested, people, they put me on, I forgot the drug, there was a drug that
11 they used to take that if you drank alcohol would make you violently sick.

12 LC: Oh yeah, I can't remember the name but I know what you're talking about.

13 JC: Yeah, but they made me take it, I mean, literally I had to go over every day,
14 you know, the five days a week and this guy made sure I took it, Jim Morrell. And I got
15 some sobriety out of that and got involved with a lot of people, that started, it took, it
16 took me well up into the 80s to really get sober after bouncing back and forth and I ended
17 up, I think during that time frame I had two more suicide attempts, no I had one more.
18 Things just kept on getting worse at the post office and they took me to the hospital one
19 day after, there was a guy named Jimmy Hunter who was another Vietnam veteran, he
20 had a mail-order bride from Thailand and he killed her and he stole a plane and flew over
21 Boston with an AK-47 and this was in 1991 and when he came down he all the, he tried
22 to claim post traumatic stress disorder but he, it didn't work and it shouldn't, he was just
23 a nut.

24 LC: They send him to prison?

25 JC: Yeah he ended up—

26 LC: Regular population?

27 JC: Yeah, he ended up they sent him to; in fact I think he was in the same prison
28 my father was in.

29 LC: Really.

30 JC: Yeah, the, what do you call it, it's more like a hospital for the criminally
31 insane in Boston, I cant think of the name right now, it's outside of Boston and it's

1 mostly really for people that, they didn't find him incompetent because of posttraumatic
2 stress disorder but they found him criminally insane. In fact, I think he was in there the
3 same time as my father; he had a lot of problems.

4 LC: So your father had been getting worse all this time.

5 JC: Yeah, he was really whip brained and he had been accused of having sex with
6 local kids, with boys, pedophilia, which went back to my older brothers claims where he
7 started and the whole domino theory but I don't want to talk about that.

8 LC: That's okay, that's fine.

9 JC: I'm trying to think; well anyway, I ended up not too long after that incident
10 there were a lot of, so much stuff going on in the post office of Vietnam veterans, going
11 over the edge and the running jokes about going postal.

12 LC: Yes.

13 JC: I mean it just; it just got impossible to be a Vietnam veteran with post
14 traumatic stress disorder working for the post office just didn't work.

15 LC: The pressures were coming from too many places.

16 JC: Yeah, you constantly, the jokes and dropping things behind me and you know,
17 there was a rumor going around there was a pool going on, people picking dates when
18 they thought I was going to go over the edge. The postal inspectors came and arrested
19 me one time for not coming to work and they were waiting for me to come in because
20 they wanted to go through my locker because somebody said they saw an AK-47 in my
21 locker.

22 LC: Good God.

23 JC: It did, it just got, and it ended up with them finally taking me out after I got
24 into an argument with my supervisor, one of the obscene ones, but this time I did kind of,
25 I did kind of threaten him and when they took me over to the VA to the program I was in,
26 that's when their doctors, I'm trying to think. By this time I had gone from, zero to
27 twenty to thirty, I was up to fifty percent for the post traumatic stress disorder and they
28 recommended me for the 100 percent and the doctors at the VA even wrote up a report
29 saying they felt that I was unfit to work because of the worsening post traumatic stress
30 disorder. They ended up; I had no choice but to take their forty percent disability
31 retirement.

1 LC: From the post office.

2 JC: Right, but that opened up the VA for my claim. It took five years and three
3 appeals, but they ended up giving me the 100 percent for the post traumatic stress
4 disorder.

5 LC: Who managed all of those appeals, I mean did you run that yourself? I can't
6 imagine the amount of work and paperwork and—

7 JC: Oh, it was the DAV represented.

8 LC: The DAV did, okay.

9 JC: The, what happened is they tried to, locally, the regional, they kept on trying
10 to say that my post traumatic stress disorder was from the post office not from Vietnam.
11 How's that for a defense?

12 LC: Well it boggles the mind really.

13 JC: Well that was their story and it took, well that was the second one, first they
14 tried to say that my whole problem was that I was an alcoholic and this is what they used
15 a lot, they would try to say that my problems were related to alcohol abuse and not to my
16 military duty.

17 LC: And seeing no connection between those two things—

18 JC: Right, that would be the way they, the people that, the pencil pushers,
19 whatever you want to call them, when it was very clear in my records, you know, from
20 Dr., but this time I was seeing Dr. Shay and he was my primary doctor.

21 LC: This is Jonathan Shay?

22 JC: Yeah, and he, he made it very clear that alcohol and drug abuse was the
23 secondary symptom of post traumatic stress disorder, that they coordinate, and he's the
24 one that finally got me to the point of really, you know, getting sober and I learned the
25 hard way that the alcohol and anti-depressants and all of these other drugs and Trazidone,
26 even going to the therapy, you're still playing games, you're never going to—it took me
27 close to ten years of treatment to finally catch on.

28 LC: What were those years, I mean when would you say that you did finally, you
29 know, figure out that all of the chemicals were probably—

30 JC: Well, 1996 and in 1991 was when I left the post office and I, '88 I went, what
31 was '88, '89, '88 I started, I was going to college part time.

1 LC: That's when you started your degree work?

2 JC: Yeah, the first part of it was they had a program that, for people, for veterans
3 that had just had a high school diploma and nothing else and there's been, like I had been
4 out of high school for twenty years and they would give you like a refresher course, well
5 that was like a fourteen week course, you know, in the basics. If you passed that you
6 would automatically be accepted into U Mass.

