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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Jim Green
Conducted by Kelly Crager
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Transcribed by Alexia Romero**

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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 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager, conducting an oral history interview with Mr.
2 Jim Green. Today is 21 July 2009, and we are in Lubbock, Texas. Mr. Green, I want to
3 thank you once again for consenting to this interview, for participating in the Oral
4 History Project here at the Vietnam Archive.

5 Jim Green: Well, I'm glad to be here, and like I said earlier I want to thank the
6 Vietnam Texas Tech Archive here, for capturing these interviews. Not just me, but
7 everybody the entire aspects. I think it's very important that it be recorded for future
8 generations and history.

9 KC: Absolutely, absolutely. Well, to start this interview, I'd like to get a little
10 background, biographical information if I may. Can you tell me when you were born and
11 where?

12 JG: I was born right here in Lubbock, Texas. Raised down in Santa Anna, Texas,
13 Post, Texas, and spent most of my life in Plainview, Texas. Basically, my mother and
14 father, my father was a high school—well no he was a school—public school
15 superintendent and later he retired to just a principal of an elementary school. So he spent
16 his entire life in public education. My mother was a school teacher. So they were middle
17 class, average, very average for this area of the country. I graduated from Plainview High
18 School in 1965 and I went to West Texas State University, up in Canyon. West Texas

1 A&M today. Before I went to college, I had a really good friend who was an army
2 fanatic. He *loved* the army. He ended up making a career out of the army and he had
3 rubbed off some of that influence perhaps on me because when I went to WT, West
4 Texas University, I joined the Army ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] program.
5 And it was kind of fun, I enjoyed it. I liked the way the army is organized, you know at
6 0800 you do this, at 0830 you do this, it's very structured. Things are lined up perfectly,
7 and everything. So I enjoyed it. It was fun. When it came time to select branches, I
8 wasn't really considering a career in the army, but I found it interesting and I selected
9 infantry, armor, and artillery, as my branches. And of course, I got infantry and I was
10 very pleased and very happy. So yeah, let's see, yeah, I went ahead and graduated. Trying
11 to decide what I should put in what I shouldn't, how much detail I should put—

12 KC: Well, let me—always as much detail as you want more or less. But let me
13 back up here a little bit, and get back to your childhood for a little while. You grew up in
14 these various towns here in west and central Texas. Like Santa Anna and etc. Why did
15 your parents move around? Was your father moving from one job as superintendent to
16 another job or teaching jobs?

17 JG: Yes, he was in Santa Anna as a superintendent and he found a better job in
18 Post, Texas. We were in Post, Texas for three years and the way that it was explained to
19 me there was a controversy in the Board of Education and there were, I don't know, six
20 members, and three of them were for my father and three of them were against. Finally
21 his contract expired, and they didn't renew it, so basically, he was fired from Post, Texas,
22 as superintendent. But then he got a great job up in Plainview, Texas as a principal of an
23 elementary school, and he ended up serving the rest of his years in public education as a
24 principal, an elementary principle. And he loved it, he loved it so much, he enjoyed it.

25 KC: That's very good. I assume that your mother traveled with him along
26 teaching at these various stops.

27 JG: She did once the children were old enough; their children were old enough to
28 where she could leave them and go teach.

29 KC: How many other siblings did you have?

30 JG: I've got one older brother and one younger sister.

1 KC: Okay. Now, moving around like this, now some people would say there's not
2 a whole lot of difference between one West Texas town or another, but when you were a
3 child and moving around and different schools, and different high schools, was it difficult
4 making friends? Was it difficult adjusting to these different moves?

5 JG: I would say looking back, my move between 2nd and 3rd grade was—I don't
6 want to say traumatic, that's too strong, but yes it was, I would say difficult. You know, a
7 kid gets settled in a routine, and they expect the same thing every day and then when you
8 move and enter the 3rd grade of new school, everybody's different, yeah it has an effect. I
9 would say it did. And then up in Plainview—West Texas is lovely, it's great, but boy is it
10 flat and bland! At least down there in Post, I could run around in the canyons for fun. But
11 up in Plainview there was nothing but flat agricultural land.

12 KC: Right, Post is beautiful. There's no doubt about that. So, what other sorts of
13 things did you do as a child?

14 JG: Pretty standard, pretty normal. Played around, watched television a lot. I wish
15 I had read more. I wish I had paid more attention to my 7th grade English teacher.
16 (Laughs)

17 KC: Now why do you say that?

18 JG: I don't think my English is that good. My writing, my spelling, as you know, I
19 got older and particularly even now, I wished I was more able to express myself,
20 particularly in writing better. Yeah, pretty standard, I didn't participate in too many sports
21 or anything. I played in the band, I played the trombone. I started that in the 5th grade. I
22 was under the impression that once you start it, you could never quit. You had to keep it
23 up! And finally my senior year in high school, I discovered you can quit! So I quit and
24 played the drum, my senior year. And I played the drum also for a year and a half at West
25 Texas State University, in their band. I enjoyed the drum, it was fun. But I knew it wasn't
26 my career. I wasn't musically inclined. I didn't have the genetics. That's for sure!

27 KC: What about school? Was there any particular subject that you enjoyed more
28 than others?

29 JG: The history, the political science. Yes, that thing—the geography, the social
30 studies. Oh, yes.

31 KC: What was it that made it so important to you?

1 JG: I'd say you get one or two good teachers. One or two good teachers and that
2 made the difference.

3 KC: So you worked your way through high school and you graduated in
4 Plainview in 1965, you said. What did you want to do when you were finished? Did you
5 know college was something you were going to look into and the ROTC?

6 JG: No, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. It was pretty well
7 predetermined that I would go to college because all my family had gone. My brother had
8 gone. My brother had gone down here to Texas Tech and flunked out. So when it came
9 my time to go to college, my parents basically said, "Mmm, you're going to West
10 Texas." It's a smaller school, my brother gone up there. He had been successful at WT.
11 So they said, "You're going to WT." So it wasn't much of a choice at that time. And of
12 course at that time, I didn't have the internet; I didn't realize that there was such a broad
13 selection out there in the world. And when you grow up in a small town, the only thing
14 you see is farmers and merchants and insurance men, you know service—it's a small
15 town, you don't realize there's a big world out there.

16 KC: Sure.

17 JG: I went to WT and I had no idea what I was going to do. So I started out as a
18 history major, and I ended up graduating with a degree in social studies, which was kind
19 of watered down, diluted.

20 KC: Right, right. How was your time up there in West Texas?

21 JG: Oh, I enjoyed it. It was good. Anytime you're going to college it's a good life.
22 I mean you're basically your own boss. You're the one that determines how hard you're
23 going to study, when you're going to college, you know, when you're going to show up
24 to class. So it was a good time. It was great. I enjoyed it.

25 KC: Now you graduated high school in 1965. You mentioned that you were
26 somewhat insulated from the wider world but were you aware or how aware were you of
27 larger global issues? The U.S. in the Cold War, the Kennedy administration, what's going
28 on in Southeast Asia, you know, Cuban Missile Crisis, you know these kinds of things.
29 Do you remember those?

30 JG: Yes, I became a news addict when the airliner [correction: passenger ship]
31 *Andrea Doria* was hit by the *Stockholm* off the coast of New York in 1956. And that

1 captured my imagination and attention. I saw it on the Today Show, I think it was. The
2 ship was slowly sinking and from then on, for the rest of my life, up until now, right up
3 till this day I watch the news every night. I mean, it's a religious thing. I mean, at 5:30
4 I'm either on CBS or I'm on NBC, or now I switch back and forth between the two
5 channels. And so I'm a news addict. So yes, I was just glued to the news all my life.

6 KC: Well, what do you remember about that? When the Cold War begins to heat
7 up in the 1950s and the Eisenhower administration and then of course Kennedy, and the
8 very important crisis of the Kennedy administration for example. What do you remember
9 about the evolution of the Cold War?

10 JG: I remember every single event that occurred. What surprised me is that I
11 never really understood the true significance of those events. For example, during the
12 Cuban Missile Crisis—Oh I knew there was a crisis, I knew Kennedy was smoking, I
13 knew they were stopping the Russian ships. I knew they—I knew all these things. I knew
14 all the facts, but it was only until years later that I could actually sit down and say, “Oh
15 my gosh! Whoo! We were very close to nuclear war. Oh, my golly!” I didn't understand
16 the significance—it's like when hurricane Katrina hit, I thought, “Oh, a hurricane.” And
17 then a month later, I thought, “Oh my gosh that really was a serious hurricane!”

18 KC: Yeah, you would've been, what? Probably 15, 16 years old. About that time?

19 JG: I would think so, I would think so. Of course, talking the news, you know
20 yesterday we celebrated the moon landing and of course the Kennedy Assassination
21 stands out in my lifetime.

22 KC: Well, tell me about that a little bit. What do you remember? Where were
23 you?

24 JG: Oh, my gosh! That's something that just exploded! And what impressed me
25 was how quickly that news spread across the nation. Even in that day and age. Today it's
26 taken for granted with all the internet services, things go fast! But I was in high school
27 and at 12:30 I finished lunch, I went to study hall and there was football game that night
28 and so I went down to the band hall to slowly get ready, which was a way to get out of
29 study hall. So I got a pass from the teacher and I went down to the band hall, and about
30 12:45 the choir was in their singing—they were just rehearsing you know, *God Bless*
31 *America*, or some patriotic song. And I heard one of the parents say, “Oh, isn't that so

1 appropriate?" And I thought, "Hmm, what does that mean?" And I was probably down
2 there at one o'clock and somebody had a radio, and they were saying, "Oh, yeah,
3 Kennedy had been shot." And so, from 12:30 when I went to study hall, to one o'clock I
4 had already heard about it. I mean that was what 30 minutes or maybe less, it could have
5 been as short as 20 minutes. It was already out on the news, one of the parents had come
6 in with a radio, heard it on the car, so the word was spreading (snaps) that fast, which
7 impressed me. And so, oh glory, for us that day I went home got a radio, brought it back,
8 and we went up to—I can't remember Pampa or Border—I can't remember, for the
9 football game, and of course everybody listening to the radio and everything. So, oh
10 yeah.

11 KC: How did that affect you and in a larger sense your generation in this region
12 with the Kennedy Assassination?

13 JG: I would say, really it was a news event. If you turned off the television, you
14 didn't know anything about it. I didn't think it affected me personally that much. I mean,
15 yeah, not personally. It was—you know the Cuban Missile Crisis didn't affect me,
16 personally. The Cold War didn't affect me, personally. But on the broader picture of the
17 nation, it was a very big, very important of course.

18 KC: Well, what about the role of the United States in Southeast Asia? The
19 Kennedy administration of course, the U.S. participation begins to ramp up and then
20 Johnson, of course begins to commit ground troops to Vietnam. You graduated in 1965,
21 1965 is essentially when the United States really begins to say, "We're here to stay, for
22 whatever purpose." What did you know about the Vietnam conflict, the Vietnam issue?

23 JG: I followed the news daily. I knew what was going on. I don't think I have the
24 perspective that I do today, the historical perspective to look back and see. At that time, I
25 thought, "Oh my gosh, well they fired on our destroyer, so yeah, we're responding, we're
26 you know, we're doing what any country would do, defending itself in that situation. And
27 so, I thought, "Well, I guess we're doing the right thing." I didn't have any doubts at that
28 time. The doubts did not come in until later and for me personally, the doubts arose when
29 President Johnson would start the bombing in the North and then he stopped the bombing
30 in the North [24 December 1965] and then he started it again [1 February 1966]. And
31 then he stopped it. I was sitting there thinking, "Is this any way to fight a war?" I guess I

1 was used to the World War II type model, not the Korean War, but the World War II.
2 And I kept thinking, “This isn’t any way to fight a war.” Of course, then my Army ROTC
3 training at West Texas State University, we had received the Principles of War and I kept
4 thinking, “They are not following the Principles of War. This is not the way to fight a
5 war. This is not the way to win a war.” And I kept thinking, “What are they doing?” And
6 of course I understand it; it’s a very difficult thing to analyze. The country was in a rock
7 and a hard place. I understand that all the historical legacy of the containment policies of
8 stopping communism and everything. Of course, today it sounds like a joke to say, stop
9 communism because today communism is gone. But in those days, it was much more
10 serious. I didn’t take it really serious as young person but I knew about it. I knew that we
11 were—the purpose was to stop the communist and stop aggression. I wasn’t what you
12 would call a radical fanatic in that area, but I was conscious of the fact. But yeah, I
13 became disillusioned very early, not because of the war itself, but because the way they
14 were conducting the war, the way they were fighting the war, the purpose, the objective,
15 the tactics, strategy, everything that was being used.

16 KC: Well, if you would, please go back on that and elaborate a little bit more.
17 You say that the strategy doesn’t make sense, the bombing, the bombing halts and then
18 the resumption of bombing again and the overall approach. Based on what you remember
19 about who you were at that time, you say these doubts were creeping. Elaborate on this if
20 you would?

21 JG: Yeah, well you know the Principles of War; one of them is “Objective” and I
22 kept thinking, “Okay, what’s our objective? What are we doing here?” And I understand
23 the need for limited war also. Some people say it would have been nice to invade the
24 North, but of course, like in the Korean War, that could have brought in Russia or China,
25 you don’t know, you don’t know. But I just felt, and of course as the years went by, it
26 became more pronounced. I thought, “My gosh, from a military point of view, are we on
27 the right course?” And the thing that hit me the hardest, I think, the most profound aspect
28 of that entire war in my mind was by, I don’t know ’67, ’68, ’69 for sure, most of the
29 American people knew that war was heading in the wrong direction. It wasn’t going
30 anywhere. Something was wrong with it and what shocked me was our nation, with all of
31 our resources, with all of our great people, great minds, great universities, could not

1 change the course. It was like either a train on a railroad track or it was like a giant ocean
2 ship and there was no way to really stop it or change course. It's kind of like if you're in
3 a situation and you notice things are not going well, you ought to stop at least to sit down
4 and think, "Where it's going wrong, how can I change it? What should I do?" But in the
5 Vietnam War it was almost like we on a runaway train, there was no way to change, no
6 way to stop. And I kept thinking, "Gee, isn't there any great general or great political
7 leader or great university professor who can come out and say, "Wait, wait, whoa, stop
8 time out! Where are we? Where are we going? How do we change?"

9 KC: What do you think accounted for that lack of leadership, lack of ideas?

10 JG: I think it had to come from the president's office on down. I think that no
11 president wanted to be the first to lose a war, and I think President Johnson kept thinking,
12 "You know if I keep this more pressure, more pressure, more pressure, eventually the
13 North will collapse." And the same with President Nixon, I think he kept thinking, "I
14 don't want to be the one who loses the war!" So he thought lets go Vietnamization, let's
15 Vietnamitize the war, turn it over to them and pull out slowly.

16 KC: Now you were at West Texas from '65 until I presume 1969?

17 JG: That's correct.

18 KC: When you graduated. Now, granted West Texas University is not Berkeley,
19 California, but how was the war perceived and received on the campus of West Texas?

20 JG: I think all of West Texas is fairly isolated, and it's fairly quiet and
21 conservative. Yes, you're right; it's not like the West Coast or the East Coast where
22 you're constantly protesting and things like that. No. In fact, if you turned the television
23 off, I don't think you would've even known there was a Vietnam War.

24 KC: Were you aware of the protesting of the war?

25 JG: Oh yes, through the television, through the television.

26 KC: What'd you think about that?

27 JG: It didn't really bother me. In a way, I agreed with them. So yeah, it didn't
28 bother me or disturb me at all that they were protesting the war. Of course, I have never
29 endorsed any type of protest that is damaging or destructive and terroristic in nature. I've
30 never pro—that's completely off the scale. But any type of peaceful protest, I though,

1 “Yeah, they’re right, they have a right to do that.” And I think it didn’t bother me at all,
2 in fact I wish I had been on the West Coast! (Laughs)

3 KC: Now, there you were in ROTC at West Texas and there was a very good
4 chance that in ROTC, you were going to find yourself in this conflict. Did you give that
5 any thought?

6 JG: Oh yes, of course. Oh yes. I’d say from the very start of my freshman year. I
7 knew that I was going to Vietnam. I just felt that. I mean I was in the Army ROTC, I
8 wanted to go infantry and so the handwriting is on the wall. So yeah. In a way that was an
9 advantage because it gave me the four, five, six years to prepare for Vietnam. So
10 physiologically, mentally I was well versed, I was prepared. I’ve always felt sorry for the
11 poor guy who graduates from high school, is drafted, goes through basic training,
12 advanced infantry training, and wham! He’s over in Vietnam. I had a chance to slowly
13 mature into the aspect of the war.

14 KC: Now, when you were in the ROTC, was it a matter of wanting to avoid the
15 draft? Was it a matter of getting ahead of the curve so you could find your place in this
16 overall system? What was it that really motivated you for ROTC?

17 JG: No, it was the friend that I had in Plainview, Texas. He loved the army. He
18 was an army fanatic. I think when everybody else on western day in high school would
19 show up wearing Army—excuse me, would show up wearing cowboy clothes; he would
20 show up wearing army clothes. (Laughs) And he bought a medical jeep—no, excuse me a
21 medical vehicle [ambulance] from World War II and drove that to high school! He really
22 loved the military. His father had been to the Signal Corps in World War II and he [the
23 son] was a military fanatic, I’d say. He wanted to go to West Point but in the football
24 game he got his knee bent back the wrong way, and so he almost lost his military career.
25 But he told me, he said he went to the [army] doctor and they looked at his knee, and they
26 said, “You need to see a specialist.” So they wrote up the paper work gave it to him to go
27 see a specialist, when he stepped out of the office he looked around he just threw the
28 paper work into the trash and got into the military and started a full 20 years in the
29 Military Police [MP].

30 KC: Oh, wow. That worked out real well for him then.

1 JG: Right. He didn't go to Vietnam, but you know he served—served his country
2 in the Military Police. And he loved it! And he rubbed off on me. So when I was at WT,
3 you know, I thought, “Yeah, let's try this.”

4 KC: Now you're at West Texas again, in the ROTC, and one of the great water
5 shed moments of the war of course, is the Tet Offensive in the spring, or—excuse me, in
6 the winter, January or February of 1968. What do you remember about that?

7 JG: Oh, I remember having it on the news but once again like I said earlier, I
8 think it was only months, if not years later that I truly understood the significance of that
9 event. I mean at the time I thought, “Gee! Wow! A lot of combat activity going on over
10 there, it's certainly increased.” But years later I learned that yes, like you said, that's a
11 water shed moment.

12 KC: The Johnson administration and General Westmoreland had been talking
13 about the light at the end of the tunnel and that the war is being won and that the
14 Americans are going to prevail. And also, obviously that the Tet Offensive was a
15 massive, massive setback for a communist fortress in Vietnam. But the impact—the
16 initial impact of the Tet Offensive had a very significant meaning for the American
17 public.

18 JG: Yes.

19 KC: That they were told one thing, but the Tet Offensive seemingly showed that it
20 was something else. Do you remember any of that? Did you fall into these categories?

21 JG: I remember the military coming up and saying, “Oh, we knew it was coming,
22 our intelligence had predicted it. We were ready. We were prepared.” And of course, I
23 was thinking, “Well if they knew it was coming, why didn't they prepare the American
24 people?” You know, say, “We're expecting something.” Not realizing that in intelligence
25 you have to keep things classified and confidential, you don't want to tell everyone. But
26 if they knew it was coming, they should have perhaps sent some word to the press that we
27 are expecting something. But I think they were caught completely by surprise! I don't
28 think they had any idea how massive it was going to be.

29 KC: What do you remember about the media coverage of the Tet Offensive? You
30 said you were a news junkie by this time.

31 JG: Yes.

1 KG: Describe for me the media's coverage of this.

2 JG: Ahh, I always thought the media was very fair and not biased. I thought they
3 did a very good job of covering it. It was very difficult thing to cover. And of course, I
4 just remember the first—at that time the news was going 30 minutes long, and I can
5 remember when the news was 15 minutes. But it had gone to 30 minutes by that time.
6 And oh yeah, for the first 20, 25 minutes that's all they talked about. And they showed
7 pictures of you know, reporters over there hunkered down, guns being fired, and I knew it
8 was big. I didn't realize how significant it was, 'till much later. And that's been
9 throughout my life. Things will happen and I'll think, "Wow, that's interesting!" And
10 then six months later I'll say, "Oh my gosh! That was really—that was really a turning
11 point."