7 LC: So you started that in 1988?

8 JC: Yeah, somewhere around there.

9 LC: When did you actually take your degree?

10 JC: Actually, I'm trying to, I can go look at my diploma.

11 LC: That's okay.

12 JC: I'm right here; let's see what they put on there.

13 LC: And this was a BA in Law?

14 JC: Yeah, well they put, '93 was when I finally earned it. Yeah, Bachelor Arts in
15 Law Studies.

16 LC: That's not bad, given everything else that was going on.

17 JC: It was, but I started it when I was working, still working at the post office by
18 that time and by that time I had a day job and I was going to be taking courses at night.
19 But when I left in '91 I started kind of going full time, you know, and I was still
20 drinking, so I was still a functioning alcoholic and that went up to '93 when I earned a
21 degree and my goal was to do legal research and I really got very much invested in
22 family law. I took a couple courses at U Mass with, you know, I was trying to get into
23 woman's studies and they wouldn't let me in some of that stuff.

24 LC: Yeah, some of the stuff we talked about a little bit.

25 JC: Yeah, but I really got into family law and some of the courses I took I was the
26 only man in some of these courses.

27 LC: Oh, I believe that.

28 JC: There was one course there was this really hardcore feminist, I was amazed
29 that she passed me, she was quite, I was, you know, she was not ready for this kind of
30 change.

31 LC: You weren't fitting her profiles.

1 JC: Yeah, no, but I just learned so much and I said I knew all along that women
2 get screwed in most cases and between the women and children end up, you know, in the
3 highest poverty levels and all of this stuff and that's, and administrative law dealing with
4 people with disabilities trying to get social security, those are the real key things I was
5 interested in. But when I finished the BA program, and tried to go out and get a job, the
6 VA, I know the way it works because Voc-Rehab paid for all of this, Vocational Rehab.
7 The theory is that instead of paying me the rest of my life, you know, to do nothing, that I
8 would go back in the work force and my disability would be reevaluated and go down.
9 That's what I wanted, I didn't want to be 100 percent disabled for the rest of my life, I
10 wanted to do something. I just started, I went to all kinds of interviews, I lost track of
11 how many interviews I had trying to get, just the law firms doing legal research.

12 LC: Right.

13 JC: And that's what I wanted to do, because legal research you work at your own
14 pace and the bulk of the work that you're doing is in the library and it was almost like
15 going back to my childhood, you know, hanging at the library.

16 LC: That's right.

17 JC: I just, nobody would touch me, nobody would give me a chance. I even tried
18 some volunteer stuff.

19 LC: No one would hire you because they knew about the 100 percent PTSD?

20 JC: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

21 LC: And they just made assumptions about whether the degree to which you
22 might be able to cope. Would they tell you this, Janice, I mean would they?

23 JC: Oh no, it was just.

24 LC: This was all behind the curtain.

25 JC: We're talking; we're getting into the era of the disabilities act.

26 LC: Absolutely, yeah.

27 JC: And a lot of it, by this time, I was closing in on, I wasn't fifty, but I was
28 closing in on fifty. It's, you know, they didn't want somebody in their late forties and
29 somebody with, a disabled Vietnam veteran with post traumatic stress disorder and the
30 VA even finally, because they were the ones who were pushing for this through Voc-
31 Rehab and what they finally did is they closed my folder.

1 LC: What does that mean?

2 JC: They declared me totally unemployable, 100 percent total and permanent.
3 They stopped, they told me that they just can't help me get a job and they counselor was
4 really, you know, nice. He said, he said, "You know and I know it's total discrimination
5 but we can't prove it. We have so many people we can get you and we just can't spend
6 the time."

7 LC: So at that point—

8 JC: He was just adamant that nobody, you know, at that time I still came across as
9 very nervous, I would shake at times and I was under a lot of medication and he was just
10 adamant nobody, you know, nobody was going to hire me.

11 LC: So the VA made an administrative decision about your permanent incapacity
12 at this time.

13 JC: Yeah, basically, once you're at, once you had 100 percent for over five years,
14 you could be declared total and permanent, unemployable. Once you get that label, they
15 don't evaluate you anymore, you're, as far as they're concerned you're, you're not
16 functional.

17 LC: Well we know that's not true. I mean, at some point, I mean it's not true in
18 terms of your functionality, I mean you're clearly very, very functional. Janice, when did
19 the Agent Orange litigation that you're involved with begin?

20 JC: That was in the middle 80s, so, I got involved with that because my son was
21 born, my wife had a real tough pregnancy, real tough. My son was born with a lot of
22 problems, learning disabilities, well, I say he was born, but as he was growing up. A lot
23 of it was from my post traumatic stress disorder but issues, we went through the 80s
24 where she, my wife had a couple of miscarriages and one when she was, they had done
25 something with her eyes that she could have gone blind, something bizarre, I don't know.
26 But I had started doing research, you know, on the Agent Orange stuff when it was
27 coming out and that was one of the biggest things, that children of Vietnam veterans that
28 kids being born with different disabilities and learning disabilities and the wife
29 miscarrying.

30 LC: Absolutely, yeah.

1 JC: And that's how I got involved with it and being in Boston, they were having
2 different hearings and I forgot what position Kerry was in at that time, he held some state,
3 I don't think the state said what job he had, you know, John Kerry. But he was having
4 some kind of hearings on it.

5 LC: Probably, I think he was a US Senator even back then.

6 JC: Maybe it was a senator. But he started at lieutenant governor and then he
7 went, but anyway, he was having some hearings on it and I got involved with that and I
8 knew other veterans that were and that's when I requested my copies of my records.
9 When they, under the Information, Freedom of Information Act and that's where I got a
10 bunch of stuff for Operation Ranch Hand. It showed that the whole area I was in in
11 Quang Tri had been heavily sprayed and the areas where I was driving they were hand
12 spraying, they would, you know, they'd be hand spraying the side of the road right up
13 sometimes even when I was driving through it, I didn't know what they were doing at the
14 time.

15 LC: Sure, of course not.

16 JC: But I had gotten all of this information and the class action suit was going on
17 and I had my name listed on it and it, and that's how I got on and got involved with it.
18 Then when, it went on so long I kind of put the back door on it, but when they finally
19 reached a settlement and I got some letter saying that I wasn't owed any financial
20 assistance because I was in the areas that weren't sprayed and it was from this court-
21 appointed judge and I think it was out of New York.

22 LC: And this is the point at which you wrote him a polite letter.

23 JC: Yeah, I wrote him a very polite letter and I sent him copies of all of this stuff.

24 LC: That you had gotten through FOIA (Freedom of Information Act).

25 JC: Right, I already had it and you know, I just kind of said, "Have you done any
26 research?" These, you know, I had, I included copies of my orders, you know, my
27 records show where I served and maps showing where they were sprayed and I kind of
28 you know said you put two and two together. You know, I listed my duties and that I
29 was driving for all of this stuff, I said, you know, the thing was I think all this judge did
30 was he looked at my name and he looked at mail clerk and that's all he did, said mail
31 clerk, he couldn't have, what could he have—

1 LC: Yeah, how could he be exposed, yeah.

2 JC: Yeah, this is just weird for me, I haven't referred to myself as "he" in a long
3 time.

4 LC: Well someone else was referring to you.

5 JC: Yeah, somebody was, yeah. But that was how, in the end they reviewed it
6 and I got, I forgot what I got, I got three checks for like \$1,500 each, something like that,
7 which was about the average the settlement, the way the settlement was broken down.

8 LC: That's not a lot of money though.

9 JC: Oh no, and it never answered any questions, I mean for a lot of people, they
10 never answered any questions about Agent Orange, I mean I still, I just lost a friend
11 actually a couple of weeks ago that I think died from complications from Agent Orange,
12 she had a lot of problems. She's another transgender woman that served in Vietnam. She
13 was a member of TAVA.

14 LC: And she served—

15 JC: She just died a couple of weeks ago.

16 LC: —in which branch, do you know?

17 JC: She was in the, she was in the Army and the Marines.

18 LC: Really?

19 JC: Yeah, she actually had two tours in Vietnam, one in the army and one in the
20 Marines. I was very lucky at last year's TAVA—you may have met her, you were at the
21 first TAVA, the woman that was in the wheel chair, the automatic wheelchair.

22 LC: Out at the Wall?

23 JC: Yeah, she was at the Wall.

24 LC: Okay, I remember seeing her.

25 JC: Yeah, her, and that was part of what her problems were, with her spine and
26 different things, they were connected to Agent Orange.

27 LC: Oh boy, that's sad news.

28 JC: Yeah, I, it was just a couple of days before Memorial Day and that was kind
29 of, and in that Memorial Day poem, you can see near the end I just talk about just
30 received an email, that's who I was talking about.

31 LC: Oh boy.

1 JC: And I, I just myself, I've, problems I have when, with my lungs and water
2 build-up. I've had doctors for the last ten years telling me how bad my lungs are and the
3 VA doctors keep blaming it on cigarettes and I keep telling them I never smoked and you
4 know, private doctors have said its probably damage from Agent Orange.

5 LC: And are the VA doctors not believing you when you say you didn't smoke or
6 do they just—?

7 JC: Oh they just kind of shrug it off. I mean they, I have 100 percent service
8 connected disability, that's all you, you can't get 101.

9 LC: Right, but in terms of treating you.

10 JC: Yeah, but that's exactly, that's what you know I'm talking about. They
11 treated me, they tell me I have real bad lungs and they don't want to get into why, but.
12 Every time I get congested now I go right over there.

13 LC: To make sure that you don't get pneumonia.

14 JC: Yeah, because I get all, bronchial infections and it gets in.

15 LC: Right, once it gets started its bad.

16 JC: Yeah, there's just so much stuff about Agent Orange we still don't know, but
17 they're so busy now with, they've got, they have a whole other can of worms with all of
18 the chemicals in Iraq and Kuwait.

19 LC: Right, right, yes it's a, I mean, all of this, do you think that enough funds are
20 being directed to either research in these areas or treatment of veterans? I mean I know
21 that this is an issue that I've heard you speak publicly about and I think it would be useful
22 to put your views down about differences within the VA in treatment and from region to
23 region as well as sort of the general policy questions of whether they're appropriately
24 funded or not.

25 JC: Well, it's, so much of this stuff just goes from region to region. It goes on
26 how, especially with issues on how they treat transgender veterans.