12 KC: I think that's how the human mind works for most of us. Okay, now with all
13 of this as a background. You've been following very closely, you say you're preparing
14 yourself psychologically and mentally and physically to some degree as well, I'm sure, in
15 ROTC. And you have this—you have these doubts very, very early on. And the effects of
16 the Tet Offense, if not the actual reality of the Tet Offensive, but the preserved effects of
17 the Tet Offense I would—I don't want to say you've assumed anything, but did it change
18 you're view on things? Did it make you more skeptical of the way the war was being
19 fought?

20 JG: I don't think it made me more skeptical, I think I was already very skeptical
21 of the war as I said earlier, from the on again, off again, on again, off again bombing of
22 the North. So I was skeptical from that on. And that happened, I don't know very early,
23 probably my freshman or sophomore year. I don't think there was any event that made
24 me suddenly more skeptical. I mean, I think I stayed the same throughout the entire war. I
25 just kept thinking, "This is no way to fight a war." I wasn't against it. I realize there are
26 times you have to fight wars. War is inevitable sometimes, you've got to. But if you're
27 going to fight it you want to make sure it's the right war, the right time, the right place,
28 and all those things. And I looked at the Vietnam War as the wrong war being fought
29 for—maybe not the war but being fought the wrong way, using the wrong tactics, the
30 wrong strategy. So that's what bothered me.

1 KC: Well, it's going to bother you a lot more because when you graduate ROTC
2 from West Texas, you're going to enter the U.S. Army.

3 JG: That's right.

4 KC: You're going to go through Officer Candidate School I assume?

5 JG: Well, when you graduated from the Army ROTC program, you're a 2nd
6 lieutenant as soon as you graduate. So there is no Officer Candidate School. That's
7 another way of getting it commissioned.

8 KC: Where did you go once you graduated?

9 JG: Well, let me finish. There are two things about WT. Two little quick things.
10 One of them, I always liked the Professor of Military Science. He was a lieutenant
11 colonel and I think he felt that maybe I would make a good career officer because I'd
12 requested infantry as my first choice, and he was an infantry officer. And I loved the
13 infantry. If you're going to be in a war, why not be at the front line where things are
14 happening? Why not be an eyewitness to all the action? To be in the center of attention.
15 And I remember at a party right before I graduated, this is a party of I guess of the ROTC
16 people or something, he asked me something about the war and I told him, I said, "I think
17 it's being poorly fought. I think it's a disaster." I said, "No, I cannot make a career in the
18 military because I don't like the way this war is and the way it's going." And it's
19 interesting when I actually graduated—on the program that they give for graduation, it
20 listed all the graduates. And then in one section here all the people getting their
21 commission in the Army ROTC and there was a little star by my name, and few others,
22 and it said, "Distinguished Military Graduate."

23 KC: Wow.

24 JG: Which I understand gives you a much better chance of getting a regular army
25 commission, not a reserve, but regular army. And of course, I wasn't looking for regular
26 army commission. A career in the military at that time, did not interest me, I was not
27 seeking a career in the military. But I asked the—I didn't get Distinguished Military
28 Graduate, and I asked the sergeant, "What is this?" And the sergeant said, "Oh that was a
29 mistake, that was a mistake." And I've always wondered to this day, if that Professor of
30 Military Science, after I had told him my thoughts on Vietnam at that party, if he thought,
31 "Hmm, I'm not going to put that guy in for a Distinguished Military Graduate." Gone. It

1 didn't bother me, but I've always wondered about that, you know, was it a mistake? Or
2 did I go in there and slash my throat? And of course, at that young age, 22, a lot of young
3 people go in and do things that later they think, "Maybe that wasn't particularly smart."

4 (Both Laugh)

5 KC: Yeah, that's also a part of human nature I wish we could change but, it's not
6 changing.

7 JG: And then the other thing I remember about WT. We had one guy [Ronald G.
8 Smithee] who, he was a year or two years ahead of me, when it came time for him to
9 select a branch, he selected air defense missiles. Because he thought, "Wow this will be
10 great, missiles firing in the air." But when he got to a unit, basically all you do is
11 maintain the missiles. You go out maybe once a year, if you're lucky, and they shoot an
12 actual missile. The rest of the time you're in garrison cleaning and preparing missiles. So
13 he wanted to change branches to infantry, and he wanted to go to Vietnam. So he came
14 back to our ROTC class and gave a talk. And he said, "Oh yeah, it was boring." He
15 wanted to get over where the action was. And as soon as he got over to Vietnam, I think
16 it was a month later, he's gone. He's dead. He was killed.

17 KC: How did you find that out?

18 JG: The rumor mill spreads very fast. It really upset the Professor of Military
19 Science because he knew the guy well and really liked him. And you know I mean a
20 month—I heard that there was a mortar attack, and he was running, trying to help some
21 guy and he was killed. So yeah, his name was up there on the monument up in Amarillo.

22 KC: Oh wow.

23 JG: And I knew him. I didn't know him well, but I certainly remember him.

24 KC: Well, you weren't thinking about making the military a career. What were
25 you planning on doing with your degree in social studies, teaching?

26 JG: Well, that's interesting. I didn't know what I was going to do! (Laughs) And
27 that was one of the reasons I was more than happy to go into the military. Because the
28 military offered me a job, they offered me pay benefits, health insurance, all those things.
29 And if it hadn't been for the military and the Vietnam War, I don't know what I would
30 have done. I really don't know. To this day I don't know what I would've done. But
31 yeah, it was there, it was available. Plus, I've always been the type of person that if you

1 were to tell me there was a bear in pit over there on the other side of Texas Tech, I'd have
2 to go over there and look at it. (Laughs) Even if you said it was dangerous and don't get
3 near it, I'd go looking and I'd probably get a stick and poke the bear. You know, when
4 you're 22, you go to things that are exciting and noise and stuff. Of course, now I'm
5 different, I'm a little older. I'm a little older now.

6 KC: Well, that bear is definitely in the pit there. How did you make that decision?

7 JG: To what now? Go—

8 KC: Go into the regular army; to make the army at least part of your career.

9 JG: Of course. At that time when you graduated from Army ROTC you incurred a
10 two-year obligation immediately. And the draft was still there, so I always knew hey, if
11 you don't—and of course at that time, coming out of West Texas you were expected to
12 do your job, do your duty. I mean you didn't go through the program and then quit and
13 resign and leave and walk away, going to Canada or anything like that, that was out of
14 the question. My gosh, I couldn't. Now see, if you lived up near the Canadian border, you
15 might okay, but no. At West Texas you do jobs, you complete jobs, you get married, you
16 stay with the family, you raise the kids, you show up for work. There's a standard you're
17 expected to follow in. So yeah, once I finished, I got my commission, you go. There was
18 no question about not going.

19 KC: Right.

20 JG: And if I hadn't have gone, what would I have done? Gone home and waited
21 for the draft or something?

22 KC: Right. So, where do you go once you finished West Texas?

23 JG: Oh, one more quick thing on WT.

24 KC: Please, please.

25 JG: Gosh, I've got to move this interview along.

26 KC: No, no, no. Take your time please.

27 JG: It's interesting, every year, I'd get a letter from the draft, out of Plainview,
28 Texas, and they just wanted to know my address, name, and what I was doing. And of
29 course, all I had to do was write Army ROTC at the bottom West Texas. And that was it.
30 They were happy.

31 KC: They're thinking, "We're going to get you anyway."

1 JG: Right. But on one of the letters—I never got any flack back on this—but on
2 one of the letters in the upper left-hand corner, it had the seal, I guess it was Selective
3 Service seal or whatever they call it, I drew a big circle around it and drew the peace
4 symbol on the side of it.

5 KC: Did you really?

6 JG: Oh yeah, and mailed it back to them, and they probably said—you know later
7 it didn't bother me, I thought heck yeah, you know so what.

8 KC: What would possess you to do that?

9 JG: I would say anger and frustration of the Vietnam War. I was just thinking,
10 “They're not doing this right. This is terrible. It's going the wrong direction.” So yeah. So
11 yeah, I sent that back, but I never heard anything about it.

12 KC: That seems very, very strange. You talk about this sense of commitment, this
13 sense of duty and obligation and doing the right thing, and the honorable thing.

14 JG: Yes.

15 KC: And it wasn't like you were a peace nick by any stretch of the imagination.
16 You're in the Army ROTC and doing your duty doesn't bother you but that peace symbol
17 seems very, very much out of character with what you've told me so far. That is very,
18 very interesting.

19 JG: Well, this is something you know, you debate in Psychology Class 101, or
20 Political Science 101. This is something about where does an individual's personal
21 responsibility to society and the community start and end. And I'd say yes, I was very
22 much against it, but on the other hand like I said, if I had opted not to go into the military,
23 what would I have done? So I went in, not because I was for the Vietnam War, I went in
24 and not because of the draft either. I went in mainly because it was a job that paid money.
25 And it was an exciting job, it was in the—not just watching the news, you were actually
26 in the news. So I thought, “Yeah.” But oh yeah, yeah, I certainly wasn't a person who
27 was carried away with the military or in love or anything. I feel that war was necessary
28 but in that case, I was thinking, “This thing is being poorly done.” I mean I was just in the
29 news and they were talking about 2, 300 casualties a week killed over there. And I was
30 thinking, “Where is this going?” So, oh yeah.

31 KC: Now where do you go after West Texas?

1 JG: Okay, I went to Fort Benning, Georgia. To the Basic Officers Infantry School
2 [IOBC, Infantry Officers Basic Course]. And that lasted I guess about nine weeks.

3 KC: Tell me about that. Tell me about basic school for officers in the infantry at
4 Fort Benning.

5 JG: Okay. One of the interesting things is I don't remember anyone ever carrying
6 on a discussion about the Vietnam War. Whether it was right, wrong, good, bad. It was
7 kind of like you show up for a job and you do the job and you're not expected to make
8 comments or evaluate. It's like being a police officer. You don't make the laws you
9 simply go out on the street and enforce the laws. It's not up to the individual police
10 officer you know, to decide what laws are right wrong, good and bad. That's up to the
11 state legislature of the nation or whatever. So yeah, I don't remember any debate on it.
12 And so, you show up—it was about I guess, nine weeks long. And the training was okay,
13 but well no let me correct that. The training was not okay.

14 KC: Why do you say that?

15 JG: When you're going into combat and your life is going to be on the line, you
16 want to get good training. The only way you get good training is to be out there actually
17 doing what you're going to be doing in combat, as close as you can to it. And at Fort
18 Benning, if they wanted to teach you, let's say the company in the attack, how you
19 conduct a company attack against an enemy position, that was done in a classroom, from
20 slides. And so you sit there, you take notes and what you were there for mainly was to
21 learn the military vocabulary. So when they tell you, "You'll be at the line of departure at
22 0700." You know what they're talking about. And so, you take a test. The test says,
23 "What is the line of departure?" And they give you a, b, c, and d. So you know, you pass
24 the test, you pass the block, now you're certified to conduct an infantry company attack.
25 But that's far from actually doing it.

26 KC: So, did you have any sort of practice experience on—out in the field while
27 you were at Benning, or just classroom stuff?

28 JG: I would say 85 percent to 90 percent was classroom. You're either in a
29 classroom or sitting in bleachers watching some demonstration out in front of you. And
30 of course, I guess they had to do that because the class itself, I'd like to guess was
31 probably 300 people, around 300 infantrymen. You have 300 infantry officers, you can't

1 go out and do a lot of—it's probably more complicated to do field things. Much easier to
2 get them in a classroom and teach them the vocabulary, techniques, and the army way of
3 doing things. Classroom style.

4 KC: Right and I guess you learn the rest on your own. On the job training is the
5 word.

6 JG: Yeah, I was fortunate, and I had many years, and I did a lot of map reading
7 stuff out in Palo Duro Canyon [State Park]. So I felt very comfortable and confident on
8 almost everything—I came out in the top, I can't remember, 5 percent of the class or
9 something.

10 KC: You did well there?

11 JG: Yeah, I did well. And I enjoyed it, it was good. I liked the military way,
12 where you know, this is the way it's done, A, B, C, one, two, three. A couple interesting
13 things at Benning, the guys would joke a lot. I remember they had one poor guy in the
14 company, I can't remember his name, Lawaski or something, I can't remember, but the
15 unit would joke around a lot, much to the frustration to the cadre officers, the ones that
16 were supposed to be overlooking us. But I remember once they pulled a big old M-88
17 armored recovery vehicle right out in front of us, you know, to show us what it was. And
18 then they couldn't get it started. It wouldn't work. And of course, the whole company
19 starts yelling, "Send out Lawaski he can fix it! —Yeah Lawaski!" So you know the cadre
20 body, "Sh, be quiet!" Very unmilitary, very un-officer like. But you know they were
21 joking, having fun. And the only thing about Benning that was interesting, we went on a
22 one field exercise and it was in Georgia, and went out on the exercise, it was nice and
23 warm, beautiful warm Georgia day. This was probably in December and a cold front
24 came through. As long as I was ever in the military, I was never so cold. It started raining
25 one of the slow drizzly rains, and I got soaked to the skin, and out of the company of
26 probably 150 people, I said 300 earlier, maybe it was a 150, I can't remember exactly.
27 Class was probably 300; the company I was in was probably 150. Out of that 150, I think
28 everybody ended up going in on sick call, except for maybe 26 or something like that.
29 Because after a couple of days, after one night you were soaking wet! That poncho would
30 not keep you dry underneath and then oh, the temperature was probably just a hair above
31 freezing. So people started going in and of course, dumb stupid me, felt like you had to

1 stay in there. So I stayed in there even though I was sitting there shaking—to this day
2 every time I get in cold weather I start shaking. I get so cold. In fact, they told me, “You
3 need to go in.” And I said, “No, I got to stay in.” And they said, “Well go sit in the
4 ambulance for a while.” So I sat there, you know—anyway it was stupid and looking
5 back at it, I should have gone in. It was freezing. But one thing I did have fun out there, a
6 lot of these guys who come in from ROTC units all over the nation, some of them had
7 been in the field a lot more than others. I felt I spent a lot of time out in Palo Duro so I
8 felt very comfortable moving through the field. Some of these guys didn’t. It was a little
9 mean on my part, but we were moving in the dark, pitch dark, you couldn’t see much. All
10 you could see was the guy in front of you and we would come to a barbed wire fence out
11 there at Fort Benning. And the first guy would go over the fence. Okay, it takes just say
12 15 seconds for a guy to go over the fence. When that 15 seconds, the second guy is just
13 standing there and waiting. Then he takes his 15, then the next guy’s waiting. The first
14 guy gets over, he goes on. So there’s a time delay there. Now a good unit commander
15 would stop the unit and let everybody get over that fence. But the guy in the lead didn’t
16 know that. He took on off. So the next thing you know, out of a 150 people near the end
17 of the line, the people are running at a full speed trying to get over this fence. And of
18 course, I went over the fence and I went as slow as I could, and as soon as I got over the
19 fence, I took off running. And it was funny because you heard the guy behind me, he
20 barely made it over the fence and then about three guys back you hear some guys go,
21 crash, bang, flop! (Laughs) You know this cussing back there, and the unit got broke up
22 and of course I was sitting there—and then we would come to a log. And you know, I’d
23 wait a second for the guy in front to almost disappear and then I’d quickly jump over the
24 log and run and catch up with them, and before you know it, just a few minutes later
25 you’d hear some guy back there tripping over that log. So I was having a little bit of old
26 boy mean fun. And I was thinking, “Well, I’d learn from this every time you come to an
27 obstacle you have to wait until everybody in this unit gets across this obstacle before you
28 just take off.”

29 KC: Right, right.

30 JG: And they were back there cussing and yelling, and “Stop them!” In fact, one
31 guy started firing his blank rifle to try to get the unit back together. So it was fun!

1 KC: It sounds like a mess! (Laughs)

2 JG: Oh, yes it was.

3 KC: What about your instructors there at Benning, did you have any instructors
4 that had been to Vietnam?

5 JG: Oh yes, yes. Many of them had. I don't remember anything in significant.
6 Mainly they just stood up and gave their lecture and in a very professional way. They had
7 all kinds of view graphs and slides that they would put on the projector. But I don't
8 remember anybody saying, "Here's what it's like—let me tell you the nitty gritty." Or
9 anything of that nature.

10 KC: No sort of specific words of wisdom? This is what you're being taught, but
11 this is what you're going to face?

12 JG: No, I never heard anything like that. Nothing like that it was all military
13 doctrine right out of the military books and what had been approved by the school.

14 KC: Okay. I didn't know if someone had taken you aside or mentioned, "Look
15 this is really what you're going to see here, so be prepared for this kind of thing" or "This
16 is what the enemy is likely to do in such a situation", nothing like that?

17 JG: Nothing like that, no. I think you had one cadre officer over maybe 150 new
18 2nd lieutenants. So there wasn't any chance for one on one or anything like that.

19 KC: Sure, sure.

20 JG: And it was interesting because when I was in Army ROTC, I went to ROTC
21 summer camp for six weeks, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. And that was in the summer of '68.
22 And that was a very dramatic year, '68. Oh, my gosh. You know you had M.L. King
23 being assassinated, you had Kennedy assassinated. Not John F., but Robert Kennedy.
24 And you had Tet, you had everything in '68. That was a major time to go there. So, oh
25 yeah. And that was in the field. We slept in tents.

26 KC: Okay, let's back up a little bit. Before we—let's go back to this time at Fort
27 Sill here. Tell me about that back in 1968.

28 JG: They had so many troops coming in from the ROTC programs here out from
29 the Southwest. We were deployed in a giant tent city. Which was nice, because we didn't
30 have to clean the floors, and clean the windows, and all those things. These were big old
31 GP [general purpose] medium tents. They held a squad of people; probably about nine

1 people lived in the thing. And had a gravel floor, so that was nice. The only maintenance
2 we had to do was take a broom down and broom sweep out the latrine. That was all, that
3 was the only maintenance, that was nice. But of course, you were always out there in the
4 open. I remember in the shower, there were snakes coming in from the lake, so all kinds
5 of stuff. It was basically just basic training, is all that was. It was very much like military
6 basic training. I remember I put in maybe three weeks before they let us off, or maybe it
7 was four weeks before they let us get an actual day off to go into the city of Lawton,
8 Oklahoma. I remember I went to the A&W Root Beer place, got a big ol' gallon of root
9 beer, I just sat there and gulped it straight down. But yeah and—it was interesting the
10 cadre guy was called a Tac [Tactics] Officer. He was from Harvard University with an
11 English degree, from what I understand. And he was very good, very professional, and
12 yeah that's about all I can remember directly about that.

13 KC: A lot of physical training, things like that I assume?

14 JG: Oh yeah, every morning you'd get up, you had to run. Just like in army basic
15 training, that's all that was. That at least was in the field all the time and so you'd go out,
16 and we'd fire the weapons, fire the rifles. A lot of the weapons firings, for example, the
17 106mm recoilless rifle I remember that anti-tank weapon. And you didn't get a chance to
18 really learn it, they give you an orientation, you sit in the bleachers, you watch somebody
19 tell you how it worked and everything, and then you went out and you fired one round.
20 And of course, one round doesn't make you an expert, but it gives you a little bit of
21 scratchy knowledge. So like I said, the training was okay, but you know, oh my gosh, if
22 you're going into combat with your life, you'd wish you'd had about a year or two. In
23 fact, I've heard it takes three years to really learn a job well. So if you're going in combat
24 it would be nice if you could serve for three years in the field, actually doing the job. I
25 understand the Israeli Army puts their officers in tanks. Takes them out and does it. They
26 don't talk about it in a classroom or platform, they actually physically do it. So they
27 were—but of course we had so many people to process through the training programs
28 that they couldn't do that.

29 KC: What other kinds of weapon training did you have there?

30 JG: All the basic infantry weapons. And then of course they gave us an
31 orientation on artillery, on helicopters, everything, so you'd go out—you didn't—I think

1 we did, we fired artillery one, you know, we went out and some poor sergeant had to tell
2 us, you know, “Line up, here’s what we do, do this, do that you know.” And so they—we
3 even fired artillery. It’s kind of an orientation, because some guys were going into the
4 artillery branch, so this was their chance to get a taste of it.

5 KC: Right. So between this time at Fort Sill’s, the summer of ’68, and Fort Sill,
6 and your time at Fort Benning, you’re receiving what you’re saying a very rudimentary
7 kind of introduction to what you’re going to be required to do once you’re in combat.

8 JG: Right. Now one thing did happen at WT, which really helped me and saved
9 me. I found a little tiny booklet, they were always sending military stuff, and you had
10 military manuals and things, and army—they had one little, tiny booklet on, I think
11 something like, “How to patrol or ranger patrol”, or something like that. And I read that
12 little book, and it really turned out to help me.