27 LC: Well let's talk about that for a second and one way to start that Janice is just
28 to clarify, what, I think it was, I think you said earlier, sometime in the late 19—or mid-
29 1990s maybe because of the internet and so forth, you were able to get more information
30 about transgender issues and you started to sort of see yourself there?

1 JC: Yeah, what happened with me in 1996, that was my last suicide attempt and
2 it, I was dressed up, my family was gone on a ski trip and I got dressed up after telling
3 myself, “This the end time, I’m never going to do it again.” And I was listening to Tom
4 Jones and I took a bunch of medications and just laid down and my daughter found me
5 and they called 911 and I got into a fight with the ambulance people because I didn’t
6 want to go to the hospital. They ended up taking me to the emergency ward in New
7 Hampshire.

8 LC: This is New Hampshire, yeah.

9 JC: Yeah, and they pumped my stomach out and they actually, really, there was
10 no question that time, I probably would have had my successful suicide attempt, you
11 know, if they hadn’t found me and got me to the hospital. They kept me there for a
12 couple of days and then they sent me down, they took me by ambulance down to the VA
13 hospital in Jamaica Plain for another ninety days of bliss.

14 LC: Of Thorazine bliss?

15 JC: Well, by this time they had stopped using Thorazine, it was different and, but
16 they really, you know, my wife told me I couldn’t come back in the house, well the
17 marriage was really over by this time. She had a boyfriend and had her own life.

18 LC: And you had two kids?

19 JC: We had three kids, I ended up having, there was like ten years in between my
20 son and my two daughters and I had back to back, that was my two daughters. It ended
21 up, I’m trying to think, they, in the VA, the program I was in, they told me they were
22 going to throw me out of the program, that they were just, they had just done, after all
23 these years, they had given me too many breaks, you know with still abusing drugs and
24 alcohol and it just looked like my whole world was falling apart. A friend of mine from
25 my church, she knew this guy that worked for the post office and was a Vietnam veteran,
26 had served, he actually served the 101st Airborne, my unit, and he’d been in AA
27 (Alcoholics Anonymous) for years and she asked him to come and talk to me and he
28 ended up becoming my sponsor. I went right into AA from when I got out of the hospital
29 and I ended up going back with my wife for a while. But anyway, I ended up putting a
30 year of sobriety together and they let me back in the veteran’s program and after a year of

1 sobriety when I was talking to my sponsor. By this time I had, my personal counselor at
2 the VA, Chris McKeary was her name.

3 LC: Chris—?

4 JC: McKeary, she came out, well I shouldn't put this—oh whatever, she came out
5 to me as a lesbian. I kind of thought she was, but she was working for the VA, she was
6 kind of very, especially dealing with Vietnam veterans.

7 LC: Yeah, kind of quiet about it.

8 JC: Yeah, but she got me to talk more about other things and Dr. Shay did the
9 same thing, I mean this whole time frame after my first year of sobriety, when I was
10 worrying about staying sober and trying to do fourth step and figure out, getting a year of
11 sobriety is easier than your second year, that's just my personal belief, but I really believe
12 that because then you get into trying to stay sober for a number of years, you've got to
13 admit that there's something wrong with you, at least that's the twelve step theory and
14 with fourth step personal inventories and why do you feel this need and especially if you
15 had suicidal tendencies. Why, it's all looking into yourself and spiritual, why do you feel
16 you're better off dead? I had always, up until this point, used Vietnam as my crutch and I
17 never; I never talked to anybody about how I felt about the transgender issues. This
18 sponsor was the first person that I told and he just totally amazed me. He said, "If
19 wearing women's clothes is going to stop you from wanting to kill yourself and keep you
20 sober, go shopping, what's the problem?" Pretty much Chris was telling me the same
21 thing and she introduced me to a lot of websites and she was not that familiar with
22 transgender issues, but being active in the gay and lesbian rights, she got different things.
23 She pointed me to a lot of websites and stuff and that's, and during this time frame too,
24 the VA, they gave me, they put me in a program where I can get a computer, I never had
25 a computer. They, I was living by myself; this is after I had separated from my wife and
26 they were afraid I was really isolating.

27 LC: Which was not good.

28 JC: No, after being, I was with my wife for twenty-five years, counting the years
29 we lived together in the marriage and all the sudden I was living in a basement apartment
30 by myself and obviously somebody with my whole prior history—

31 LC: Yes, exactly.

1 JC: The, so they got me this computer. At first I thought it was just going to be a
2 used thing, but I was just, couldn't believe it, it was all brand new, a Dell with a big, what
3 do you call the TV part of it?

4 LC: The monitor?

5 JC: Yeah, with a huge monitor, because I have bad eyes.

6 LC: Right, exactly.

7 JC: And everything, all, it was all brand-new Dell with all the equipment, real
8 high-tech. My son came over and put it all together for me and my son was just
9 fascinated, he couldn't believe that they gave you this.

10 LC: And this came to you through the VA?

11 JC: Yeah, it was through the VA program in Boston and for, it was a program just
12 for 100 percent disabled total and permanent veterans to try to get them, the idea was
13 through the computer and the internet, they could make friends and—

14 LC: Pursue interests and yeah.

15 JC: And along that.

16 LC: Get engaged.

17 JC: Right, I think if they knew, I don't know if they would have given it to me if
18 they knew my sole purpose was to get transgender information.

19 LC: Well, probably not, probably not.

20 JC: But a lot of it, a lot of the guys I knew that used them, they had contact with
21 other Vietnam veterans and that was the idea. But anyway, after I got that, they paid for
22 tutoring; I had a tutor come in and—

23 LC: To teach you how to use it.

24 JC: Yeah, and it opened up right from day one, that really was one of the first
25 things I did was hit transgender, I was just getting familiar with the term, wasn't even
26 sure what it meant and at that time, when I got the computer, I actually was, I was living
27 as—from the time I left my wife, I'm going to backtrack.

28 LC: That's okay.

29 JC: 1997, I left New Hampshire and went down to Boston for a year and got an
30 apartment and I had the apartment for about a month and I just went out one day, went
31 down to the Goodwill store and I bought up a bunch of, just went nuts, all cheap clothes,

1 I went nuts, bought a couple of big bags of all kinds of stuff, went back to my apartment
2 and took all my men's clothes, put them back in the two bags and tried and put on what I
3 thought I looked best, my summer dress, it had all daisies on it, my summer dress and a
4 pair of sandals and I went back to the Goodwill store and made a donation of all of my
5 men's clothes. The same person was there that just saw me buy all of the other stuff and
6 she just kind of had this look on her face, "Okay."

7 LC: I'll bet she did.

8 JC: And, but all my life, at least, I had done this purge, but I always purged of the
9 female clothes, this is the first time I actually purged all of my male clothes and said,
10 "I'm never going to wear men's clothes again."

11 LC: Wow.

12 JC: I went out and got a cup of coffee. By this time I didn't have the computer
13 and I had a little information about the International Federation for Gender Education, I
14 was just totally going blind, I went to a doctor outside of Boston and had some hormone
15 tests done and he told me that I had a lot of estrogen and he said that the imbalance may
16 have been what was causing a lot of my depression and my lack of sex drive and he
17 wanted me to start taking some Thorazine, not Thorazine, what's the male hormone?

18 LC: Testosterone.

19 JC: Yeah, I have a hard time saying that word; I can say estrogen without a
20 problem.

21 LC: I think that's a sign too, anyway.

22 JC: Yeah, and—

23 LC: So he wanted you to take shots or pills or something?

24 JC: Yeah, he wanted me to go on male hormone and he, his exact language was it
25 will bring back your male aggression and your sex drive, and you know, I just kind of
26 looked at him saying, "I don't want that."

27 LC: Why would I want that, right.

28 JC: Leave me alone, I even said something to him once, "I don't think I ever
29 actually had any male aggression." You know, you can look at that as a problem; I don't
30 look at it as a problem. The doctor's at the VA didn't know anything; they recommended
31 that I got the Fenway Clinic, so I went to this other clinic in Boston.

1 LC: Fenways.

2 JC: Yeah, if you're familiar with the Fenways, and they, I saw a nurse there and
3 she took more blood types and stuff and then she asked me what I preferred and I said I
4 would rather go on an estrogen program and she told me about their program and she was
5 just so neat, she just kind of looked at me and everything. They had tough program, they
6 were I think a little too tough and she did my height and weight and all this other kind of
7 stuff and looked at my hands and feet and really was looking for other feminine qualities,
8 which not all transgender women have to a certain extreme.

9 LC: That's right.

10 JC: But she said, "Yeah, you're a great candidate for our program." And she got
11 me into their support group and stuff. I had to wait a year before they put me on the
12 estrogen program.

13 LC: And was that a protocol that they had internally that you had to—?

14 JC: Yeah and that's most, that's procedure for just about all treatment.

15 LC: And what, just to explain the reason for that for someone who wouldn't,
16 wouldn't get that, why would they want to do that, like to make sure?

17 JC: Yeah, to make sure, there's a fair amount of people with other issues, a lot of
18 gay, I won't say a lot, but a fair amount of gay men that because of their religious
19 upbringing, they get it drilled into their head that being gay is bad and evil and there are a
20 lot of documented cases when effeminate gay men will say, well, maybe I'm a
21 transsexual, if I have sex, then I could have sex with men and I won't be, I could still go
22 to church.

23 LC: So it's to—

24 JC: And there's other things, but that's one of the key red flags and there are
25 people that are just cross dressers and they too kind of, doctors say if you're this
26 comfortable with wearing clothes once in a while and there's several factors and the
27 transgender is such a vague realm of people and when you get into therapy with these
28 issues there really is a minority, minority in the transgender community that are actually
29 found as to be clinically, what they call gender dysphoria or gender identity crisis that
30 qualify for that extreme of hormone treatments and then body altering surgeries. Because

1 the people, the hormone treatment ain't bad, that can be reversed, but once you do any of
2 these gender-altering surgeries.

3 LC: Right, I mean this is a life; this is a life commitment, life change. Your,
4 obviously your transition has been one that, I mean you're completely comfortable with, I
5 know that from meeting you and your interests now include working with and being
6 associated with other transgender veterans.

7 JC: Very much so, we've founded our own organization, Monica Helms and
8 Angela Brightfeather are actually the co-founders.