13 KC: How so?

14 JG: Because it was just a little simple book. And it said, for example, “If you wish
15 to set up a night bivouac, first thing you do is go in there and set it up, then you send
16 security out, you circle around, you make sure there is nothing in the area.” And then you
17 do this and then you do that, it just kind of laid out little things to do, and that made a big
18 impression. I wish I had saved that little book. I didn’t, I didn’t keep it, but it gave me the
19 basic rudiments of what I should be doing. I learned more out of that little paperback
20 book, it probably only had 30 pages in it, than I did all the rest of that training.

21 KC: Wow.

22 JG: Because somebody had put it in a nice, neat, orderly format. As here’s what
23 you ought to do if you need to conduct a capture a bridge, you set up your security, you
24 have a fire team overlooking the bridge, you know all the little rudiments of what you
25 should do.

26 KC: Alright now, you’ve finished at Fort Sill. You’ve got your degree and you’re
27 at Fort Benning, Georgia.

28 JG: That’s right.

29 KC: And you’ve finished this basic officer’s school here, when did you graduate
30 from there?

1 JG: Let's see, I went in active duty in October of '69, so I graduated probably in,
2 I'm going to say maybe December—October, December. It was about nine weeks long, I
3 think, maybe its January—no, its December because I think we got out and then we were
4 off for Christmas—or we came back and graduated the first of January 1970. Something
5 like that.

6 KC: Okay now, when do you receive your orders to go to Vietnam?

7 JG: Okay, as soon as I graduated from officer basic, of course like any good
8 infantry officer, I wanted to go to Airborne and Ranger School, and I took the ranger test,
9 the airborne test and everything and I was all set. I went over to the Airborne School and
10 they said, “Yep, you're in class 23-6,” whatever you know. And I thought, “Great,
11 Airborne! Here I go.” But then orders came down from the Pentagon that I was supposed
12 to go to flight school.

13 KC: Flight school?

14 JG: Yeah, I forgot to tell you, when I was in Army ROTC one day they said,
15 “Yeah, anybody want to go to flight school, come on over and take the test.” And I
16 wasn't really enthusiastic over aviation, it wasn't part of my life. In fact, my parents
17 always looked at aviation, as tantamount to death. I remember they looked at an airplane
18 one time, and they had curtains in it, and they said, “Look, it looks just like a hearse.” So
19 I went over and took the thing, and sure, they said, “Yeah, you're qualified.” I took the
20 physical, I passed the physical, next thing I knew I was flying little airplanes up in
21 Amarillo.

22 KC: Is that right?

23 JG: Cessna 150, yeah.

24 KC: So you had to report from Benning, you planned on going to airborne—

25 JG: Right.

26 KC: And the Pentagon had snatched you out because of this previous test you'd
27 taken as an afterthought, what sounds like—

28 JG: And I had taken the Army ROTC Flight program. I had learned to fly the
29 Cessna 150, I got my license, everything. I was a fully licensed pilot. And so yeah, they
30 had me tapped for an aviation career. And so—

31 KC: What did you think about that?

1 JG: Well, I was, well I kind of knew, you know you take flight training I guess
2 you know you're going to fly. But I was disappointed, I was angry! I mean I'm an
3 infantryman, I'm not aviation! I think only my wife understands this. I mean, she knows
4 how much I love the infantry, and I'll admit when I drive by an airport, my head starts
5 turning, she has to control the car because I'll watch those airplanes and I love the way
6 you bring an aircraft in at the end of the runway, minimum air speed, everything perfect,
7 it's beautiful. But I was an infantryman, I wasn't a flyer. I wasn't an aviator. But they
8 said, "No, you have to go to Fort Wolters, Texas and learn how to fly helicopters."

9 KC: Helicopters?

10 JG: Yeah, so—

11 KC: Now, was—were you interested in—you weren't interested in flying, but
12 then did the rotary wing appeal to you more than the fixed wing?

13 JG: Well, I didn't have a choice.

14 KC: You were going to fly helicopters because we by God need helicopters in
15 Vietnam.

16 JG: Right and we spent all this time and money training you to fly, in the Army
17 ROTC program, now you're obligated to go fly. And you also incur a three-year
18 obligation. Normally it would have been a two-year obligation but now it's three years
19 after you finish flight school.

20 KC: Right.

21 JG: So I mean you get orders, I was angry and disappointed, and I went over to
22 airborne and talked to them, they said, "Sorry, that's out of Pentagon, we can't change
23 that." So I went to Fort Wolters and I flew the helicopter.

24 KC: Did you—tell me about that, you act like you're about ready to buzz over
25 that. I want you to tell me about training in Fort Worth.

26 JG: That was very good training compared to the infantry training I got in
27 Benning. The Wolters training was so much better. They put a lot of money into training
28 those people to fly helicopters.

29 KC: Yeah, for the extra year they get out of you.

30 JG: Yeah, and cause you're flying a machine worth, eventually worth millions of
31 dollars. Not the trainers but eventually. But yeah, the training was great. You got

1 instructor one on one, they had a lot of visual aids where you could go into a study area
2 and punch a little cassette in and see the helicopter landing and practice over and over.
3 All the instruction was top notch. That was one of the best military schools I ever
4 attended, was the flight school—the aviation school.

5 KC: Take me then through in some more detail. What kind of classes were you
6 taking? What kind of hands-on experience did you have? What types of crafts were you
7 flying?

8 JG: I was flying an OH-23 [Raven, light observation helicopter], they had two
9 types of helicopters, one was—we called it Mattel [toy company] helicopter, because it
10 was—I don't know what the name was, a little tiny civilian helicopter, very small, very
11 cheap. But if you were a certain weight, you flew the larger heavier OH-23. Which looks
12 like an OH-13 [Sioux, light observation helicopter], it's your traditional helicopter you
13 see on all the television shows. Big bubble top and everything. And yeah, the training
14 was good. It was all aviation directed. You know aviation weather, instruments, aviation
15 navigation, all those things. And then they took you out to the flight line, you had an
16 instructor, and you flew, one on one. And I soloed and flew the thing, and autorotated and
17 leaned all the techniques and everything, you know. I didn't have any heart in it; I didn't
18 like it at all. And then after I had finished the first phase, I failed the check test. Every—
19 after months of training you go up with a check pilot, and see how good you're doing,
20 and I failed it. And then I failed a second check test. And then I went before a board.

21 KC: Why did you fail these tests?

22 JG: Well—

23 KC: What was the issue?

24 JG: Part of it might be I didn't have my heart into it. And part of it maybe I just
25 wasn't skilled enough. There's a certain thing about flying a helicopter and of course, I
26 realized this much better now, you have to have a certain coordination between the
27 throttle, the cyclic [correction: collective], and the rudders, and there's a way you have to
28 move each one. And that makes the helicopter stay in a stable pattern, otherwise it goes,
29 wiggle, wiggle, wiggle. The tail swooshes back and forth. And I'd say part of it was just
30 lack of flight ability and also, I didn't have my heart in it either, you know. Anyway, I
31 went before the board and it was interesting, they were—well the instructor who was

1 teaching me how to fly had just had a terrible car accident right outside of Lubbock here,
2 and it killed a person. So he said someone pulled out in front of him—anyway, so they
3 felt maybe that was a factor, maybe me not being able to get through the check test. So
4 they were willing to recycle me back to the next class to try it again. And they said—I
5 remember the board asking me, “Well do you think you could pass a second time?” And I
6 replied, “Well, I don’t know.” And they kept wanting a firm answer from me and I
7 wouldn’t give them a firm answer.

8 KC: Why not?

9 JG: I just wasn’t that pleased and happy. Aviation was interesting, but it wasn’t
10 where I really wanted to be in life. You know, it’s kind of like my music. I loved playing
11 the drum, but I knew I didn’t have any ability in it and I didn’t want to make a career out
12 of music and I didn’t want to make a career out of aviation. It was fun, I loved it. I loved
13 flying. I haven’t flown in years, but I still have my license. I flew here to Lubbock, out of
14 the Lubbock airport.

15 KC: Is that right?

16 LG: Yeah. But it wasn’t something that was my career. It just didn’t feel like—it
17 was okay, but it wasn’t my—it wasn’t me! It wasn’t my life. Infantry is where I wanted
18 to go. So they said, “Yeah, you’re out.” And so really officially, I washed out, but luckily
19 when you’re an officer already infantry trained it doesn’t do anything to your career—

20 KC: It’s where you’re going to go.

21 JG: At that time all the aviation did was put an extra little plus on your record that
22 you could fly. So you took that off and now you’re just a regular infantry officer, which
23 is fine with me, I was more tailored.

24 KC: Right.

25 JG: So they said, “You have a three-year obligation, where do you want to go?”
26 And if I had been smart, I would have said Germany, but at that time I had never been to
27 Europe and I didn’t realize beautiful it was over there. So, I thought, “Well—.” I said,
28 “Send me to advanced infantry training.” You know, I had done that infantry life. So they
29 said, “Yeah how about Columbia, South Carolina, Fort Jackson.” And I had never been
30 there, so I said, “Sure.” And so, I was on my way to Fort Jackson, for advanced infantry
31 training as one of the trainers. When I got there, I was assigned to the weapons committee

1 and the weapons committee was responsible for all the basic infantry weapons except the
2 M-60 machine gun. So we fired the .45 caliber pistol, the M-72 grenade launcher—no, the
3 79 grenade launcher, the M-72 rocket launcher, the .50 caliber machine gun, which I
4 loved. Was that it? Those four weapon systems. I think that was it, the four weapon
5 systems. And so, for the next year and half, we would get enlisted trainees coming out to
6 our weapons field, out there in the range. And on Monday we would teach the .50 caliber
7 machine gun, on Tuesday we would teach the M-79 grenade launcher and rocket
8 launcher, I don't know Wednesday would be the .45 caliber pistol. And we'd give them
9 classroom instruction on the bleachers out in the open, and then they'd go down to the
10 range and they'd get a magazine of ammunition or a belt of machine ammunition and
11 they'd fire the weapon.

12 KC: Now you said you were at Fort Jackson for a year and half?

13 JG: Yes. A year and half.

14 KC: What did that mean to you? You were looking for action you were looking
15 infantry and now you're at Fort Jackson, you're teaching for a very long time—

16 JG: Yes.

17 KC: As an instructor there, what did you think of that?

18 JG: Oh, I loved it.

19 KC: Did you really?

20 JG: Oh, I loved it, it was a great job. You go out in the morning, and that .50
21 caliber machine gun, I got to the point where I could just listen to it and tell if the head
22 spacing and timing was off. And you know you, chamber that big old gun, that thing—
23 that's a weapon that Audie Murphy used when to win his Medal of Honor. That's a
24 powerful weapon. I loved that thing.

25 KC: Everybody loves the .50 caliber, why did you love it so much?

26 JG: Oh, it's got power, I mean we had a demonstration that they had opened up to
27 the trainees and to the public once a month, and when that .50 caliber would fire down
28 range and hit that armored personnel carrier you could hear those rounds, just going
29 thump, thump, and oh, it was powerful. And I got—I had the grenade launchers, some of
30 those trainees were impressed. One time, it was pure luck, I picked the grenade launcher
31 and fired a round, this shoots a grenade into the air, a high arc and the round went right

1 into the hatch of a tank out in the field. And the trainee's said, "Wow." And I said, "Eh."
2 (Both Laugh)

3 KC: Your turn.

4 JG: And the thing that I pushed the most in the weapons training was safety,
5 safety, safety, safety. I mean you had to be so careful out there. And thank goodness, we
6 never had any problems with safety. Some trainees were—one was killed, one trainee as
7 killed, but that did not happen on my watch. That did not happen on my committee, thank
8 goodness. But safety was so important. And I would run the pistol range and I always
9 kept a very calm voice, and I'd say, "Number 23. Don't point your weapon to the man
10 next to you. Keep your weapon pointing straight down range."

11 KC: As an instructor how proficient were you with all these weapons?

12 JG: Oh, in time, at the end of the day if we had extra ammunition, they wanted us
13 to shoot it off not take it back to the ammunition dump. Because the lot had already been
14 broken open, and this is open contaminated ammunition, and they didn't want it back. So
15 they would say, "Shoot it up." So at the end of the day, I'd go down there and shoot off
16 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, rounds of M-79 grenades ammunition, as quick as we could to get rid
17 of it. Or rocket launchers, shoot those things off, get rid of them. Now if the package had
18 not been opened, then you'd take it back to post and turn it back in. But if you had broken
19 the seal and opened it up, they didn't want it back. Too much paperwork, they said. So,
20 oh, in time I got very proficient at those weapons. I could take a M-72 grenade rocket
21 launcher and see a tank down there, take a look at it, and pow! Right on it.

22 KC: So you felt pretty good about it then?

23 JG: Yeah. In fact, a sergeant one time he said, "Oh you can't hit anything with
24 that .45 caliber pistol." So he put two targets about 50 meters down range, and I lay down
25 on the ground and I just slowly squeezed that trigger until the weapon went off. And we
26 went down range and of course the sergeant quickly grabbed the target and put them
27 together and said, "See you didn't get it, you didn't get it!" Found out I hit it right in the
28 dead center. He put the targets together to cover it up. (Laughs) But oh yeah, and the only
29 thing that happened that was interesting at Fort Jackson, once a month they would have
30 these—or maybe once every three months, they'd have these weapon demonstrations,
31 where oh my gosh, they'd bring up every single weapon the military had. They had a

1 national guard that came in and air force units would come in and they'd show the public
2 and the trainees what all this military stuff could do. And we had one where everything
3 went wrong. It was so interesting!

4 KC: Oh, tell me about that!

5 JG: Oh my gosh! Well, they started out with the pistols. They got this guy out
6 there shoots a pistol at a target and when it hits the target, the target drops, and come back
7 up, it's mechanical. And he missed the target. So the guy on the tower thought, "Let's
8 help him out. When he shoots next time, I'll just throw the switch and that'll drop the
9 target." So he gets up there and gets ready to shoot, and all of sudden the target goes,
10 (thweep), this target drops without him firing a bullet! They go, oh shoot! So they said,
11 "Now we'll go to the M-60 machine gun and of course the weapon jammed and it
12 wouldn't fire. Then they went to the hundred and, it gets into some Russian equipment,
13 .150 mm—Russian .55, .150 mm? 105, oh my gosh, .155 mm! 155mm howitzer, self-
14 propelled howitzer firing direct fire at this tank hull probably 3, 400 meters down range.
15 They fired that big thing. It missed. And then they said, "Okay, now we'll have the air
16 force flyover." We waited, and waited, and waited, and waited, it probably took five
17 minutes before the air force finally turned around and come over and fly. So this whole
18 thing is just a disaster, I mean every weapon system messed up, wouldn't fire, jammed,
19 and of course the major who was in charge is up there screaming and cussing. He was an
20 old prior enlisted guy, and he was angry and mad. But it's interesting on the training
21 there, they said, "As long as you don't mess up, the major will never come out to the
22 range and bother you. But if you ever mess up, and something goes wrong, and the
23 general gets upset, he's out there all the time with you." It was a good time. I really
24 enjoyed it. What better job could you ask for than going out every day and firing
25 explosives. The only thing is I think it damaged my hearing some. We had a medical guy
26 come out one time with an instrument to try and measure the noise that these weapon
27 systems were making. He said, "I can't measure this, it goes off the scale!" He said, "This
28 is way beyond even the scale of my instrument here." And at that time, they did have
29 good ear protection. We had little ear rubber ear plugs which I used. You know, we stuck
30 them in our ears, but still, when you're firing those things everyday sometimes I'd go
31 home and boy, they—you could still hear that ring from the guns. But we didn't have any

1 safety problems. We did have one big old guy, I wasn't there at the time it happened, but
2 some large Black [African-American] guy took the M-72 grenade launcher—no, excuse
3 me rocket launcher, and you're supposed to pull that thing back to cock it, to get it ready
4 to fire, he pulled it back so hard he jerked it completely apart! And the missiles sitting
5 there dangling in the air. But luckily it didn't explode or anything. But you were kind of
6 like uhh! (Both Laugh) But it was great. I really knew weapons well. When I went to
7 Vietnam, weapons were not my problem. I knew that—I always thought you know,
8 whether an enemy takes a shot or even if an American soldier takes a shot at me, I said,
9 “Well, they'll get that first shot, but I'm pretty sure I'll get that second shot and it'll be
10 accurate.” We fired a lot of M-16 and oh! We had night vision devices. We also taught
11 the night vision devices. And that was connected to an M-16. So I had a chance to shoot
12 all the weapons except for the M-60 machine gun, that's the only one I didn't work with
13 intimately every day.

14 KC: Now you're there at Fort Jackson, you're teaching these classes, is it—would
15 it be fair to compare this to a nine to five job or eight to five job? You go out, you go to
16 the range, you instruct, when you're done, you go home? Were you living on base or off
17 base? What was the—

18 JG: I was off base.

19 KC: Off base.

20 JG: And you're right it's more like a nine to five job.

21 KC: What were you doing when you were done for the day? Or on the weekend,
22 what sorts of things would you do as, not as a basic 1st lieutenant?

23 JG: I was in Colombia, South Carolina. And that was a nice town. I was never a
24 person who went out drinking or rousing, in fact, I never—I didn't date any women at
25 that time. It always made me kind of mad, we went to sometimes the officer's—I didn't
26 join the officer's club either! Because all they seemed to do over there is drink and I
27 didn't care about that. It's not part of my personality. We would go to, periodically once
28 a month they'd have what they call a “Hail and Farewell”, where they'd greet people
29 coming in and going out. And I remember some officer's wife tell me, “Why, Lieutenant
30 Green you don't have a date?” Or something like that, “No, ma'am.” And to this day I
31 wish I had gone down to South Carolina and hired one of those prostitutes to go out there

1 with me! (Both Laugh) You know, tell her, “Now the colonel, go up the colonel and be
2 real friendly.” But I didn’t do that, but I wished I had, because I felt it was none of her
3 business, and you know—so what, only my mother can say things like that to me! I’m not
4 going to take that from some other. Anyway, so yeah, my efficiency reports I did very
5 well. I think the only thing they lowered me on, which is only by one number, was
6 sociability or something. Because like I say, I showed up to parties, I didn’t have a date at
7 that time.

8 KC: And not drinking or corralling or—a lot of that probably had an impact.

9 JG: No, what would I do? I’d go walk around the streets of Colombia, looked in
10 the windows. I enjoyed just walking around, went around the capital. Capital of South
11 Carolina got a big gold star on the side where union bullets had hit. Solid cannon shots
12 and they still had that marked up there, they’re not about to take those down and fix it. It
13 was very enjoyable. Oh, good food! Barbeque, mhm! Good food, I liked it. First you get
14 off—it wasn’t really a nine to five job, sometimes the night vision would go up to ten or
15 eleven o’clock at night, you’re going to get out, grab a coke, drink and go home. I lived
16 off post by myself. Had my own car, and as an officer you get a lot more freedom than
17 the enlistees. But once again, to give you a feeling of the time, I don’t ever remember
18 anyone ever really discussing the Vietnam War, no one really talked about it. Some of the
19 old guys would talk about it; you know who had been over there. You know they’d say,
20 “Yeah.” I remember one of them said—they were talking about something about I don’t
21 know, about killing civilians or something and I said, “Oh I would never do that.” And
22 some sergeant said, “You wait till you see one of your best buddies shot.” He said,
23 “You’ll change your mind.” And I said, “No, I won’t do that.” But there wasn’t much talk
24 about the Vietnam War, particularly in the classes and everything. You were there to
25 teach the .50 caliber machine gun and that was all, there wasn’t anything else. This is it,
26 here’s the weapon, here’s what you do. Here’s the way you load it. Here’s what happens
27 if it doesn’t fire correctly. Things like that.

28 KC: Okay, now you brought up the war again. I assume you’re still a news junkie,
29 at this time were you paying close attention still to the war?

30 JG: Oh, every day, every day. And this is an interesting time because, at this
31 point, President Nixon sent the troops into Cambodia. And all—

1 KC: While you were at Jackson? Spring of '70?

2 JG: Yes, at Fort Jackson and all heck broke loose at the University of South
3 Carolina. They had a lot of big protests. People were writing on the walls and all kinds of
4 things like that. And I would—I looked at it and everything I'd never seen the writings, I
5 wish I had photographed them now, but I didn't. And I think they had protesters at the
6 state capital. And I drove by one time at night and saw them, and I thought, "Boy, I'd like
7 to join them." But I thought, "I can't join them; I'm an officer in the army." I mean, kind
8 of like you're telling your friend in the Pentagon, you do that and next thing I know I'm
9 in there visiting the general, you know!