9 LC: Of TAVA.

10 JC: Of TAVA, the Transgender American Veterans Association, but I've been
11 involved with it from the very beginning and even before the beginnings on going back
12 several years ago when we were trying to have a transgender march on Washington,
13 similar to the lesbian and gay marches. That never got off the ground, we just could not
14 get that organized, but from the roots of that, I proposed having a transgender veteran's
15 march on Washington at the time. This is from the roots of where the concept of TAVA
16 came from, but I really had this vision of transgender veterans from all around the
17 country with a bus from every state and a real, you know, massive demonstration at the
18 Vietnam Memorial, because I would love to, I just had this huge vision that, and the far-
19 right attacking us and I just couldn't see how they would get away with it when we were
20 all veterans.

21 LC: It would make it more difficult for them.

22 JC: Yeah, just because we're transgender, we're still veterans that served our
23 country and that was my vision, well we never just got—but TAVA which is existing has
24 had two conferences in Washington is doing well and growing.

25 LC: Any estimate, I mean are you on the board, Janice.

26 JC: Yeah, I'm on the board of directors, yeah.

27 LC: About how many active—you know, whether they're members or not, I don't
28 know if you guys, if you make that distinction, but about how many active people
29 associated with TAVA at this point?

30 JC: I think there's around sixty, that we say active.

31 LC: Wow.

1 JC: There's more, I would say around sixty that are on a regular that are listed as
2 members and—

3 LC: And tell me about the visit to the Wall and, that TAVA made, was it last year,
4 in 2004, or to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

5 JC: Yeah, that was last year was the first one, and we had a repeat this year that
6 there weren't as many people.

7 LC: Okay.

8 JC: But last year's was the first and it was probably, as highly emotional as, I
9 don't know if it's psychological, but I have been to the Wall before as Janice, as a female
10 and I don't know if it's estrogens or psychology or just my own maturity that the first
11 time, I just found it so much easier to cry, and I don't know if it's a combination of all of
12 those or much more from the stoic approach that I usual had when I went to the Wall. I
13 found, you know, the transgender veterans are so emotional, so much more emotional
14 than going with a bunch of guys who kind of, you know, they'll pat each other on the
15 back and kind of look about, "Should I hug him?" There's that kind of standoffish.

16 LC: Right, because of gender roles.

17 JC: Right, right, it's so embedded in the military and it was just so much of an
18 emotional, emotional trip and when, and going to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We
19 actually did draw straws kind of thing to see which two would actually bring up the
20 wreath and but just, the fact that we got to, and there was an issue over this a few years
21 ago over a gay veterans group, that they wouldn't let them.

22 LC: The, sorry, Arlington people would not.

23 JC: Yeah, let them put a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, they ended
24 up winning, but they, they had a much harder time.

25 LC: Yes. What did you guys encounter, I'm sorry, what did TAVA encounter?

26 JC: We had no real problem up until the very end when the wreath arrived it said
27 Transgender Veterans, the wreath disappeared for a while, the wreaths arrive right in
28 these, like a back room where the honor guard is and they come, they arrive that morning
29 and they just schedule these things right behind each other.

30 LC: Right, they have multiple ceremonials lined up.

31 JC: Right, all day they may have as many, I don't know a couple dozen.

1 LC: Sure.

2 JC: Organizations that are putting wreaths or personal people and you've got to
3 schedule for these things well in advance and I think we were just listed as TAVA all
4 along and they just thought it was, maybe they thought we were the Tallahassee
5 American Veterans Association.

6 LC: Right.

7 JC: And when the wreath arrived and said Transgender American Veterans
8 Association we think somebody kind to try to bury it in the back somewhere. They
9 claimed that they didn't have it shortly before the ceremony and Angela, because I was
10 up arranging all this stuff and I had a cell phone I had to call back to get Angela.

11 LC: And who's Angela?

12 JC: Angela Brightfeather is the co-founder.

13 LC: Oh, one of the organizers.

14 JC: Angela and Monica basically are the founders, the president and the activities
15 coordinator for the titles. So she, and she's, she's a big woman and she was a DI and she
16 pulls no punches and she called immediately the commander on the honor guard and
17 advised him of the situation that the honor guard is saying our wreath is not there and I
18 guess they found it real quick, real quick, you know. But that was the only, you know,
19 and the ceremony went without an issue.

20 LC: But even in, but even within this whole experience, of course, you're still
21 getting what felt like, whether it was intentional or not isn't really established, but it felt
22 like discrimination from active duty personnel, I mean is that fair?

23 JC: Yeah, I mean, that's what, we were convinced that it was deliberate, that they
24 just, it goes back to the homophobia, transphobia attitude. Even in the honor guard. You
25 can't get more military than the honor guard, you know the whole, you know, ultimate
26 uniform thing and, but, you know, to actually have the honor guard lay the wreath,
27 introduce us and salute the wreath and in reality, they were admitting that the transgender
28 veterans have given the ultimate sacrifice for their country, that was what it was all about.

29 LC: Janice, let me ask you about other public ceremonies that you've gone to,
30 ceremonies that are connected to military service like Memorial Day ceremonies or
31 Veteran's Day. Yesterday, you mentioned to me outside of the interview that you've had

1 some strange reactions to your appearance at some of these ceremonies over the years,
2 the last couple, three years or four years. Can you tell me anything about those?