10 KC: Right.

11 JG: This is—there are certain obligations and once again we are back to Political
12 Science 101, what are the obligations of a police officer on the street? Or a military
13 office? You know, are you to do what you want to do or what you think is right in
14 service of your country and there are obligations. I didn't want to get into any difficulty
15 because like I said earlier, it was a job, and I didn't want to get fired. What would I do
16 when I went home?

17 KC: Well, you mentioned Nixon and when Nixon takes over he begins to
18 implement this policy that really began in — during the end of the Johnson
19 administration of Vietnamization. Did that make any sense to you?

20 JG: Well, I was a little disappointed because I was hoping the presidential election
21 would completely change the course of the war. I was looking for a 180-degree turn, and
22 I think all President Nixon did was gave us maybe a 10 or 20 percent degree turn. And it
23 disappointed me, I didn't vote for him, I was hoping I guess, Humphrey, I think was
24 running against him, if I remember correctly. I think I voted for him because I was
25 wanting to see an end to this. But I understand they threatened Humphrey and told him,
26 "You better go for this war, or else your political career will end." So, there wasn't really
27 any real alternatives that I remember. But I know—I guess I was disappointed because I
28 was looking for a more dramatic change, not Vietnamization because—but I was
29 thinking, "Well I hope it works." But I had a lot of concerns and doubts.

30 KC: Now why did you doubt this policy?

31 JG: It's very much the same as we're having today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

1 KC: How so?

2 JG: Well, we're trying to turn the Iraqi situation to the Iraqis and I'm sitting here
3 today just like I was in Vietnam, I'm thinking, "Is this really going to work? Do you
4 think the Iraqi people can really form a government that is split between the Sunni and
5 Shiite? Are they really going to be able to come together?" Earlier this morning on the
6 news they said four more Americans were killed in Iraq, IED [Improvised Explosive
7 Device]. So, I track this stuff very carefully, but just like Vietnam, I kept thinking, "Is it
8 really going to work? I hope it works! —I'd love to see it, I think it would be great!—But
9 is it going to work?"

10 KC: Now a difference that you—between these two events and try to stay away
11 from comparing one to another, because the circumstances are completely different, of
12 course. But in Iraq there is a matter of trying to form a government, a coalition
13 government of different peoples, of different religions, and these kind of things.
14 Vietnamization was geared toward turning the prosecution of the war over more heavily
15 to the Vietnamese rather than the Americans.

16 JG: Right.

17 KC: Did you think the Vietnamese were capable of this?

18 JG: Well, at that time I didn't know for sure. I'd never met a Vietnamese person. I
19 only knew what I got over the news media; I had to form my opinion by what I was
20 hearing on the news. And to answer you directly, and to answer your question, I didn't
21 know, I didn't have any idea if they could do it. I hoped they could do it. But it wasn't the
22 disengagement that I was looking for, I was wanting the disengagement—declare a
23 victory and come home, as one person, one of the congressmen said. And I wasn't getting
24 that. So I was hoping it would work, but I was disappointed, I was thinking, "Oh boy, I
25 hope this works." And as history turned out more soldiers were killed under the Nixon
26 administration than under Johnson. And it was a very slow process.

27 KC: As you were watching this whole process unfold, Vietnamization and
28 withdrawal of American troops, which clearly wasn't quick enough for you and what you
29 were thinking at the time, what were your thoughts about it? Okay, I've had time, 1969,
30 1970, I've had time to watch part of this Vietnamization take place, were you aware of
31 how effective it had been? Or non-effective?

1 JG: Well, I only knew what I heard on the news. But basically, I'll go back to the
2 thing I said earlier, what amazed me during that period of time, throughout the entire
3 Vietnam war, is that obviously something was wrong because my gosh, there were so
4 many protestors, so many people denouncing it. There was so much controversy. I think
5 it was the most divisive period of American history, other than the American Civil War.
6 Maybe the Revolutionary war, but it was very decisive, not decisive—divisive period.
7 And the thing that kept coming back to me is okay there is a problem, let's sit down
8 figure out what it is and change course. And I don't think Nixon changed course enough.
9 So to me, it was almost a continuation of the Johnson policy. I didn't see any major
10 changes. And it was very subtle and very slow and very long. It wasn't something like we
11 are going to Vietnamize the war in the next six months, no it was the next what? Six
12 years? Very painfully slow, in fact when I got over there, they were still in the process of
13 slowly changing it.

14 KC: What about the encouraging of the Cambodia in 1970? Did you see this as a
15 positive thing or a negative thing?

16 JG: You know as I look back now, I don't think I saw it as a positive or a
17 negative. I understood the military aspect of going over there and cutting the supply lines,
18 I understood the purpose of it. It didn't affect—bother me as much that we were violating
19 an international border. It didn't upset me as much as a lot of other people. I think the
20 whole war had upset me, not just that one incursion. No, I wasn't—I was already upset
21 with it and that one thing did not increase nor decrease my feelings toward the war.

22 KC: Just another part of it?

23 JG: Yes, another part, another day. Just another story. I thought, "So what?"

24 KC: Militarily though, you said you think it was a pretty good idea?

25 JG: Well, I can see why the military would advocate that, but Vietnam was a very
26 difficult war because one hand they wanted to have limited war, and I can understand the
27 need for limited war. I remember some of those sergeants would say, "We ought to just
28 go over there and nuke them! Drop the nuclear bombs." And I thought, "Yeah sure, woo-
29 hoo." What would be after that? Oh man, then comes Russian, then comes China, then
30 comes radiation, and all kinds of stuff. But it's pretty difficult fighting a limited war. And
31 I understand the need for it but of course when you're one of those soldiers, going out

1 there in the field, there's no such thing as limited war. It's max all out, World War II, full
2 war for you. So I never could have good feeling about this limited war. So, yeah, they
3 were going over there to try to upset the base camps, and the supply lines and I thought,
4 "Well that's good thing for the military to do I guess, militarily speaking." But in the
5 grand scheme it's still a lost cause. It's still a war that's not being fought right and how
6 should we have fought it? I don't know to this day, but you know, I mean I can't say we
7 should have invaded the North, because then once again you have the model of Korea. It
8 could have been a repeat of Korea. On the other hand, I knew that what we were doing
9 was not getting us anywhere. So we were stuck. Advanced in history and I've always
10 admired President Clinton you know over in Somalia when they lost, what was it, 34
11 soldiers? And then they thought, "Why are we fighting in Somalia?" So they picked up
12 and left.

13 KC: Would have been nice if we thought of that beforehand, but that's the way it
14 goes.

15 JG: Right. Maybe, maybe that's what we should have done with Vietnam. I can't
16 say. It's going to be up to future generations, future historians to be sure. But I felt uneasy
17 about what was going on, I was never pleased with it. Mainly from a military point of
18 view and yet on the other hand I realized that you couldn't invade the North because you
19 might do Korea again. So it was a rock and a hard place for the United States.

20 KC: Alright now, let's take you back to Fort Jackson.

21 JG: Okay.

22 KC: How long were you going to be there in weapons training?

23 JG: Oh, I didn't know for sure. I didn't know for sure; I was guaranteed one year
24 and then after that all bets were off. You just sit and keep training and wondering and
25 waiting and finally after a year and a half orders came down. Now, in Fort Jackson I had
26 already volunteered to go to Vietnam. I had filled out the paperwork and put in a request.

27 KC: You still wanted to be there, you still wanted to poke the bear in the eye with
28 a stick?

29 JG: Yeah, my wife didn't understand that.

30 KC: You had gotten married in the meantime?

31 JG: No, I had not.

1 KC: Oh okay, this is after you got back.

2 JG: Yes, much later, and thank goodness I was not married, because I was free
3 and able to do all this stuff. If I had been married with kids, it would have been a
4 different story. Anyway, yeah, so I had volunteered and one day here came the orders.
5 And it turned out; the orders were the original orders I had gone into the army with back
6 in 1969. The original orders I had got upon commission that said, “You would go to
7 flight school and then you will go to Vietnam.” And so yeah, they simply pulled up the
8 original orders. They didn’t care that I had volunteered, it had never gone through I
9 guess, or never had an impact. They pulled the original 1969 orders and said, “Oop! Your
10 turn, go.”

11 KC: Let’s just forget the hour—the year and a half interlude at Fort Jackson, and
12 we’ll move you on.

13 JG: Yeah, well, yeah, since I had a three-year obligation, because I took flight
14 training, I was guaranteed one year at Fort Jackson.

15 KC: Okay, now you’ve got your orders to go to Vietnam. This is what 1971, by
16 this time? What time?

17 JG: Right, that would have been, ’71. I was supposed to go there in July of ’71.

18 KC: Okay, July of 1971 the American participation in the war is winding down
19 but you are going, and the war is still being fought. What were your thoughts now?

20 JG: I still felt like I had for all those years. I felt like, my gosh we’re fighting the
21 wrong war and the wrong way. I thought, “This is not good, it’s not right, there’s too
22 much protest. We’re not winning anything. We’ve been over there what now, six years, I
23 don’t know.” I thought, “We’re not making advances.” I guess I was looking at the World
24 War II model, where you invade Normandy and you drive across France, and you go into
25 Germany and you win. And we’re still sitting there! And you kept hearing all these
26 horrible stories about taking terrain and then giving it up. I just thought, “This no way to
27 fight.” You know sanctuaries, limited areas, we couldn’t go over this boundary, couldn’t
28 go here, the president was controlling the war and telling what targets to bomb and
29 targets not to bomb. I’m just sitting there thinking, “This is no way to fight a war.” So
30 those were my feelings, and my feeling was, “Well, here’s orders. You got to go.” And in
31 one hand I wanted to go for the excitement, to see the bear in the pit, but on the other

1 hand I thought what a wasted cause. What a terrible waste this is. But I never thought
2 about not going because my gosh, at that time I would have been court marshaled and of
3 course coming out of West Texas you didn't want to dishonor yourself or your family or
4 anything. So, by gosh you had to go. There wasn't ever any question, never debated.

5 KC: So you get your orders, did you have time off? Did you have some leave
6 before you had to report?

7 JG: Yes, I did. I went back to Plainview, Texas, for I don't know, two, three
8 weeks and it kind of frustrated me; the military sent what they call a port call [in my case
9 an airport call]. And that was your order to report to a port and go to Vietnam. And they
10 sent it to me registered mail and I thought, I'm an officer! I'm going to go; you don't
11 have to send this to me registered mail! And of course, they wanted it registered so I'd
12 have to sign for it, to show I had received my orders. And I thought, "By gosh! You don't
13 have to do that!"

14 KC: Do you think that was a reflection of the time and people not wanting to go?

15 JG: Oh yes! Of course, my gosh, yes! Yes, they wanted everybody to get their
16 orders and sign for their orders, so they made a legal obligation. So they could come back
17 on them and say, "You signed for them, you got them."

18 KC: Now what did you do when you came back to Plainview? How did you
19 family react to your—to your going to Vietnam?

20 JG: My mother was tickled to death that I wasn't flying those helicopters
21 anymore!

22 KC: Is that right?

23 JG: Yes. They felt that that was the tantamount to death. And so they were tickled
24 to death. And of course, I'm thinking, "I don't know if the infantry is any safer than that
25 helicopter!" But my parents never expressed any feelings either for or against, you know
26 what I mean? By now I was about 22, maybe 24 years old. So they never actually—and I
27 never asked them, you know what their feelings were. It just wasn't spoken about, never
28 said. I mean, I was going. So I got orders, I thought they were going to send me up to
29 New Jersey to fly out. So I told them I was in Tucumcari, New Mexico because I saw on
30 a desk the boundary for east and west was the New Mexico border. Because I wanted to

1 go out of California, I didn't want to go out to New Jersey. So I got Travis Air Force
2 base, and my father drove me out to California.

3 KC: Drove you to California?

4 JG: Yeah. Oh, he wanted to go to California. My father loved California. When I
5 had to go to California, he was right there. It was the summer, school was out. So he was
6 free. So yeah, he jumped the car and I we didn't talk about it or anything. I'm not a
7 sentimental type person; there wasn't hugging or anything. We just said, "Yeah, okay.
8 See ya! Bye, Bye" You know he took me out to Travis Air Force Base.

9 KC: What was it like out there at Travis?

10 JG: I was only there for—I think I showed up in the morning and flew out maybe,
11 I don't know, maybe 2,3 o'clock in the afternoon. Most of the time you just sit around
12 waiting.

13 KC: Did you see any protest, organized protest?

14 JG: No, I did not.

15 KC: Okay.

16 JG: No, it's a big air base and basically you checked in and—well, when I was
17 still at Fort Jackson, I remember before you could deploy overseas, they do a number of
18 things. They give you a physical, you have to qualify on all your weapons—I never
19 qualified, in fact the sergeant said, "What do you want to qualify as?" And I said, "Oh
20 expert of course." And so here came orders, that I had to qualify expert on the rifle.

21 KC: You didn't have to—

22 JG: Of course, I had fired the thing every day, so I felt comfortable. But yeah, I
23 went to the dental facility, and they checked my teeth and I remember, there must have
24 been a clerk there, a dental aid, some woman who said, "The dentist is trying to save
25 some of your teeth." And I didn't know why she said that. I thought later, "What is she—
26 is she just vindictive or is that just nastiness?" What a comment to make. I was scared to
27 death being in the dentist office. And then the dentist looked at it and I got a little bit of
28 malocclusion and the dentist said, "Well, we could work on it." But he said, "You're
29 aiming to go to Vietnam, if you come back, then we can work on it and finish it up."
30 There's no sense is doing it now, kind of thing. And of course, to process or POL [POL
31 maybe an incorrect acronym] they just want to make sure that your teeth were good

1 enough that you could go to Vietnam for a year and not have any serious major problems
2 and get back. That's all they wanted to do.

3 KC: Sure, sure.

4 JG: But it kind of made me mad. I wish now I'd said to that woman who told me,
5 "He's trying to save some of your teeth." I wish I had basically said, "You're not looking
6 at touching me anymore." You know, I wish I had said that, but I didn't. I was a good
7 soldier, I just sat there. But yeah, so—

8 KC: Okay, so you're at Travis and you're going to fly to Vietnam.

9 JG: In a commercial airliner.

10 KC: In a commercial airliner. What was that trip like over?

11 JG: It fascinated me. I had never been overseas before, so I sat there and watched
12 the Pacific go by and I couldn't believe how big the Pacific Ocean was. I would see a
13 cloud formation come up, cross over, and go down. And other one, it was so big. Even
14 today when I fly, my eyes are right out the window looking down all the way. And I
15 remember the flight attendants were very old, they were very elderly, of course I was 24,
16 so they were probably all of 35 or 40.

17 KC: (Laughs) Ancient.

18 JG: Yeah, they were ancient, but I understand they got extra money by going into
19 a combat zone. So they were more than happy to volunteer for that. And we were all
20 crammed in there and it was every Tom, Dick, and Harry. All our members, mostly
21 Army, I think. You know, you had enlisted, officers, just everything. It was all there. You
22 sit there and—it was like a commercial airliner, except it was a *long* flight. I think we
23 landed in Hawaii and refueled, and then we flew to Formosa and refueled in the middle
24 of the night. I think it took maybe 24 hours of clock time to get over there. I'm not sure of
25 the flight time or anything like that but it was a long flight. And I remember the pilot
26 woke us up and said, "Were over Iwo Jima." And of course, I looked. I had never done
27 anything like that, I looked down there at those Pacific Islands and you could see
28 thunderstorms down there and I thought, "My gosh, World War II. Pacific theater." I
29 thought, "Man." And we landed at, was it Bien Hoa Airport, I believe? I think it was Bien
30 Hoa.

1 KC: Before we to get you in country, what was the atmosphere like on the plane
2 with the other soldiers who were going over?

3 JG: Uh.

4 KC: It's 1970 and a lot of things had happened.

5 JG: There was nobody—I never heard no talk about the political rightness of
6 aspects of it. No one asked, no one said. I think people just knew, here we are you're
7 going, you know, you're in the plane. What are you going to do?

8 KC: Right.

9 JG: I mean, if you stood in protest people would look at you, and “What? What
10 kind of nut are you?” And then when you landed you know, they would probably call the
11 commander and say, “Something is wrong with this guy.” So I don't remember any
12 conversation. You just sit there and they fed us, just like a commercial airliner.

13 KC: So you fly into Bien Hoa. What was your impression of Vietnam the first
14 second you stepped out of the plane?

15 JG: Well, people had told me before, they said, “Don't worry, you won't hit the
16 ground shooting; you don't have to get off the airplane and run.” So you basically got off
17 and there was a bus waiting, and it was well organized, they drove us over to some kind
18 of compound. And I wasn't in Bien Hoa but maybe two days, three days. They gave
19 you—they issued your jungle fatigues and I think I got a helmet, I can't remember, a
20 duffel bag, all your field equipment. Because we showed up not in the green army
21 uniform, it was in the summer, we were wearing what I call TW's [tropical worsted],
22 which is kind of a khaki uniform. And then you basically waited, there wasn't much
23 orientation or anything; you just waited until you got an assignment in country. So while
24 we're sitting around for, I don't know, two, one or two days, somebody in some
25 administration office was sitting there thinking, “Okay I got a new 2nd lieutenant—1st
26 lieutenant by then. “Where are you going to put them? Where are you going to put
27 them?” You know, “Where do we need them?” And then after a day or two you, I don't
28 know if they give you orders or if it was on a board. I think I got orders and you looked at
29 it and it said 101st Airborne, and I looked at this map, and I said, “Where is the 101st” I
30 had asked for the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, that's what I wanted cause—

31 KC: Why did you want the 11th Armored Cav?

1 JG: It sounded neat! 11th Armored Cavalry, I thought, “Man!” But they were in
2 the process of disengaging and going home. And so, they were like, “I’m not going send
3 you there.” So I got 101st Airborne.

4 KC: You had never gotten around to the airborne training, jump training, things
5 like that? But you were going to the 101st anyway.

6 JG: Right. [The 101st Airborne Division was a helicopter division at the time and
7 not a parachute division. The division was accepting non-airborne soldiers.]

8 KC: What did you think about that?

9 JG: Well, my first thought—I looked at a map, they had in one of the rooms. And
10 at the very top of the map, here the 101st was right up here below the DMZ
11 [Demilitarized Zone]. My first thought was, “Oh my gosh. I’m dead.” I thought, “This is
12 going to—I’m going to get killed.” I thought—that’s way up there. I thought, “Oh my
13 gosh.” And then you got all your field equipment, and I can’t remember all the minute
14 details, but I think they flew us up there in C-130 [Hercules, cargo aircraft] and they had
15 not set the aircraft up for passengers, they just had some cargo decks, and they had some
16 big straps across the cargo [decks], and you got in there and sit down and pull the strap
17 over your legs. And of course, that strap went all the way from one side of the fuselage to
18 the other, so you had about five or six guys all just sitting there and that was it. And they
19 took all our duffel bags and loaded them into the back of the C-130 and we took off and
20 flew up north. Landed at, I’d like to say, Phu Bai Airport, I believe. Maybe it’s Camp
21 Eagle Airport, one of those, a little air strip. And really, I hadn’t had much of an
22 impression of Vietnam then because I had always been on an air base, surrounded by
23 mostly Americans. So I hadn’t had a chance to really see the country. But once we landed
24 at the airbase up north, they put us in a cattle truck, it was a kind of semi-truck that had
25 sides on it and went up about, oh maybe three feet. I called it a cattle truck, I’m sure they
26 had a better name for it, but surprisingly I had ridden in those things at Fort Benning and
27 those things were nice. They were—they have a good suspension system. So when you
28 hit bumps its very gentle, very soft. I’d rather ride in a cattle truck than to ride in an army
29 truck, because it was much more of a gentle ride. But that was the real first introduction
30 to Vietnam, because we—they took us up to, I think Phu Bai, which is north of Hue, to a
31 kind of introductions and in-processing centers. Riding from the airport up north on a

1 road that is, I don't know, maybe 15 maybe 20 miles, that was the first time I really had a
2 chance to see Vietnam.

3 KC: What was your impression?

4 JG: Oh my gosh, I thought I'd been watching this on the news for years now
5 suddenly I was here! And it was all in color and it was big, and you could see and smell.
6 And when I would see something like a water buffalo or some Vietnamese lady walking
7 on the side of the road, or I'd see a Buddhist temple, I'd think, "Whoa! Nothing like it in
8 West Texas!" I mean, wow! I was sitting there going, "Wow!" And we didn't have any
9 weapons, but they had a military armored vehicle behind us that had a .50 caliber
10 machine gun mounted on a turret, armored vehicle not an armored personnel carrier, but
11 an armored vehicle, as security. And it followed us up there, they took us up there. And
12 they had a little introduction course, I think it ran maybe, two weeks, I'm guessing.
13 Where they just basically said welcome to Vietnam and here's what to expect. They did
14 say in the class, they said, "How many of you are grunts?" Now I had never used the
15 word grunts, I always said infantry.

16 KC: Right.

17 JG: Like a lot of things, they always said the bush, I always said the field. And
18 they would say the dinks, the gooks, I always said the enemy. So I never had the
19 vocabulary a lot of the time that a lot of Vietnam veterans would use. And I remember
20 they asked one time, I think in the introduction class, they said, "Well how many of y'all
21 are going out into the field?" Or something or, "Into the bush?" And not a single soul
22 raised their hands, they were all rear area processing for whatever engineers, supply,
23 whatever. I didn't raise my hand either! I just sat there. And the only thing I remember in
24 that introduction course is they had one Vietnamese guy who came in and stripped down
25 to his underwear and went through the wire in front of us, to show us how easy it was to
26 go through a wire entanglement. You know, and I was a little disappointed in the medical
27 people. They came in to tell us about medevac helicopters and the guy had kind of a, I'd
28 call it a snotty attitude. He said, "Now before you bring a guy up to the helicopter, before
29 you hoist him up, you got to make sure you get all his weapons, ammunition, hand
30 grenades and everything smoke, everything off of him." And I can understand their
31 purpose. They didn't want that stuff coming in the helicopter. But he had kind of a

1 sarcastic attitude and he said, “If you send that stuff up, we’ll just send it straight back
2 down on you, hand grenades and all.” And he kind of implied he’d pull a pin and just
3 drop the grenade on you. And of course, I was sitting there thinking, you know, we can
4 shoot up if you can drop down, and kind of sarcastic attitude there. Well, I can remember
5 the enlisted people had to do perimeters, guard duty, that night. The officers didn’t, we
6 didn’t have to do that. And that’s about all I remember. Oh, I remember this one thing
7 good; they had the artillery guy that talked to us. Now this was interesting. The—I found
8 that when you get into combat all these great rules that the army has written go out the
9 window. And I remember at Fort Sill and particularly at Fort Benning they taught us how
10 to direct artillery. And this was done of course in bleachers, we were sitting there, we did
11 go to a bunker once because it was supposed to be close fire [correction: danger close,
12 which was fire support within 500 meters of friendly forces]. But anyway, they’d tell
13 you—the artillery officer would tell you, “Okay if you want to call artillery, first thing
14 you have to do is say ‘Fire mission. Enemy troops in the open. Open sheath. High
15 explosive delayed fuse’” Or something, you’d have to call off all this junk. And then
16 you’d have to put in 640 mils, direction and all that junk. When we got to Vietnam the
17 guy, the artillery guy said, “All you got to do is tell us where you are, tell us where the
18 enemy is, and give us the direction.” He said, “You can do that in degrees, tell us
19 northwest, tell us mils.” He said, “Don’t worry, just tell us what you got and we’ll take
20 care of it.” He simplified it. And I thought, “Thank goodness.” None of this—he just said,
21 “There’s the enemy, here we are, call it and we’ll just take care of it.”

22 KC: Right, right.

23 JG: And I just thought, “Thank goodness.” And I found that true of everything.
24 Radio conversations, everything, administration, paperwork, all that stuff went out the
25 window. It got down to the bare bones, what you really truly needed. And if you got in
26 combat forget all those codes words and stuff, you spoke plain English, make it clear to
27 what was happening, and it was simplified and I’m so thankful that they simplified that.

28 KC: You’ve expressed that even when you’re going through this training back
29 state side, that you weren’t comfortable with the lack of actual experience—you’ve even
30 practiced this kind of experience, now you get over there—I can see how this would be

1 very reassuring for you. I'd say all the things you learned there, so much of it is just
2 unnecessary.

3 JG: Oh yeah.

4 KC: They've boiled it down to a way that makes it useful for us here.

5 JG: Thank goodness.

6 KC: And I'm sure it made you feel safer.

7 JG: And they learned that through experience, I'm sure.

8 KC: Sure.

9 JG: Right. And then I wasn't comfortable with the training I'd received because
10 back in the States you know, this artillery training at Fort Benning, one day that was it.
11 Take the test, you're it, you're certified. And—I lost my thought—so yeah that was the
12 training. And then—I was trying to think of anything else.

13 KC: Did you have any Vietnamese language training while you were there?

14 JG: No, I did not. And I always regretted that. I did purchase, I don't know if I got
15 it at an airport somewhere—I purchased a little book on, "Teach yourself Vietnamese."
16 And it was a disaster, I tired but I never really got very good at it. But I had the little
17 pamphlet to the book.

18 KC: So you were there for, what do you say like, two weeks or so?

19 JG: Yeah, about two weeks.

20 KC: To go through all this introductory stuff?

21 JG: Yeah, I think it was two weeks, yeah.

22 KC: Okay, alright, now you're with the 101st, when do you receive your orders to
23 go out to your specific unit? What was the unit when you get these orders?

24 JG: Well first they sent me to the 1st of the 327th Infantry.

25 KC: Okay.

26 JG: 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment which is part of the 1st Brigade, 101st
27 Airborne—Airmobile, now I think they call it, they call themselves air assault, then it
28 was airmobile and that was part of I Corps, near Hue area, North Vietnam—in the
29 northern part of South Vietnam. And so I thought, well I'm going to the 1st, when I got
30 over there, they said, "No, no, we don't need you. They need you in the 2nd of the 327th."
31 So big deal, so I changed battalions.

1 KC: Now, were you assigned to be a platoon leader at this time?

2 JG: Right.

3 KC: An infantry platoon leader?

4 JG: Right.

5 KC: In I Corps?

6 JG: Right.

7 KC: Outside of Hue?

8 JG: Right.

9 KC: What are your thoughts about all of this? You've been paying attention.

10 JG: Well, all my life I'd wanted to be infantry. And my role models were, Audie
11 Murphy, John Wayne, so I thought, "I'm here! This is it! This is what I've been training
12 for! This is what I wanted! I'm infantry. This is it!" I mean I was tickled; I mean, this was
13 great. And I'd been training for this for I guess, six years. You know, on my own,
14 reading, thinking, watching, you know what do you do? What do you not do? So you
15 know, this is—I'd finally reached it, I was there. And so, I was excited. Of course, I still
16 had the same feelings, I thought, "What a stupid war." But personally, man, I was there. I
17 wouldn't call myself gun-ho, but I was professionally ready, and I'd finally achieved
18 what I had been looking for.

19 KC: What was it like when you came to your platoon?

20 JG: (Laughs) That was funny because I think a major said, "Okay we'll go out to
21 the unit." And about the only time I ever wore a flak jacket was riding in the jeep, and put
22 on a flak jacket, helmet, rifle, he checked the radio to make sure he had radio contact, and
23 we drove out to, I called it B-ham, Fire Base—Birmingham is what it was really called.
24 And I met my unit, and I got out there and discovered I was the only officer, there
25 weren't any other officers. They had all finished their tour, returned and had left! And so
26 I can't remember—

27 KC: No one there for any sort of introduction to say, "Here's who your guys are,
28 this is what we've been doing." Anything like that?

29 JG: No, they said, "You're the company commander."

30 KC: Company commander?

31 JG: I said, "What? Company commander?"

1 KC: Not just platoon commander, company commander!

2 JG: Yeah! Because there weren't any officers. So they were on B-ham, so I went
3 up and met the, I can't remember, the major took me up there to introduce me to the radio
4 operators, you know, for the company. You know, met them, introduced myself and of
5 course then the battalion calls down and says, "What's SITREP [Situation report]?" And
6 the radio guy says, "Line two." And I'm sitting there, "What's line two?" I don't know! I
7 had no idea what was going on!

8 KC: So you were brand new in country in the summer of 1971 and you'd trained
9 to be an infantry platoon leader and now all of the sudden you are the company
10 commander.

11 JG: Right. And thank goodness we were on a fire base, we weren't moving. We
12 weren't in the jungle or anything. But yeah, I had no idea what was going on. Because—
13 yeah what's line two? And you know I slowly started to learn but man I thought—and I
14 was kind of angry, I thought, "Don't they have any officers in the battalion staff or
15 brigade they could send out to be a company commander to, you know—" Because I was
16 just walking in brand new. I had no idea what the standard operating procedures were,
17 how they did things, what time they woke up, I had no idea. So I had to rely on the
18 enlisted guys to you know, "Hey! What does that mean?"

19 KC: And the major just dropped you off, and said, "Here's your company, good
20 luck."

21 JG: Well yeah, right, well he said, "Here you are." And I think he told me, I can't
22 remember who told me or when I first found out, but suddenly I was company
23 commander. Now I was only a company commander for maybe two weeks, maybe three
24 weeks at the most. Maybe three weeks at the most.

25 KC: They shipped some somebody out there?

26 JG: No, a sergeant I remember he was in the rear area, but he said, "Do you want
27 me to cut orders on you? And make it official?" And I said, "No, supposedly there is a
28 real captain coming in." I said, "No, there's no real need to cut orders or anything." I
29 said, "I'm just going to be here for two or three weeks." And the only thing that frustrated
30 me—I had all these young soldiers coming up saying, "I need to go to the rear area to
31 take care of a pay problem, I need to go to the rear area to take care of finance, blah, blah,

1 blah, dental problem, I need to—” And of course, I’m sitting there thinking, “What do
2 you do? You don’t say yes to everybody, they’ll all go back to the rear area!” So—

3 KC: That’s a good point, what was the moral of this entire company like when
4 you took over?

5 JG: By ’71, ’72 the handwriting was on the wall. Everybody knew where this war
6 had been, where it was going. The morale was low, I mean no one was out there excited,
7 I didn’t meet anybody who was (makes ahh! sound), excited about the war. On the other
8 hand, it was kind of like, “Well here’s your job, get up in the morning, do your job.” I
9 didn’t hear any rebellion or complaining. It was just kind of a—kind of a, you just did
10 you job. And I never remember anyone talking about it politically or anything or asking
11 questions about it, you were there. So in that situation you were more concerned with
12 what am I going to eat, how can I keep clean, where’s that bug spray. (Both Laugh)
13 You’re more concerned about personal things running around the area 50 feet around you
14 than you were strategic. Of course, now I was away from the news. I had no news, I mean
15 they had a *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, or something came down there, but I always
16 wondered, who produces this, who writes this? I had no outside sources. We got *Time*
17 magazine, would come in from the States but once again, I think it had been—it wouldn’t
18 surprise me if it’d been rewritten, certain elements cut out and added and things. But I felt
19 cut off from the news. So suddenly rather than watching the news every day, I became
20 more interested in what occurred to me within 50 feet around me.

21 KC: What was the relationship like with the men, when you showed up, the
22 enlisted men?

23 JG: Since I was brand new, I had learned that you can’t go in there and start
24 giving orders. When I went in there what I said is, “How does this work? What do y’all
25 do?” And they were helpful, they helped me. They told me, “Line two means that
26 situation normal, no changed since the previous report.” So I learned, and I didn’t try to
27 go in there and change anything or do anything different because I figured, my gosh some
28 of these guys had been there almost a year. They knew what do to, so I relied on them to
29 help me, kept me going. I didn’t go in there as some guy who jumps out of the jeep, and
30 says, “I’m in command!” You know, so oh no, I figured they knew. I’d say, “Well, what
31 do y’all do here?” And he’d say, “Well, we got to keep a grenade here and ready, at

1 nighttime we want to watch.” And I’d say, “What happens then?” So they would tell me,
2 they were instructing me, and they did, they helped me out quite a bit.

3 KC: So the role of your company at that time was to protect the fire base?

4 JG: That is correct.

5 KC: Your group—your company was not going out on platoon or squad sized
6 patrols outside or anything?

7 JG: Thank goodness, no, thank goodness.

8 KC: So your job was, I don’t want to say it’s easy—

9 JG: Yep.

10 KC: But it was made easier due to the fact that you were there to provide base
11 security rather than patrol.

12 JG: That is correct.

13 KC: Okay.

14 JG: Oh yes, if we had gone outside the wire, I would have been, “Oh my God,
15 where are we going?” And once again I would rely—I relied heavily on those young,
16 enlisted guys. You know, I said, “Hey! What’s the story, what do you do?” And they
17 were pretty good, they would tell me, “Oh no you want to do this, you don’t want to do
18 that.” You know.

19 KC: Well, tell me about setting up base security there.

20 JG: The base had a string of wire all around it, it was a big base. This thing had
21 some 175mm long range artillery, stationed at the base, along with mortars, and I think
22 there were some 105’s [Howitzers], I can’t remember. I remember those big 175’s, they
23 were firing long range ammunition, way back into the A Shau Valley. So basically, our
24 job was to sit there and provide security. And there were a number of bunkers, the
25 bunkers were probably, I’m going to guess, probably 25 meters apart. Each bunker
26 consisted of a little bunker area, maybe a room that was probably four meters by maybe
27 three meters. And it was covered by sandbags it had been built years ago. It had heavy
28 timber reinforcing it. There were little trenches out to the side, where you could go out on
29 the edge, if any of that made sense.

30 KC: No, yeah it did.

1 JG: Their job was just to sit there mainly at night, make sure nobody came
2 through that wire, make sure there was no attack. And the big conversation at the time
3 was Fire Base Mary Ann. That was a fire base earlier that had been overrun by the
4 enemy. Which everybody was sitting there thinking, “Oh the war is winding down
5 everything is quite.” And then one day the North Vietnamese came in there and
6 slaughtered the people of that base. I think they killed I don’t know, 20 or 30 people, I
7 think about 30 something people. And they all told us, the problem that happened at
8 Mary Ann is that the enemy started firing mortars in on them, so they got in their
9 bunkers, and then when they started going through the wire. They stopped the mortars
10 and started shooting rocket propelled grenades. And the enemy—the Americans thought,
11 “We’re still under mortar attack.” So they stayed in their bunkers and the enemy came
12 through the wire and they had sappers, or engineers who were trained at carrying satchel
13 charges, which are explosives in kind of a canvas bag, to each bunker. They knew which
14 bunker they were going to, and they went to those bunkers and threw those satchel
15 chargers in there on those Americans and they basically, practically took Fire Base Mary
16 Ann. They knocked out a Quad-50, the first thing they did was make sure that Quad-50
17 was out of action. A Quad-50 is a [weapon system with] four .50 caliber machine guns.
18 And I read a book on it after I got back from Vietnam, but oh yeah. So there was always
19 that potential danger. You never knew, if they thought you were weak, they would come
20 in there and try to take that fire base.

21 KC: How did you motivate the soldiers for whom you were responsible? How did
22 you keep them under your cover? How did you make them or try to make them as
23 effective as they can be?

24 JG: Two things. One thing, I never tried to be you’re Napoleon military
25 commander who issued orders and yelled at them or cussed at them or anything in that
26 nature. No, never. Some guy—I’d go over to some guy and I’d say—I’d tell the squad,
27 I’d say, “Gee, let’s take some time here and clean weapons. I’ve been getting a lot of
28 requests that we ought to clean our weapons this morning. So let’s take 30 minutes and
29 everybody clean your weapons.” You know something like that; I never tried to make it
30 harder, angry, or harsh on them. And I relied on them a lot to help me. I kind of looked at
31 it as a team operation. You know, “What are we doing here? Y’all help me.” Now one

1 thing I did—the two things I really pushed hard, one was safety, because nothing worse
2 than having some guy accidentally shoot another soldier because his weapon accidentally
3 went off or something, or a hand grenade that the pin got pulled on it, accidentally. And
4 that was the thing that always worried me, was safety, safety, safety. And the second
5 thing was security, security, security. So I was constantly checking those troops to make
6 sure they were awake, alert, and alive, and watching for when an enemy might come.
7 And if I went back and found some guy sitting there facing the wrong direction, you
8 know, I wouldn't yell at them, I would just say, "Hey, hey the enemy might come from
9 that direction, now let's turn around and face that direction." And so he'd turn around,
10 and of course on my way back he probably flopped back over and went back to sleep
11 again. But the morale among the soldiers, it—there wasn't any real spirit. They just kind
12 did what they were told. You'd tell them, "Okay, let's pack up and move out." And
13 they'd get their stuff, and they'd get going, but there wasn't any, (makes Ahhh! noise).
14 No, that's gone.

15 KC: Do you think that that was a function of the war? Do you think it was
16 function of their place in the war, the time in the war? Do you think it was a function of
17 being on the defensive, sitting at base security? What do you think that was?

18 JG: I think it was the war. I mean, like me, they'd been watching this thing go on
19 for what, I don't know, I'm saying six years, I mean it was obvious. And we were in the
20 process of pulling out and there was no way we were winning this. And I told them up
21 front, I said, "The only time you should risk your life is to save another American." And I
22 had no desire to risk their life. You know, of course, I had never got any orders to attack a
23 hill occupied by the enemy, that never came.

24 KC: What about your non-coms [non-commissioned officers]? What role did
25 they play in your getting used to and understanding this new position?

26 JG: Well, at first, I didn't have any. All I had was draftee and enlisted.

27 KC: Wow.

28 JG: That's all. And yet some of those guys had been there for you know, eight,
29 nine, ten, months. So they knew. You know, they were good. The company was too big.
30 When I was in the company commander position, I stayed up there with the company
31 radio telephone operators, RTO's. The company TAC, as they called it, TAC [Tactical]

1 Operations Center. I never really went down to the platoon and people, troops. I went
2 down and walked the line, and talked to them and everything, and introduced themselves.
3 But I stayed up there with the company. It was only when the new company commander
4 arrived that I actually went down and joined the platoon to stay with them.

5 KC: What was that like?

6 JG: I was glad to see him! Thank goodness! Because I didn't want to run the
7 company, I wanted to run the platoon. I didn't know how run a company. I was a—it
8 takes time to learn these things. So I was happy to get back down to the platoon. The only
9 technical mistake I made was, each day the battalion commander, who was a Black
10 lieutenant colonel, would have a meeting of the fire base personnel, officers and
11 everything. And it was my job to give them a report and now that I'm older and more
12 mature, I could see that I should have given a more definitive report on the status of the
13 unit occupying the security position, so many men present, so many men absent, you
14 know things like that. Instead, I didn't know I—I was a brand new lieutenant at 24, so I
15 gave them a report, it was kind of not real firm in details and facts. Kind of—I said,
16 “Well sergeant something brought some sodas out to the troops this morning.” You know
17 the battalion commander probably didn't give a hoot about hearing. And later I realized I
18 should have been a little stronger in that area, perhaps. And I guess, my biggest
19 deficiency before I got to Vietnam—I should have mentioned this earlier—is that I had
20 been with a troop unit. I had been with a weapons committee, so I knew weapons. Oh,
21 you could give me a M-72 rocket launcher and I knew exactly how to fire that thing on
22 fire and hit the target. But I had not been with soldiers. And when you're with a weapons
23 committee, you train these enlisted people, but you don't go home with them at night.
24 They have cadre officers that stay with them and go back to the barracks. So I never had
25 a time where I was actually in charge of a unit, that I was actually with the enlisted
26 people like that. So that was a serious deficiency in my training.

27 KC: How did you deal with this?

28 JG: I had to deal with it through common sense, book knowledge, what I'd heard,
29 my feelings on how an officer should be, things like that. And like I said, I relied very
30 heavily on my squad people. And the people, the squad leaders they were some really
31 good squad leaders I had inherited. They were draftees, I guess, yeah, I'm pretty sure

1 they were draftees. And they always gave me good advice I never got, what I consider
2 bad advice. So, yeah, we stayed on the fire base for a while. Let me think, is there
3 anything else about there. I was so glad to see the company commander. The company
4 commander [Michael (Mike) A. McDermott] turned out to be a really great person. He
5 was career military and he had already served a tour in Vietnam, at least one, if not more.
6 And he was very good. What I liked about him is his philosophy of being an officer was,
7 “It’s business, purely business. I mean at 0700 we are all going to get up and move, its
8 business. There is no time to whining, taking on debating, questioning, and talking. This
9 is business and everything is serious.” I mean, he didn’t—there wasn’t any joking around
10 or anything. That was it. And I thought that’s a pretty good attitude to take in a combat
11 situation, everything is business. There’s no horsing or playing around, anything. It’s just
12 straight-shooting business. And he was very good, he never carried a rifle in combat, he
13 always carried a pistol. The odd thing, he figured there’d be plenty of rifles laying around
14 if anything ever happened. But he carried a pistol and one thing that I always noticed is
15 when he was in the jungle, he would pull that pistol out. He’d carry that thing in his hand.
16 And when he would bivouac at night, he would find an old shell crater or something
17 where he could flop into real quick. I thought, you know, “That guys been around a
18 while, he knows.”