3 JC: Yeah, I've, came to, the realization has come to me that I kind of knew
4 subconsciously that women veterans are treated differently from men veterans but I'd just
5 seen it so first hand from all the years, especially up in southern New Hampshire, the area
6 of New Hampshire where I lived in Salem, where for several years, every Memorial Day,
7 every Veteran's Day I've gone to different ceremonies and would wear either my
8 uniform or a hat with my ribbons on it, I would wear something that's totally
9 recognizable as a decorated Vietnam veteran. And all the years with male clothes and
10 with the male appearance, I would always have people shaking my hand, asking me
11 where I served and reporters asking me questions, you know and maybe taking my
12 picture. But from the very first time I went to one of these ceremonies as female with the
13 same ribbons and, it was just, all of the sudden we weren't, I wasn't as, I don't know, I
14 hate to say, I would important, I'll use that word. It just, other veterans they wouldn't
15 come up and ask me where I served, nobody would take a picture, nobody, I'm talking
16 about the media, the people doing the presentation, other veterans, it was like you
17 became, I became invisible.

18 LC: Invisible.

19 JC: Yeah, and wearing, you know, exact same ribbons as a man that people would
20 have—you know, and I just seen that grow more every year, especially since I got more
21 effeminate.

22 LC: As your public appearance became more effeminate.

23 JC: Yeah, wearing, I would wear the same battle ribbons, you know, light black
24 jackets and one of the women's caps, the same as I pretty much did as John and it's like
25 people look right through you. They'll knock you over to shake some guy's; some man's
26 hand and occasionally someone would say something, "Well gee, were you a nurse?"
27 But even that, it's so rare.

28 LC: If somebody does ask you that nowadays, what do you reply to them?

29 JC: Oh, that's kind of a personal quagmire for me and it depends on my mood.

30 LC: I'm sure, I can believe that.

1 JC: Because, I mean, sometimes I will say yeah, I was training, I'll try not to lie,
2 and I'll say I was trained in the medical corps and I was sent over to Vietnam to be in the
3 medical corps and they ended up, so I don't say well yeah, I ended up serving a year in
4 Vietnam as a clerk and I'll just leave it at that. Other times, you know, if I get irritable
5 and somebody kind of, you know, gets on my nerves with war stories or crap, I will say
6 actually, I served as male and I served on a firebase on the Laotian border and people
7 kind of go, oh. But either way, I just feel like this subject suddenly changes and
8 transgender issues or basic gender issues, a woman can't do this and either way as a
9 transgender woman or as a woman period, you know, I end up feeling slighted. You
10 know, from other veterans and from the media, women just do not get the same respect.

11 LC: Are there other veteran's organizations besides TAVA that you are or have
12 been a member of during your post transition life?

13 JC: I'm still, well I'm a lifetime member of the Disabled American Veterans and I
14 belong to an American Legion Post and I belong to VFW (Veteran of Foreign Wars) and
15 all three of them were issues over my discharge papers which you can't change, which do
16 have me with the name John and obviously male, all three organizations I went through a
17 lot of paper work and a lot of arguments to get them to change.

18 LC: Get them to change your legal name?

19 JC: Yeah.

20 LC: Your name that's registered.

21 JC: Right, and respect my gender and the VFW was one of the weirdest, for a year
22 they kept on sending my VFW magazines with a label on it to Mrs. John Carney.

23 LC: They just couldn't, they just couldn't handle it.

24 JC: Yeah, and even it at first they had it to Mrs. Janice Carney. It took me over a
25 year and threatening a lawsuit until I finally got—

26 LC: Really?

27 JC: Yeah.

28 LC: Did you keep all the correspondence from those exchanges?

29 JC: No, I didn't keep a lot of that stuff.

30 LC: Okay, but the VFW was the most resistant. What about the Legion Post, how
31 did they react?

1 JC: Down here, the commander acted really weird, he didn't know what to do,
2 you know he was just, and I kept on telling him, well you just do it like you would do it
3 with any married woman that has a DD and that's pretty much what I tell a lot of them,
4 just follow whatever procedure you have for somebody that has a DD-214 because it's
5 the same thing if you're married, if you served under your name and then you got
6 married, your DD-214 is still going to have your original name on it, so it's the same, it's
7 the same procedure, whatever your procedure is for that.

8 LC: Right, but that doesn't go down very well or not?

9 JC: No, they kind of look at it and say well this is different, this is, and this guy
10 really was and I had a copy of my name change, a copy that I had a surgery from the
11 doctor, the court order, their both court orders and all you have to say is you're refusing,
12 you're refusing to follow a court order. Especially with a name change and a court
13 documentation that you had SRS (Sex Reassignment Surgery) surgery and are legally this
14 gender, both court documents, you present those for any reason when you're changing
15 your name and your gender, to anybody anywhere and they refuse to do it, they're in
16 violation of a court order.

17 LC: And you've had to explain this and go round and round about this.

18 JC: Yeah, so many times that it's unbelievable. What was funny at the American
19 Legion Post though, with this guy, "Well I have to go talk to the secretary, I don't know
20 what to do with this." The woman that handles all of the paper work, she just basically
21 said, "So what?"

22 LC: She said so what?

23 JC: "You've got the DD-214, you've got the name change, you've got, what's the
24 issue?" I mean she just really, she just couldn't understand what his problem was.
25 "You've got everything you need, there's no problem here, you're creating a problem."

26 LC: Right, it would be interesting to hear him explain what his problem was, but
27 you probably, he probably never had to offer an explanation of his position, whereas you
28 constantly, over and over had to explain your position, I'm sure.