19 KC: Now, you said that when you’d go out into the field—

20 JG: Right.

21 KC: So you didn’t spend all of your time on fire base.

22 JG: Oh, no.

23 KC: You would occasionally go out.

24 JG: Oh yes, quite a lot. Okay, here’s a situation. The 101st Airborne Division was
25 responsible for the area west of Hue and their job was to make sure the North Vietnamese
26 did not come back into that area, they didn’t try to stop any infiltration, any type of
27 resupply, any type of messenger from the North, to stop them, and to try to cut all contact
28 between any communist in Hue and those who might be in the North. And to do this they
29 created a number of fire bases. On the fire base they’d place—a lot of them had artillery.
30 And then they had a bunch of other smaller fire bases [correction: OP or Observation
31 Post] that would hold just infantry. Once you’re on the fire base they would send out

1 patrols, platoon sized. They would go out and kind of scan around the area near the fire
2 base, just to make sure that nothing was going on out there. And also, by having the
3 patrols out you could also set up ambushes on river lines and trails and things. So it gave
4 good security. So we didn't just sit on fire base, we were out patrolling the area.

5 KC: Tell me about your first patrol.

6 JG: Let me think a second here. First, let me say the organization of the platoon.
7 The platoon itself consisted of only about 18 men. That's all. Very small. Half the size of
8 a normal TO&E platoon, Table of Organization & Equipment. So it was very small. In a
9 way that was good, because when we went out into the, I called it jungle, they called it
10 bush, when we went out into the jungle it was good to have a very small unit. If they'd
11 give me a full-size platoon, my gosh I don't know what I would have done with them.
12 But we had about 18 people, it was divided into two groups, called squads. Each squad
13 consisted of two, three guys on M-60 machine gun that was called the fire team and then
14 there was a maneuver team, and other three or four guys, and a squad leader. You had a
15 second squad, then you had myself, an RTO, Radio Telephone Operator, and a medic and
16 that was it. That was the entire platoon [later a platoon sergeant was added]. And I always
17 felt sorry for the RTO's because those guys had to keep their ear to the headphone of the
18 radio all the time. I think maybe at night—no, even at night somebody was monitoring
19 those radios. And we couldn't put speakers on those radios, because when you're in the
20 field, there had to be absolute silence. You couldn't have anything—you whispered.
21 Everything was a whisper. You didn't want that radio blaring, so they had to use the
22 headset to the ear. And the poor guy had to walk all over Vietnam with that headset to his
23 ear. And I used to think, "God, that's a hard job."

24 KC: Plus, they were a target.

25 JG: Their what?

26 KC: I said, plus they would be a target.

27 JG: Oh, that's a—could be true, could be true. That's right. I've always heard
28 that, right. And you're right. And we had one radio set, I think it was an AN/PRC; I'd
29 like to say '64 [correction: 25]. It was a good FM set, it worked well, had a big battery.
30 You had to change the battery about every other day and when the RTO would change
31 the batter he'd take the old battery, twist the wires together so it would destroy the

1 battery, so it could never be used by the enemy. We had the radio, and it was in contact
2 with the company. The company had two radios; one would give them the company radio
3 and then the battalion radio. The battalion commander flew around in a helicopter, I
4 never saw the battalion commander on the ground. And the battalion commander
5 primarily relied on his S-3 [Operations] and his S-3 Air [Air Operations] to get
6 everything done. The company commander was actually on the ground with us. And he'd
7 take turns going to different platoons and go with us to the jungle. He was with me for
8 probably a third of the time. There were three platoons. It was always fun talking to the
9 other platoon leaders, because you had somebody you had something in common with.

10 KC: Right.

11 JG: When we would meet—

12 KC: So you eventually got platoon leaders, other lieutenants came in?

13 JG: Right. Thank goodness. People started showing up. And of course, they
14 thought of me as the old veteran, I had been there two weeks, three weeks! (Both Laugh)
15 But anyway, yeah, finally we got other officers in there and we even—I even got a
16 platoon sergeant, who finally came in. So that was great to get these people. And he was
17 an E-6, he was Hispanic, and he was professional career military. And he was good, but
18 he was young, and just like me, he didn't have a lot of the knowledge of what was going
19 on either. And I think that was his first tour. So you know—and basically the first time
20 we went on patrol they just said, "Okay, go out there, walked off fire base, go and see if
21 anything is out there." And we went out, oh I don't know—I'd like to say maybe 1,000
22 meters, a click. And later the company commander called me up and said, "You hadn't
23 moved very far!" And I'm thinking, "What are we supposed to move, how far are we
24 supposed to go? How far do you want us to go?" And the interesting thing about the
25 jungle west of Hue, was that years earlier they had gone through with Agent Orange, and
26 it killed all the vegetation, so what you had—first of all you had big hills, we were in the
27 mountains and these were pretty tough little hills we'd be going up. On these hills, you
28 would have these big dead trees sticking straight up, no leaves, no branches, just dead
29 trees straight up. But now, I think they had stopped the Agent Orange, but now the
30 sunlight penetrated down into the jungle, and you had this tremendous vegetation growth.
31 And that vegetation growth probably went up as high as the ceiling in here, probably 8,

1 10 feet! And when you got down there in that growth, you couldn't see anything! I could
2 see—when we were moving through the jungle, I could see the guy in front of me, and I
3 could see the guy behind me, but I couldn't see anything else because the vegetation was
4 so thick. Now we walked off that fire base, but then on I think helicopters would take us
5 out and they would drop us somewhere.

6 KC: A little farther outside I would assume.

7 JG: A little further out, they would fly us out to an open area, and we'd jump out
8 of the helicopter and we'd be out there for probably no more than ten days, I'd say
9 days. Then they'd bring us back to a fire base and then after maybe 10 days, we'd go
10 back out again. So it was kind of in and out rotation.

11 KC: Would you say platoon—1st Platoon would go out and come back, 2nd
12 Platoon would go out and come back something like that?

13 JG: Correct. Something like that and we never did the same old thing. We were
14 always moving to a different place. We'd go to a different fire base. They created a new
15 fire base, Apollo, where they just went and blew everything away and we dug trenches
16 and that was—we put up wood to kind of protect it and later I went by and saw that place
17 and all that wood had collapsed. But you never stayed in the same place; you never did
18 the same thing. We were always moving to a different area; we never patrolled the same
19 area twice. We moved fire bases, constant moving here, here, there, here. And in the
20 patrols, it was interesting—I got out there and I'd read somewhere in a book that you
21 didn't want to walk down the trails because that's where the enemy would set up mines
22 and that's where the enemy would set up ambushes. So I told the patrol, "Well shoot,
23 let's get the machetes out and let's just go straight through the jungle here." Now that is
24 good, because one, you never knew what you'd come across. You could be chopping
25 through the jungle and you might suddenly come across some base camp or something
26 out there. That was a positive thing. The negative thing is you couldn't travel very fast.
27 And the chances of you encountering the enemy were probably much less. But at the time
28 I wasn't out there trying to find the enemy, I didn't want to find them and kill them. I just
29 wanted to do my job, and if I had to come across the enemy, sure we would do our job.
30 But I wasn't going to make an aggressive attempt at trying to find them. First of all,
31 you're in an area where you can't see anything and so, there wasn't any way I could say,

1 “Oh there’s the enemy. Let’s go after them.” And the jungle, it was interesting—I
2 remember there were a lot of leaflets out there in the jungle, I still have some of them that
3 would say you know, “Surrender.” This is to the North Vietnamese; some were written in
4 elementary form and some were quite sophisticated in color. And you were always
5 finding odd things out there, but I’d learned, don’t ever touch anything; don’t ever pick
6 anything up, just leave it alone, so I never took anything. We found one giant hole one
7 time, and never did figure out—I think maybe a bomb had gone into the hole and just
8 hadn’t blown up. We didn’t throw any grenades into it, that’s for sure.

9 KC: Right.

10 JG: We also had one Vietnamese with us. He was called a Kit Carson Scout. I
11 didn’t realize at the time, he’s true job was only to walk point and take the first bullet,
12 was his true job. And of course, he could also translate, and he was tickled to death to
13 have the job. It meant money for him, so he was gratified. Since we were chopping
14 through the jungle, he couldn’t walk point because he couldn’t swing that machete like
15 the Americans could. So he was in the middle of the formation and I stayed in the middle
16 of formation. I thought that was the best place to be. And basically, you chopped around
17 and then sometime around 5 o’clock you’d decide to go camp and you’d just stop
18 somewhere and set your camp. We never dug in; the rocks, the vegetation made it
19 impossible to dig fox holes. So you didn’t dig. I think the unit carried two or three
20 shovels and that’s all. And that was mainly to dig a little hole and bury things. We would
21 never leave anything for the enemy. Any kind of C-ration [canned food] that wouldn’t
22 open, we’d pop the can open it up, so it’d be bad, bury it. There was always silence. No
23 music. No talking. I don’t remember anybody smoking, surely some of those guys had to
24 smoke, I don’t remember. I didn’t smoke, I don’t remember smoking. But constant
25 silence. It’s very interesting to be out there all that time and not a word spoken. You’re
26 just whispering, everything was a whisper. And another interesting thing at that time, rule
27 had come down from battalion that there were to be no loaded weapons except for the
28 point man. That was the only guy allowed to load his weapons.

29 KC: To load his weapons?

30 JG: Right, allowed to load his weapon!

31 KC: Did you follow that rule?

1 JG: Oh yeah, we did, because I was very concerned about safety. I was more
2 concerned about somebody accidentally shooting himself. We followed the battalion rule.
3 What it was you had a magazine in the M-16 rifle, but you did not have a round in the
4 chamber. Now to load that weapon all you had to do was take the charging handle pull
5 that back, let go, and it's loaded. So (snaps fingers) took that fast to load it. But anyway,
6 one of the soldiers wrote a letter to his congressman saying, "I'm in combat I can't have
7 my weapon loaded?" They sent the letter back to the company commander to respond,
8 and the company commander sat there and said, "I don't know why I'm responding to
9 this, it's a battalion directive. Somebody on battalion staff ought to be responding to
10 this." And he didn't say he was—he was business like he just said in a very calm voice,
11 you know. So yeah, we had no leeway with—I carried way too much stuff.

12 KC: What did you carry with you?

13 JG: One time I weighed my stuff, it weighed 120 pounds and that is before we
14 went out in the field. A lot of that was water. We carried—I carried—I must have had—
15 oh man, I'd like to say 12 quarts of water. It was a lot of water. It was heavy. And I went
16 into an ammo dump before I went out there and my eyes were bigger than my back. I
17 even picked up a white phosphorus grenade; I had all kinds of ammunition on me and
18 carried a claymore [directional anti-personnel mine]. At night we slept in hammocks and
19 hammocks were good. They were comfortable, you were off the ground and if anything
20 happened all you had to do was flip and you're on the ground.

21 KC: Now what kind of hammocks, do they self-contain? Do you carry them with
22 you in your backpack?

23 JG: Well, the hammock I had I inherited it. Somebody in the platoon said the
24 previous platoon commander had it so they gave it to me and it was a mail bag, a U.S.
25 mail bag that had been cut down the seams, spread out and put a rope in both ends and it
26 made a perfect hammock. And when I left the unit, I gave it to the next platoon leader.

27 KC: What did you use to support the hammock?

28 JG: It had ropes on each end, and there were plenty of trees around the jungle, so
29 you just tied it up to a tree. And if it looked like it was going to rain you could put your
30 poncho above to make a little tent above you. And I had a poncho liner [camouflaged,
31 light-weight nylon blanket]. At night I think I'd take off my boots, I'd lay the rifle right

1 next to the tree, at the top of the hammock. And I didn't take off my clothes or anything
2 and that's the way I slept. Insect repellent you're using all the time. The food was pretty
3 good. I never complained about the food or the supplies, or the support we got. I was
4 always happy with that. The artillery support, the food, everything was good. We got
5 everything we wanted, and everything we needed.

6 KC: About how often would the flights fly supplies into you?

7 JG: I'd say once every five days.

8 KC: Okay, did they bring mail with this?

9 JG: Yes, they would. They'd bring mail and they'd bring some kind of little box, I
10 don't know where it came from, it had paper in it, pencils, chewing gum, all kinds of
11 stuff and we'd spread that around the platoon. What wasn't left we'd tear up and through
12 away. Everybody would always take stuff, you know stuff it into their bag. Personal stuff,
13 I had a small ammunition can and you put your personal stuff in there, like a pair of
14 scissors, I had a camera, stuff that was personal to you, you put in there. And you could
15 close that ammunition can up and it was watertight, airtight, and everything. I carried that
16 in the back of the bottom of the pack. I carried the poncho, sleeping—not sleeping bag,
17 poncho, hammock, a lot of ammunition and a ton of water and then food, 120 pounds.
18 Now one of the machine gunners weighed his equipment and his equipment, all were
19 talking about is the rug sack the weapons and the helmet, his weighed 135 pounds. They
20 were carrying a lot of weight and you had to be self-contained out there. But still as I
21 look back on it, gosh that was too much to carry! And when you would first start, you had
22 so much weight on you, your feet would actually tear through the vegetation of the ocean
23 floor—of the ocean floor (chuckles), of the jungle floor. Now later when you'd start
24 drinking the water and getting rid of the food, you'd get a lot lighter, it was easier. But
25 we carried way too much equipment out there, I think.

26 KC: And what about this water? You carried an awful lot of water. Usually, the
27 guys I've talked to carried two canteens of water and then they'd find water elsewhere or
28 they have water brought in and resupply. You said you went out with 12 quarts? [In the
29 field, we were not resupplied with water. In addition, we were told untreated water in the
30 jungle was not potable, meaning it was unsafe to drink. In addition, we operated in
31 mountain areas with few available sources of water in the dry season.]

1 JG: Oh, at least 12 quarts, I mean I had a big old five-quart blivet. I had probably
2 two or three canteens on the side, I had other things. It was a lot of water.

3 KC: What was the environment like? Because it's related to water, it's hot, it's
4 steamy, you're working hard through these hills. What was it like tramping through the
5 jungle with all this?

6 JG: It was hard because of all that weight. And yes, in retrospect I think we
7 should have gotten rid of a lot of that stuff. I did not need a white phosphorous grenade.
8 What—cuss what I'd have done with that if I'd ever thrown it. Finally, on a fire base, I
9 left it on a fire base—left it one time. And it's interesting, on the hand grenades we never
10 wore grenades on the outside like you see in the movies. These things were—first of all
11 we put a piece of tape around them to keep the handle from flying loose, and then they
12 were put in a bag on your front. So if you needed to throw a hand grenade you had to
13 open the bag up, pull the grenade out, pull the tape off the grenade, pull the pin, and then
14 throw the grenade. But in the jungle like that you know, you didn't want to throw a
15 grenade because it probably would only go about six feet, hit a tree, and bounce back on
16 you. So, that's something you—and then you didn't want any accidental discharges with
17 grenades. Carried a claymore mine, we didn't have any rocket launchers; basically, all we
18 had was a couple of M-79 grenade launchers, two M-60 machine guns, and I was always
19 taught the M-60 machine gun, is the bread and butter of the infantry. And yeah, we'd
20 hump around about five days moving around, never finding much. I was very lucky and
21 very fortunate, and this is a significant point in my lecture—of my interview here. Just
22 before I got to Vietnam, they had Operation Lam Son 71-niner [719], where they had the
23 Vietnamese go into the northern part of [South] Vietnam, and I understand that disrupted
24 the North Vietnamese supply channels and everything. So when we got there, there
25 wasn't a lot of action in the area of operation. Thank goodness we weren't in heavy
26 combat. There was—all the time you could hear artillery going off. In fact, in one of my
27 letters home I listened for 60 seconds and I wrote down every time I saw a flare or heard
28 an artillery round go off, and I probably had two artillery rounds every 60 seconds and at
29 least three flares every 60 seconds. So there was constant artillery going off.

30 KC: Now, is this American artillery?

1 JG: Yes, and a lot of times it was just harassing fire you know, they'd just fire
2 into the some place where they knew Americans—they would just fire around there. So
3 there was always firing going on. But the enemy wasn't there, they were there, but they
4 weren't in an active combat mode like they were later in the Vietnam War or like they'd
5 been previously in the Vietnam War. And the word had come down to reduce the number
6 of casualties. We were turning this war over to the Vietnamese and I remember the
7 company commander, and he was kind of disgusted, he said, "Yeah we were supposed to
8 go into the new LZ (Landing Zone), but they decided there were too many land mines."
9 He said, "They didn't want too many people to get hurt, so they said not to go." And of
10 course, I wasn't going to argue, but he sounded a little frustrated like you know—And the
11 company commander kept hoping somebody would get hurt, shot or something we'd
12 have some contact because he felt the unit was too lax, and you know nothing will tighten
13 the unit more than some poor guy gets shot and I wasn't in any hurry for that myself! But
14 we—the contact wasn't there. Now the Vietnamese were there, oh—everyday you'd hear
15 some rumor. I heard a rumor one time later on where some platoon decided to camp in
16 the base of this beautiful waterfall, and of course that night the enemy came in with
17 mortars and had the place zeroed in and they killed three or four of the platoon guys. So
18 they were there. But luckily it wasn't—it was period where the Vietnamese—the North
19 Vietnamese were waiting for us to leave and all they wanted to do was maintain their
20 contacts with whatever forces they had in Hue and recover. And they were patrolling,
21 now if they had an easy shot at an American unit, yeah they'd take it like they did with
22 Fire Base Mary Ann. So there was always a danger, you'd step on a mine, or something
23 out there. It was always there. But we weren't in what you'd call heavy combat. And my
24 biggest fears over there was the command detonated mine, which is the same as the IED
25 [Improvised Explosive Device] they have over in Iraq. Where some guy sitting over there
26 putting in a battery, all they have to do is touch the battery and some mine blows up. And
27 if you walk into the kill zone that's it, it's over. That was my biggest fear. And the
28 hardest part—

29 KC: Did you ever encounter any of these?

30 JG: No, never did. Thank goodness. I did encounter mines later but that's a
31 different place, different story. So it's interesting combat particularly in that environment,

1 you never see the enemy and I did see the enemy later but that was a different time,
2 different place. But at this time, no, you didn't. The hardest thing I had to do out there at
3 that time was direct the artillery. At nighttime, there was a policy that you would bring
4 the artillery in as close as you could to your perimeter so that if you got in trouble it was
5 there, it was ready. And usually, they would wake me up around—I always wondered
6 why they waited so blooming late, around 11, 12, 1 o'clock in the morning and they'd
7 wake me up. And I'd pull guard duty just like all the other guys in the platoon. You
8 know, we'd do our shifts. I felt that I had 18 people, I had to do my job, I wasn't going to
9 go to sleep. Heard about a submarine commander that always took his sleep because he
10 said if anything ever happened, he wanted to be fully awake and alert. But as a platoon
11 leader I felt like I needed to do my job too and you know—So 2 o'clock in the morning
12 I'd direct the artillery, well not 2 o'clock, 1 o'clock I'd direct the artillery and that was
13 the hardest thing I'd ever did. Because when they taught you to direct artillery, you were
14 out at Fort Benning, on the bleachers and you could see for 10 miles. Now here I was, in
15 the middle of the night, in these mountains, which would just start the sound the echoes.
16 One time the platoon sergeant, myself, and another guy, we said, "Where did that sound
17 come from?" I pointed here, he pointed 90 degrees off, and other guy pointed another
18 completely different direction. You couldn't hit the sound; it was so distorted in those
19 mountains. You couldn't see anything! I couldn't see outside the distance of this room
20 right here, you know 10 feet. So here you are directing artillery and you can't see it, and
21 you can't really tell from the sound where it is. So you're telling them, "Right 200, drop
22 100." And you're thinking, "Oh gosh." And you're sitting there praying that, oh gosh—

23 KC: That it wasn't on top of you.

24 JG: Yeah, and you couldn't tell. So I'd get it where I felt happily comfortable, and
25 I'd say, "That's it! Good job. End of mission, EOM [End of Mission]." (Laughs) You
26 know, and I'd say, "God!" You know, you make a mistake, and that thing can come in on
27 top of you, and I'm sitting there thinking, "I can't even see it! And hear it!" And
28 sometimes we'd be out there and try and figure out where we were, and this is before
29 they had all this GPS [Global Positional Satellite]. And you're in this jungle of a map and
30 you can't see anything! So you call for an artillery round to land out there, supposedly so
31 you can shoot a compass bearing at it and then you shoot another one and you can find

1 out where you are. They'd shoot a round and it would echo through those mountains and
2 like I said, people would point different directions where they thought it was coming
3 from. And I thought, "Oh, god!" So that's the only thing that really worried me. That and
4 command detonated mines were the things that scared me the most. And yeah, we went
5 to different bases—what happened. Some of the guys, you know the guys who had been
6 there for a year, you could tell. They had a kind of a rundown stare look. They'd been out
7 there hunting in that jungle and they were exhausted.

8 KC: Had they seen much combat before you arrived.

9 JG: No, not really, I don't think so, about the same. About the same. You could
10 tell the guys who were reaching the end of their tour because they had just kind of a cold,
11 run—they just looked beat. Kind of beat dogs. I remember I was downhill one time—I
12 can't remember, maybe I was going to the bathroom, I don't know, but some of the guys
13 threw rocks down the hill and you know, as if they were grenades coming down. And of
14 course, I just kind of smiled, kind of laughed, you know they were just playing with me.
15 You know, say, "Hey why don't we throw a rock down to your lieutenant down there,
16 he'll think it's a grenade." They were just kind of playing around.

17 KC: Did you have a good relationship with the men of your platoon?

18 JG: I think I did because I was very concerned for their safety. Not just the
19 weapons safety but every safety, all aspects, around the helicopters, everything. For
20 example, when we'd take off from an LZ, I was horribly concerned we would leave a guy
21 on the LZ. You know, one guy could be off in the bush somewhere, and you leave, and
22 you get to the fire base, and some guys says, "Where's John?" And "Oh god." So right
23 before the last helicopter would leave, I'd be the last on out, myself the radio man, and
24 the machine gun would be the last out. And I'd yell, "Anyone left, last bird!" Safety,
25 safety, safety! And they knew that I wasn't out there to get them killed. I never cussed at
26 them directly. I did cuss, and that's the only time I allowed myself to cuss and curse. And
27 I regretted it later, it was uncalled for and it was unnecessary, and unprofessional. But
28 yeah, I never had any problems. There were no drugs on the field. One of those enlisted
29 guys told me, he said, "If we ever get anybody with drugs, we'll kill him." Because
30 you're out there at night, in the jungle, and you don't want some guy over there smoking
31 marijuana, or heroin or something. So no drugs at all. And they always joked that the

1 LRRPs [pronounced Lurps] platoon, which is the long-range reconnaissance, they said,
2 “Ah, those guys, their supposed to be elite. They said they just go out, lay around and
3 smoke marijuana all night.” (Both Laugh) But even though it was the 101st Airborne and
4 on the patch it says, “Airborne”, there was no airborne, nobody in there was airborne. In
5 fact, I had one guy say, “That’s why the unit went downhill, because they took out the
6 airborne.” And nobody said anything.

7 KC: A bunch of replacements. Draftee’s replacements going into the—going into
8 Airborne 101st.

9 JG: They were all foot infantry, leg infantry [non-airborne]. There was no
10 airborne in there. And let me think, the only—the time we—the first time we ever had
11 contact, we moved up the hill, we stopped on the hill for some reason. We were sitting in
12 there, and of course security was out and I can’t remember what I was doing, all of a
13 sudden, I heard a rifle shot, and I thought, “Oh boy!” And of course, I grabbed that radio
14 and I said—I can’t remember the call sign—I said, “Charlie 23 in contact.” And that
15 alerts company, which alerts battalion to get things going, to get things cranked up. I
16 always felt safe and secure because I knew I had artillery and even though I couldn’t see
17 it, I knew if it came bad, I knew I could direct that artillery, I could bring that stuff in real
18 close. So I never felt insecure out there, with that artillery backing me up. Never had
19 anything to do with the air force. In fact, I didn’t want any air force planes coming in.
20 [Air force planes, called “fast movers” in Vietnam, were not as safe for friendly ground
21 troops as army helicopters were in close (less than 50 meters) infantry support operations.
22 Under enemy pressure, I might have quickly reconsidered my position on air force
23 planes.] We never had any air force at all. They were around, but they did their mission
24 somewhere else. Shot fired and a few more shots were fired and then that machine gun
25 cranked up and I thought, “Oh, shoot!” And of course, for just a millisecond, I had a
26 feeling the enemy was enveloping us, going around us, and I had this panicky feeling
27 going through me. But no, I thought, “Whoa, get a hold of that. Put that away real fast.”
28 And so, the first thing that came in were mortars and I got mortars out there as fast as I
29 could, directed them as close as I could, fire for effect drop [artillery term meaning
30 adjustments complete, fire a volley]. Whole ton of mortars out there, and then came in an
31 aero-gunship [AH-1 Cobra, helicopter gunship] in, and they had one of these Loach

1 helicopters [OH-6, nicknamed Loach, an acronym for LOH—Light Observation
2 Helicopter] came down close, searched over the area, and of course, I was telling the—I
3 stayed where I was in the middle of the platoon, which technically could have been a
4 mistake. I should have gone down to the end of the platoon where this action was
5 occurring. But I—my first feeling was fire power, get the artillery, get the aircraft, get
6 everything going, don't worry about getting down there. I don't know what the platoon
7 sergeant did, if he went down there, I don't know. I was telling each person—I would
8 say, "Helicopter coming in on a firing run, pass it on." Well, later I found out it never got
9 passed on to the end of the line and those guys said that when that gunship opened up, it
10 scared them to death because they didn't know it was coming. And you know you pop
11 smoke, you direct it, and the guy came in and fired the—what did the gunship carry?
12 Didn't fire rockets, he fired a gatling gun thing, across the front there. And so finally,
13 what had happened—I finally after this was all over, and it's really funny to see what I
14 did under combat—under fire. And the interesting thing is that I shook like a leaf, my
15 arms, legs, were just shaking, just like that. But my mind and my voice were perfectly
16 calm, just like they're right now. I was sitting there very calmly on the radio, saying,
17 "Right, 200, drop 100." You know, whatever to the artillery. Just as—in my mind,
18 everything was clear and it's kind of in slow motion, everything moved in slow motion
19 kind of. But I was very calm and collected but I was just shaking like everything.

20 KC: Because your body has to release that somehow.

21 JG: Yeah.

22 KC: While your mind is still in control of things.

23 JG: And it was interesting, it took me 10 years after Vietnam to get over that
24 shaking. Any time anyone would fire a weapon around me, I'd start shaking. My hands
25 would shake.

26 KC: Really?

27 JG: Yeah, and it wasn't until 10 years later, I was on a trip out of my job out in
28 Yuma [Arizona], and they fired a weapon on a carrier thing, and I didn't shake. I thought,
29 "My gosh, isn't that interesting." And I was sitting there [in Vietnam] looking, thinking,
30 "Boy, that is so fascinating. How interesting."

31 KC: Wow.

1 JG: But the mind was clear as everything. I mean, I knew exactly what I was
2 doing and in retrospect you always look back and you think, “Boy, I wish I had done this,
3 and I wished I had done that.” But at the time, things happen quick and my thought was
4 get that fire power in here, get that artillery, get that stuff coordinated.

5 KC: Now this is the time you’re still a platoon—

6 JG: Platoon leader.

7 KC: Platoon leader of this—out there with the 101st.

8 JG: That’s correct. We were out there on the side of a hill. What happened I think
9 is that a trail watcher, that’s why they called them, some communist out there in the
10 jungle had decided to follow our unit and he was coming up the trail behind us, and he
11 may have been looking for C-rations we may had disregarded [correction: discarded]. If
12 you get there fast enough, you can dig those things up, open up those cans and eat that
13 food before it rots. And so he was probably just following us seeing what’s happening.
14 Well, my rear security, the guy—I don’t think he was alert and watching, I think he was
15 laid back like this, on his back, and he said he looked up and I don’t know if the guy
16 stepped on him, or what but he looked up and there is a guy above him who had a cloth
17 hat on. And we didn’t wear cloth hats. We had the army steel helmet, from World War II.
18 And he said, boy right there he jumped up, and that guy took off and he shot [at] him. He
19 said he only saw him a millisecond, but he said, “That guy had a cloth hat on.” And there
20 wasn’t anybody out there with us that had cloth hats on. And so he shot—well that guy
21 went down the trail as fast as he could and got out of there. Of course, I didn’t know that,
22 nobody knew—I didn’t know! So I was assuming that we were being attacked from the
23 rear. And then we got to the fire base and the battalion commander came down and I got
24 the—he got back there and had him tell the battalion commander.

25 KC: Right. Were they satisfied with the explanation?

26 JG: Yeah, they were, he just said—now he didn’t tell him that he was laying there
27 asleep—I don’t know if he was asleep, but he wasn’t—if he had been more alert he
28 would have seen the guy coming.

29 KC: Right.

1 JG: Even as short of a distance as 10 feet. I mean that guy, I can't remember if he
2 stepped on him or if he stepped right up next to him. He was right on top of him, he said
3 he looked up and there was a cloth hat.

4 KC: See if you looked up, that says right there you're probably laying down.

5 JG: On your back, right! Right, I don't know if he told the battalion commander
6 that, he just said a guy just came up the rear wearing a cloth hat. And they were satisfied,
7 turned out to be zero. But it gave us a good chance to check things out and we responded
8 quickly.

9 KC: Felt pretty good about what your platoon was doing?

10 JG: Yeah, platoon did well.

11 KC: You felt good about what you were doing as a leader?

12 JG: In retrospect as a leader, you know, it's always hard. You stay in the middle
13 of a platoon and you direct that fire power. Because fire power—as a lieutenant, my job
14 is to get that fire power, get that artillery in there. Because this was—if this was a real
15 attack you needed that fire power and some people would say it would have been stupid
16 of me to run down where the action is. If I had been shot somebody else would have to
17 call fire power, maybe they could, maybe they couldn't. You know, I don't know. I tried
18 to cross train, and everybody could see what I was doing. But in retrospect maybe I
19 should have gone down there to that point guy and said, "Hey what's the story, what's
20 going on?" And then of course, you always think, "Hey, if he'd done that you could have
21 grabbed that machine gun and radio." And said, "Let's go after him!" And chased down
22 the trail after him. But by that time, it was all over. The whole encounter lasted maybe
23 10-15 minutes. Took a while—the mortars came in pretty quick, but it took a while for
24 that gunship to get around there and do its thing.

25 KC: Now you said that you tried to cross train—

26 JG: Oh yeah.

27 KC: Tell me about that.

28 JG: One time we had to call a medevac in because a guy had taken a machete and
29 accidentally cut his hand. And we didn't have a medic with us at that time. We were out in
30 the field with no medic or anything. He had gone to R&R [Rest & Recuperation]. So he
31 gave me the heroin—excuse me, morphine to carry. Because I guess I was the officer, I

1 wouldn't dream of doing anything else with it. So I kept the—he left the morphine, but
2 we didn't have a medic and a guy cut his hand with the machete, and I was thinking
3 maybe he can last, but the platoon sergeant said, "No, out in the jungle it'll infect. You
4 need to get him out of here." So I said, "Okay, let's call medevac." And I let my platoon
5 sergeant call a medevac because I thought, people need to be cross trained. And if I
6 ever had to do it again, I'd have a squad leader call.

7 KC: Did anyone ever talk to you about cross training before?

8 JG: No, no.

9 KC: Not in training or anything?

10 JG: No there wasn't any—I just thought that every guy in that platoon needed to
11 know how to direct artillery, call medevacs, talk on the radio, do all that stuff. You know,
12 because if something had happened to me, I wanted to make sure everybody in that unit
13 knew. So yeah I let the platoon—and of course later I thought, "Was that good letting the
14 platoon sergeant call the medevac? Maybe as the officer I should have been doing it." But
15 then I thought, "Well no, let him do it. And next time let a squad leader do it." So he
16 called the medevac, and we had a terrible time getting the medevac in there, because we
17 had popped this smoke and the grenade would go up into this jungle area that we were in.
18 And they couldn't see it because the canopy was so big. So much vegetation. They finally
19 found us, I finally—you know we were taking turns, I got on the radio, and said, "2
20 o'clock at your position now, 2 o'clock now." Time to get them to turn to get over there.
21 [The nose of the aircraft was considered 12 o'clock, therefore 2 o'clock would be to the
22 front right of the aircraft.] We finally got him out of there. So that was our medevac
23 experience. They hoisted him up on a cable out of the jungle, flew him away. Took him
24 back, he was fixed up, you know, wasn't anything serious.

25 KC: Right.

26 JG: But out there in the jungle you could get infected. And the platoon sergeant
27 was right. I didn't argue with him but my first thought was, "Oh we'll hold a day or two."
28 Then I thought, "No, he was right to get him out of there and get him doctored up." Let
29 me think of what else happened.

30 KC: Well, why don't we take a break for now? For just a little bit.

Interview with Jim Green

Session [2] of [2]

Date 21 July 2009

1 KC: Okay Mr. Green, you said that there were a few more points that you wanted
2 to make about that time as a platoon leader under the 101st. So we'll pick up on that point.

3 JG: Right let me see if I can remember all of them. One of them, it's interesting to
4 look at the amount of entertainment we were given. The only entertainment I remember
5 was back at the base camp, at Camp Eagle. We were—I was back there, company was
6 back there, I can't remember, but we had an Australian group to come in and sing to us.
7 Now I don't know if they were sponsored by the USO or the Red [Cross], I don't know
8 who sponsored them, but they were good, I remember that. Later in my tour Bob Hope
9 came out there, but I was out in the field at that time, and there wasn't any way I could go
10 back and see that. And I was always a little, a little jealous about that, a little bitter that I
11 missed that. I was a little jealous and bitter of the space program. At that time they were
12 launching I think the last Apollo mission, and of course I'm sitting out there on a fire
13 base thinking, "Why are we going to the moon, when I'm sitting out here in the jungle?"
14 I said, "My gosh." And then later in the career, when Nixon went to China, that was
15 down the line here I was thinking, "Why is Nixon in China, while I'm sitting here in
16 Vietnam fighting?" There was little bit of sitting on that.

17 KC: A readjustment of nation priority is what it sounds like you're thinking about.

18 JG: Yeah, which left me puzzled. It's kind of like President Roosevelt going to
19 Tokyo, when we were fighting the Germans. You know I'm sitting there thinking,
20 "Whoa, that's not right." Another point that's kind of interesting from historical point of
21 view, they pulled us out of the field and sent us to this beach resort, for—I think we were
22 told it's going to be for three days.

23 KC: Was this just R&R?

24 JG: Yes, a little in country R&R. It was the company, the whole company.

25 KC: The whole company, wow.

26 JG: And the company commander, he disappeared; he went off somewhere I think
27 to get some time away from the company. And he was in there saying—here's another
28 side point, I don't want to get too deep in this but it's kind of interesting—he was a true
29 man's man because he was looking forward to his R&R so he could go to Montana, or

1 Idaho and shoot big game animals. And I'm sitting there thinking, "Don't you get enough
2 shooting here in Vietnam? Why the blank do you want to go shoot some big animal?"
3 Anyway, so they pulled us back for three days R&R. It was nice, they had you know, hot
4 dogs and I discovered, oh my gosh, when I'd go back to the rear area, I'd get a
5 hamburger with as much mustard on it as I could.

6 KC: Is that right?

7 JG: Aw, I was just looking for that bang of something. And even in the field, hot
8 chocolate or any type of hot sauce on your food, would make it, you know, come alive.
9 Always looking for that. But yeah we went back to this R&R area, and it was on the
10 beach, it was nice. We could swim and all kinds of stuff. We put all our equipment in
11 Conex containers [large metal shipping boxes] to include rifles. They had some beer, 3.2
12 [low alcohol content] beer available to us. They locked everything up so you couldn't get
13 to your weapons or anything, for safety.

14 KC: Sure.

15 JG: And it's interesting, one aspect on that story, when I got my equipment back
16 out I discovered a rat had chewed through a plastic army canteen seeking fresh water.

17 KC: Is that right?

18 JG: Yeah. And it amazed me that they could chew through the heavy plastic on
19 that canteen. But oh yeah, he wanted that fresh water bad. We were out there for one day,
20 and there weren't any Blacks in my platoon. But there were Blacks in the company. And
21 all the Blacks in the company got together and they were quite upset at that time in
22 history. You know it had only been three years since M.L. King had been assassinated
23 and Civil Rights Movement and everything. They were quite upset, and they were
24 complaining and the company commander was talking to them. And I remember I was
25 listening in and the company commander was telling them, "Well yeah, y'all got—you're
26 right in what you're saying, but the fact is you're here. You're in Vietnam. So you got a
27 job. You don't have a choice on that."

28 KC: You say they were complaining, what were they complaining about?

29 JG: Oh, the war, the civil rights, why were they here, why where they you
30 know—was this doing them any good? They were being discriminated against. You
31 know just everything. It was just the general complaints.

1 KC: Was there—were there—were they complaining about discrimination or
2 problems within the company?

3 JG: No, I think it was the Vietnam War itself. The fact that the Civil Rights War
4 [Movement]—the civil rights was still going and here they were over in Vietnam and
5 why were they being made to do this and it wasn't their war and all that stuff. No, it
6 wasn't the company, I don't think. It was mainly more strategic, through the whole
7 theater. And the company commander was tough—it's interesting I was listening in and
8 the company commander looked at me and said—basically told me to take a hike, get out
9 of there. I guess he didn't want some little lieutenant looking over his shoulders as he
10 talking to—

11 KC: Is that right?

12 JG: Yeah, so he told me get out of there. He didn't want anyone, just himself and
13 there were about five or six Black guys there. And he just wanted to talk to them
14 individually. And so I went away, but the interesting thing is, that very—I think it was in
15 the daytime, that very nice we suddenly got orders to go back into the field again,
16 because of some serious problem. And I'm thinking, "Huh. " I think the company
17 commander—this is what I always thought—went to the battalion commander and said,
18 "I'm having problems back there, we need to get these guys back out on the field." So we
19 were there only for one day, one night. (Snaps fingers.) Immediately we were packed up
20 and ready to go back out on the field again.

21 KC: Now that seems somewhat strange but I guess it makes sense in this way, is
22 that when there's down time these kinds of issues will come up. But when you're out in
23 the field there's no time for these kinds of issues.

24 JG: Very true, that's very true.

25 KC: And you suspect that's why the company commander got the company back
26 out there?

27 JG: That's what I've always think, but they never said that, they said they
28 received intelligence that there was going to be an enemy attack and we were needed
29 back out there immediately.

30 KC: Was there any enemy attack when you got back out there?

1 JG: No! So I always thought, “Hmm, I wonder.” I’ll never know, only the
2 company commander knows for sure.

3 KC: What do you think lead to racial problems within the U.S. Military in
4 Vietnam?

5 JG: I think it come straight over from the U.S.A. I think the Black people were
6 angry, there had been civil rights, Martin Luther King had been assassinated, jobs,
7 employment, unemployment, you know, I think there was a lot of anger and bitterness.
8 And the interesting thing the Black people would do over there—I called them Blacks
9 and now it’s African-American, but at that time they had a way of shaking hands with
10 each other. Which was very intricate, I can’t remember.

11 KC: They called it a dab.

12 JG: A dab, yeah. I remember one time we pulled out of the area on a bunch of
13 trucks and there was a whole line of maybe 20-25 maybe 30 Blacks that all lined up on
14 the side of the road, and they were all doing that dab thing, with arms, you moved it a
15 certain way. And they were quite angry. And you know I can understand, historically.
16 But that was the only time that we went back out. Interesting thing, we were getting ready
17 to go back out in the field and these troops are loading for this helicopter and one of the
18 helicopters had a power outage. The engine, main power plant failed and it just bounced
19 on the landing pad, big old piece of PCP pipe [correction: PSP, Pierced Steel Planking]
20 —not PCP, oh a steel stake went up through the bottom of the helicopter and disabled it,
21 so the helicopter was gone. And if that had happened just a few seconds later, that
22 helicopter would have been out over—I never knew if that was the Tonkin Gulf, or if that
23 was the South China Sea, I don’t know what that water was out there from Hue. But that
24 helicopter would have been out over water. If it had crashed in the water it would have
25 been tragic. Because those guys were carrying all that weight on their back and they
26 could not have gotten out of that. But it didn’t, thank goodness. And I remember some of
27 the soldiers said, “It’s interesting they must have left the logbook in the helicopter.” They
28 didn’t even take the logbook, you know the investigators. And I heard later when they
29 tried to hoist the helicopter out of there, they accidently dropped it and just completely
30 destroyed it. So they lost that helicopter.