29 JC: Yeah, and it gets, it just gets old and—

30 LC: I'm sure, I can imagine.

1 JC: And the carry-over, which is the other issue is even if I'm involved in
2 somebody's organization for a period of time, it's still this constant thing, well are you,
3 people are constantly saying, "Oh, your husband served in this." I can't, I lost count how
4 many time's I've heard that, "Oh, was your husband a Vietnam veteran, are you in the
5 auxiliary?"

6 LC: Right, right.

7 JC: They still, there's this, and I think it's rapidly changing because of Iraq, more
8 than ever, you know, women are serving in these combat support units and getting
9 discharged. There was even, Congress, what was his name, I can't think of his name, one
10 of the congressman or representatives just tried to push through a bill real quick that
11 changed, to change the Army, you know what military occupations women can serve in
12 to try to—

13 LC: To restrict them.

14 JC: To restrict them in serving in the combat support units and that's, I'm glad
15 that didn't fly.

16 LC: Well, yeah, they're pretty tight for man or woman power right now, so.

17 JC: That and you know, I belong to the Service Members Legal Defense League
18 (Service Members Legal Defense Network (SLDN)) which is fighting to do away with
19 the don't ask, don't tell policy and I was trying to think, in the American Veterans for
20 Equality, I'm a member of that.

21 LC: So you're very actively, publicly identifying yourself with your service to the
22 country, I mean it's so integral to who you are, in at least in the public sense.

23 JC: Yeah, that's one of my, I actually wrestle with this at times that I'm just so
24 anti-war and passive type of person but, yeah, I'm proud of the fact that I served my
25 country and want that recognition, it's, it's just one of those things. Even when I went
26 through all of my transitioning, you know, from male to female roles, the, one of the
27 things my doctor, my therapist in Boston was constantly reminding me and I, you know, I
28 knew that some things change and some things don't change. Even as I got more
29 comfortable in being a female, I always knew what it was, the stuff from Vietnam and
30 certain things that were, fifty years of my life were not going to go away.

31 LC: That's right, yeah.

1 JC: It's a, at times it's very difficult for me to maintain both sides of my life but I
2 think, I've learned quite a bit myself from meeting other women veterans and you know,
3 you can still have that devotion and there's some pretty tough women out there. I don't, I
4 sometimes fall into our societies traps that all, I'm this and I always wanted to be this and
5 I sometimes stereotype myself as a female, it's kind of mind-boggling.

6 LC: Well it's, it's a very, I think important and interesting, historically important
7 thing that you've done to share as much as you have with the oral history project of the
8 Vietnam Archive and I'm very grateful to you for all of the time you've spent. I just
9 want to ask one final thing, Janice, is there anything that you would like to say in
10 summary or any observations you'd like to offer about any topic that I haven't asked you
11 about in concluding the interview? I know I've taken you all over the place and you've
12 hung in there very, very well.

13 JC: I have, one of the things that just popped into my head is an organization I
14 didn't mention was American Veterans for Peace. I think that's a very important
15 organization.

16 LC: Are you affiliated with them?

17 JC: Off and on, in fact I've been trying to join, there's a local chapter down here,
18 but I've spoken at some of there events at Boston and stuff.

19 LC: Okay.

20 JC: Gone to different rallies, you know, protesting the war, but—

21 LC: The current war.

22 JC: Yeah, the Iraqi war and I just think that veterans are the greatest resource on
23 the, war veterans particularly, on what war is like and what is really worth, you know,
24 fighting and dying for and we, war veterans, are the ones that, are the only ones that can
25 speak out. I'm really, really, hoping and drumming and meditating and praying that we
26 start seeing some of these Iraqi veterans coming back speaking out similar to the Vietnam
27 Veterans for Peace did, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War did. That if the veterans
28 that came back from Vietnam that were disillusioned or are illusioned, depends on how
29 you look at it, that went to senate hearings and spoke out about what was going on in
30 there and Vietnam may not have, Vietnam could have gone on for another ten years;
31 Vietnam could have ended it like Korea with just a stalemate that seemed never-ending.

1 That to me is the biggest thing that veterans have got to speak in the public and tell
2 what's really going on in these wars, especially letting the congressmen and the
3 politicians know what's really going over there. I think that's part of, part of our issue,
4 what the Pentagon represents to congressmen and legislators and, it's not necessarily
5 what's really going on and only the actual soldiers on the line or whatever you want to
6 call it, that have been in these wars can really, really educate the public.

7 LC: And you feel that's a responsibility that you have as a veteran, as well as a
8 privilege and an opportunity?

9 JC: I think it's a moral responsibility that after what I saw in Vietnam and my
10 knowledge of the history of the war, for me to sit back and what I see or perceive as
11 history repeating itself, making the same mistakes.

12 LC: In Iraq.

13 JC: Right that I'm morally obligated to speak out and I think all Vietnam veterans
14 that have similar feelings. If they sit back and don't say nothing, who can educate the
15 public?

16 LC: I think it's a good question and something that other veterans no doubt will
17 give greater consideration to I think as time goes on and as people study these interviews,
18 Vietnam veterans have a lot to say about current and future foreign policy decisions and
19 particularly commitment of troops, so I thank you for your observations. Janice, thank
20 you also so much for all of the time you've put into this.

21 JC: You're quite welcome, it's been, it's been an experience.