31 KC: Oh wow.

1 JG: Yeah, they quickly threw them back into the field. And I always thought,
2 “Hmm, interesting.”

3 KC: Now, there had been no problems with any company other than this?

4 JG: Not that I had heard of.

5 KC: You had heard a discussion but it didn't seem to be a problem but was an
6 issue.

7 JG: Yeah, not that I had heard of. Now, when you went back to the rear area it
8 was a different world. There was a lot of drugs in the rear area. I remember seeing a lot of
9 these little [empty] capsules, little plastic capsules. I was told they cost \$5 and it's full of
10 heroin. A really strong type of heroin I was told. And I—you know could see those, if
11 you walked around, oh, you would see maybe one or two a day. They were there, they
12 were around. And there was a lot of more anger and discontent in the rear area because
13 they were just sitting back there. If you had perimeter guard duty on one of those big
14 bases, you basically stood there every night, staring in the darkness. And so the morale
15 was really bad in the rear area. Also, there was a thing called FTA [Fuck the Army],
16 blank the Army. (Laughs) If you FTA the army. That was everywhere. There was a lot of
17 discontent. A lot of the troops on their helmet liners [correction: camouflage covers]
18 would write things and in fact, the company commander had “Montana” on the back of
19 his. He was proud of that, he didn't add anything else, he was a career officer. But the—it
20 may have come down from division, they said, “No, that's got to stop.” Because they
21 were afraid of what might appear on these helmet liners. So they said, “No more writing
22 on helmet liners.” And this kind of disgust the company commander because he had to
23 take his, “Montana” helmet liner and throw it away and get a new one that didn't have
24 anything on it. So, it was that aspect of wanting to control a unit and keep any kind of
25 dissent or protest or anger or anything down. And let's see—

26 KC: What led to this? All this discontent in the rear, racial issues, drug issues,
27 what lead to this?

28 JG: I think about 1971-'72, it was obvious. I mean the people knew we were
29 leaving, they knew the war was not going to be won. They knew the war wasn't going
30 anywhere. They were thinking, “Why am I here? Why am I risking my life? What am I
31 doing here?” It had been building for years. They'd seen all the protests, the Pentagon

1 Papers had come out—I don't think I really realized that until I got back and started
2 reading about it afterwards. But you know it was obvious. I never meet anyone who was,
3 “We should be here—this is great!—Vietnam is right!” I never met anybody like that.
4 The general attitude was, “We're doing our job.” And many of the guys in the rear area
5 you know, they did their job to the minimal. I mean, I took a piece of equipment one
6 time, had all this paperwork and then I went back to the kid who checked that piece of
7 paper and the guy had just thrown it in the trash. I mean, just minimized work. Doing as
8 little as you could, getting through, don't rough, don't cause any waves, just do your
9 time, and go home; that was the feeling.

10 KC: A break down in morale and break down in discipline that was army wide.

11 JG: Yep. And of course you always heard about fragging [killing with a
12 fragmentation grenade], and officers being killed. I'd heard about that.

13 KC: Well you're an officer now.

14 JG: Oh yeah.

15 KC: And you're a platoon leader, and you're going out on all these patrols. Did it
16 ever bother you?

17 JG: It never bothered me. I never felt endangered by my own men. But I always
18 thought in the back of my mind, if anybody ever takes a shot at me, I knew how to handle
19 that weapon. They'd get that first shot, but I knew I'd get that second shot. So it never
20 bothered me. No, I never had any real fear of my people. No, but you could see in rear
21 areas if some officer leaned too hard on some guy, particularly if he was on drugs, and he
22 thought he was going to get his drug supply cut off, I could see where he would easily
23 kill him, frag him or anything else. It was there, I heard about it. It was happening. And I
24 think the company commander described it, he said, “It's murder.” He said, “That's
25 simple murder.” And I agreed with him, you know.

26 KC: When you'd go back to the rear—not necessarily to the rear, when you'd go
27 back to fire base—

28 JG: Right.

29 KC: When you weren't on patrol, you'd have—I assume that when you're not on
30 patrol you're back at the fire base, you're performing security in parameter and things
31 like that. What sort of things would you do in your down time?

1 JG: Usually there always keeping busy, you didn't just lay around. This is the
2 army, you don't want to—if you come down from battalion or company you didn't want
3 to sit there. So you're always filling sandbags. They seemed to constantly want to fill
4 sandbags. And then just taking care of yourself on a day to day basis, like taking a
5 shower. You had to go down to a water point with a powder canister [metal cylinder used
6 to transport and store gun powder] from the artillery, fill it full of water, carry it back up
7 to the showers, pour it into this canvas bag above the shower and you know that whole
8 operation could take an hour! To hump all that water up there and take a shower, a cold
9 shower. So you know there was always maintenance and things to do. You'd get some
10 down time, I always loved to read war novels—not novels, but war stories, history,
11 World War II usually. And I wrote letters every day. Not a single day went by I didn't
12 write.

13 KC: Who'd you write home to?

14 JG: My mother and father. Every single day I wrote because it was free! All you
15 had to do was write the word free in the upper right hand corner of the letter and drop it
16 in the mail. So, I sent home letters every single day. What else happened up there—let
17 me think, try to reminisce on this. One of the fire bases stands out in my mind, I always
18 thought that was interesting. Well, one of them we were on the base once and one of my
19 men saw somebody moving down there and said, “Whoa! Enemy!” And we called it in,
20 and the way they handled the fire support in the division, they had a map, it was cut in
21 grids and if you were in a grid, no one could fire into that grid. And they came back and
22 told us that, “No, there was an American patrol in that grid.” So we were probably seeing
23 Americans out there. But the only people that could clear a grid was the S-3 and the S-3
24 Air. The only two people in the division or the brigades—I should just say brigade or
25 battalion who could say “That grid is clear to fire.” And then the artillery could fire on it.
26 I don't want to ramble too much; I'm trying to think of what else happened. There was
27 one fire base in particular I always remember. The company commander, we had a
28 mortar platoon on the base and he was wise to do this, he brought that mortar fire in and
29 with no powder charges on it, within 50 feet—not feet, 50 meters excuse me, of the
30 perimeter. And when you're firing them mortars, you can see those things. They go
31 almost straight up above your head and them come right down 50 meters in front of you,

1 which is close! He could have been shorter than 50; he could have brought those things
2 within 30-40 meters. It was close. But he was right. He said, "If there was ever an attack
3 you want that mortar to be right there on the wires, as close as you can get." And we were
4 at another fire base when he was doing that and the guys out on the point out there
5 radioed me up on the platoon radio and said, "That stuff is coming awful close!" And
6 once again you always think back years later, and you think, "Here's what I should have
7 done."

8 KC: Right,

9 JG: But here's what I did at the time. And I got on the radio and I said, "Oh, okay,
10 gosh." And I should have been more firm, I should have just said, "Get—" What I should
11 have done as a true leader is said, "Hang on, I'm coming to your position behind you."
12 You know, you always want to be careful when you're coming up on a position at night.
13 What I should have said is, "I'm coming in on your position." And when you came in
14 you'd always say—in the battalion you'd always say, "No Slack." That was our motto.
15 "No Slack, No Slack!" That always meant that you were American. I should have gone
16 down there to them and said, "Ah, it's okay." But instead I was on the radio and the
17 company commander heard me talking to them, and he came over the radio and said,
18 "Get down, put your helmets on. You're okay!" You know, "You'll be alright. Just be
19 quiet!" And of course I thought, "Oh, boy. Maybe I didn't look that good in front of the
20 company commander."

21 KC: Right.

22 JG: So there are times that you do things and later you think, "Boy, I wish I had
23 that to do over again."

24 KC: What was your relationship like with the company commander?

25 JG: I'd say good. It was business, like I said there was never any point where you
26 socialize on an easy free basis, joking and laughing. He would talk, you know, we'd talk
27 but it was always business. He'd talk, you know like I said, he wanted to go big game
28 hunting and he'd tell me about his R&R to Australia and things. But it was business. And
29 sometime he'd get mad. He'd tell me, "I want your perimeter to go down there to that
30 point." And I'd say, "What point?" He'd say, "That point right down there." I'd say,
31 "Now which point?" So I was wanting him to get more specific, and he was I think

1 getting frustrated that I was sitting there—you know there's always a little friction going
2 on between. Because you're—you give an order and you know, he didn't think—like I
3 said one time he said, "You're not moving enough, you're not moving fast enough. You
4 haven't moved much from here to here in the day." So there's always a little bit of
5 friction. But I think it was always good. I always admired him. So, I was glad he was
6 there. I felt really he was a good company commander.

7 KC: Let me shift gears here really quick. You've mentioned he was on R&R in
8 Australia, and you've mentioned this one day R&R, or almost one day R&R that you had,
9 had with the company. Did you get any individual R&R?

10 JG: In a one year tour, you got two weeks R&R [correction: one week of R&R].

11 KC: Where did you go?

12 JG: That came much later in my tour.

13 KC: Okay.

14 JG: At that time, near the end of the war, the only thing open was Hawaii.

15 KC: Okay.

16 JG: They closed up Hong Kong, Thailand, Australia, all those good places.
17 Everybody said, "Oh, those are the good places!" I got Hawaii. And so I spent two weeks
18 in—two weeks? Could have been a week, I think it was two weeks, maybe it had been
19 one week, in Hawaii. And I didn't do much really. I just basically sit in my hotel room
20 watched TV, saw Nixon go to China, little depressing. I remember one lady on the street
21 approached me but I said, "No thank you, no thank you!"

22 KC: Now why do you say it was a little depressing?

23 JG: Oh, it—at that time in the war, it just wasn't anything I was excited or happy
24 about. I mean, and I'll tell you later—you'll understand later in the story. But yeah to
25 finish up this little period, we had one fire base I remember I went to and it had been
26 occupied by the South Vietnamese earlier. And they put a mine field in and around the
27 base and of course, no body went through that mine field. But they had a couple of
28 engineers out there, now they were from—they must have been from division or
29 brigade—probably brigade engineers. They were two young draftee guys, 18, 19, 20 years
30 old. And their job was to go out there and disarm a path through this mine field so they
31 could put fougasse out there. Fougasse is a big ol' 55 gallon drum full of gasoline and I

1 heard Tide soap or something in there and you pack sandbags around it and you put a
2 claymore mine under it. Then if the enemy attacks all you got to do is fire that mine and
3 you get this *big* blast of fire! Their job was to clear a path through that mine field and
4 put—so they could put fougasse out there. And at that time, they didn't have any
5 technical equipment; all they had was a bayonet and a mine detector. And they had
6 explosives and when they would find one they would pack explosives around it and blow
7 it in place. And stupid me, I went out there in the mine field with them and I went down
8 the cleared path you know. But out in that mine field it had been there for years and some
9 of these mines were completely buried, you couldn't even see them. Others were sitting
10 out in the open ground, where the ground had eroded from under them and they were just
11 little round saucers and they had little prongs sticking up.

12 KC: Were they ones the South Vietnamese—

13 JG: South Vietnamese had put those in I was told. And that was the Bouncing
14 Betty type. You hear in World War II, if you trip that sucker, it pops about three—about a
15 meter in the air and then it explodes. And I went out there and looked at it, and they were
16 more than happy to let me come out there and look. You know, I thought, “God, what a
17 dangerous thing you know.” And the company commander saw this, and he told me—I
18 didn't see it but he said, “One of those guys reached over and picked up a parachute flare
19 and when he picked it up it tripped on those prongs and the mine popped out of the
20 ground but I didn't go off. It fell back to the ground.”

21 KC: Wow.

22 JG: Yeah. And of course—

23 KC: Like you said, you never picked anything up because of that reason.

24 JG: Oh yeah, you don't touch anything. And I was—you know I thought, “Gah,
25 this is stupid! Can't they bring in some Bangalore torpedoes [explosive charge placed
26 within one or several connected tubes] or something to blow these things if necessary,
27 there's got to be a safer, easier way of doing this?” But these were out of brigade. They
28 weren't my responsibility. I'm very happy and proud to say that no one under my
29 command ever got hurt, cut, or wounded or shot or anything, or died under my command.
30 And I'm so thankful for that. But anyway we eventually left that fire base, and then later I
31 heard that both of those guys got killed. One of those mines went off, they found the

1 remains of one, the other was blown off the hill. And they went helicopter searching
2 down there and never could recover them. And the interesting thing, the S-3 the same old
3 guys, me and another lieutenant, he was an assistant S-3 Air, he told me when he called
4 for a medevac, the medevac people wouldn't go in there. Because they thought it was a
5 live hot fire zone. And he kept telling them, "No, they tripped a mine, there's no enemy
6 action. It's clear." And they popped green smoke, meaning it's safe, come on in. And
7 medevac said, "No, we're not going in, not till we get more gunships around here to
8 protect us."

9 KC: Now do you think this was a result of the overall morale, discipline problem
10 with the era?

11 JG: Yeah, I think so. I think those medevac pilots were thinking it's a hot LZ and
12 these infantrymen are just saying, "It's okay, come on in." And they were thinking if
13 that's a hot zone and somebody's shooting they could get killed. And this is near the end
14 of the war, and they were thinking, "Eh, I think we'll just wait a while, get some more
15 gunships to kind of check the area." And the guy he told me, he said, "Boy he was angry,
16 he was yelling at them, get in there, these guys need help." And they were saying "No,
17 we're not going in there yet." So that always made me think, you know—I always
18 thought, "Mm-hmm—yeah." But I didn't see that. I was gone. I do have a picture, a
19 photograph of those guys. It's way off there going back up, I was in the mine field
20 shooting them back. But I look at that picture and think, "God, those guys never made it.
21 How sad." Now I never saw it happen, I got this through the rumor mill, but everything
22 indicates that was a true story. I have no reason to doubt that didn't actually happen.

23 KC: Now you were with 101st until, what December? October? December?

24 JG: Yes. That was interesting, now what I have been talking about—we'll what
25 I've been talking about is a three month period from July, August, and September.

26 KC: Okay.

27 JG: At the end of September, the company commander tells me that I'm being
28 sent back to the rear, we're getting a new lieutenant. And I said, "What?" He said, "We
29 got a new one." And I said, "Why?" I said, "What have I done? Have I done something
30 wrong?" And I started thinking maybe my platoon sergeant told them that I wasn't as
31 good, maybe he [the company commander] had lost faith in me. Maybe he had lost

1 confidence in me. And I said, “What—Why?” and he said, “The reason we are sending
2 you back, we got a new lieutenant, we need to rotate him in, and get a new lieutenant in
3 here, and you’re the oldest lieutenant in service, in the company. So you’re the one that
4 gets to go back.”

5 KC: So you’re the one that gets to go.

6 JG: He said, “That’s why you’re going back.”

7 KC: You’ve been here for three months?

8 JG: Right! Three months! And I was—

9 KC: Obviously you’re upset about this.

10 JG: Yes, I was angry! I thought, “I didn’t come out here and spend three months!
11 These other guys have been there year! They were spending a year out there!” It made me
12 feel like a dog, going back after three months. I told him, “I don’t want to go!” And he
13 said, “Nope, no choice you got to go back.” He said, “You’re going back to company XO
14 [executive officer], in the rear area. You get a brand new lieutenant, you brief him and
15 next day you’re going to be in the helicopter out of here.”

16 KC: How’d you brief him?

17 JG: I set him down over on the side, and told him everything I knew about the
18 people, the place, the country, everything. Anything I could think of, I just poured it out
19 to him. He was brand new, just in. And I said, “Good unit, good people.” I said, “Here’s
20 what you do. Here’s what you’ve been doing.” Everything I could think of. Like I’ve
21 been telling you just now. And I was quite upset. And to this day, I still don’t know for
22 sure. Now later when I got my efficiency report it was good, it wasn’t written by that
23 company commander, it was written later. Because when you’re in the field like that, he
24 doesn’t take the time to write reports.

25 KC: Sure.

26 JG: And nothing ever came back to me that I’d done anything wrong, but still,
27 you always pick your mind. You always think, “Was is that time? Like I didn’t go down
28 there to that OP, when the company commanders if firing mortars and reassure them.”
29 You know, you think, “Is there something I did wrong?” You always wonder, but I never
30 got any indication I’d done anything wrong. It was just my time, three months! And I
31 thought what a heck of a way to fight a war. You bring officers in for three months and

1 then send them back? Now for the country that's good because you're getting a number
2 of officers that are infantry experienced. But for the unit, the platoon, and for me, that
3 was rotten. And so, gosh, I was out of a job, that was it. It was over, three months in the
4 field that was it. And yeah, I was quite upset. But you know I didn't argue with him. I
5 was like how I am now, I was not happy with it at all. He said, you know, "You're a good
6 soldier. You wear your helmet and carry your rifle at all times." That was a division
7 standard, you had to always have you helmet and rifle. You never went without your
8 helmet and rifle, no matter wherever you went. And so, you know, he said, "You did a
9 good job." But I still wonder to this day—when I gave my platoon sergeant his rating, I
10 wrote it up as good as I could, top notch. And he seemed amazed that he got such a good
11 report, and it made me think, "Huh, I wonder if he stabbed me in the back and now he's
12 shocked he's got such a good report." But I don't know! I don't know. The only person
13 who knows for sure is that company commander and he never told me. So you go away.

14 KC: Its one of those things, you continue to go over in your mind, over and over,
15 and over, for 40 years or whatever, and it won't do you a lick of good. It will probably
16 just drive you crazy in the process.

17 JG: Right. I just thought, "What a heck of a way to fight the war." And that kind
18 of—the whole war I heard the battalion commander served six months, and that was it.
19 Six months and you're out. What a heck of a way to fight a war. It's more of a real life
20 training school, than it was a war. So I went back as a XO, I got back to the rear area and
21 I thought, "What the cuss do I do back here?" I didn't know what to do. They had a
22 sergeant back there that ran the office and there wasn't hardly anybody back there. The
23 only people in the rear area were people who got sick, just coming in, going out. There
24 weren't that many, you had a few clerks. And they had one formation and with the
25 battalion and each rear area component, the company probably only had maybe 12 people
26 in the rear area. So you had I don't know, three or four platoons, three platoons—three
27 companies, three companies, so you had only a total of maybe 30 people in the rear area
28 for this battalion. Everybody else is deployed out in the field. And we showed up and I
29 didn't know it was the first time we'd done this. And I sit there—and all my unit no one
30 had polished boots. There wasn't any black polish on their boots. I looked down the row
31 at all the other little company detachments, all their troops had polished boots. And I'm

1 going, “Oh shoot. That doesn’t look too good.” And sure enough the battalion XO didn’t
2 seem too pleased with it. And of course I told them, “Oh yeah, we’ll take care of that next
3 time.” And I thought, “Oh boy, there’s another arrow in my side.”

4 KC: So what was it like going back from being on front line troop to going back
5 to the rear? Where they have more of the rules, regulation, spit and polish, what some
6 soldiers would call chicken shit. What was it like going back to that?

7 JG: Oh, you pretty well described it right there. You know I wasn’t that pleased
8 with it. I think the only thing I did constructively; I had to pay the troops. So you’d go
9 over to finance they’d give you \$10-12,000, you didn’t have dollar bills, you had a
10 special currency used in Vietnam. So I got that. Somebody told me—and I’m glad they
11 did—they said, “Count it out in a room by yourself, staple it to each voucher.” So I did
12 that and everything worked fine. I paid everybody, that’s the only thing I did
13 constructively. And the rest of the time I’d sit there—I remember the company sergeant
14 was pretty good, he was an old career sergeant, and he was pretty good in the rear area.
15 And he said, “Put the money in the company safe and it will be okay in there.” And of
16 course I did, I put it in the company safe, and later I thought, “Only he knows the
17 combination to that. What if something happens to that?” You know, I’m sitting there—
18 but you know, that would have been okay, it’s safe. But yeah, it was discouraging. I
19 didn’t see any—it was you know—and now I don’t know, once again did I do a bad job
20 and they decided they needed to get me out of that job because about three weeks later I
21 was ordered to go to another job. And I kept thinking, “Is this because I didn’t do a good
22 job, or because they needed me somewhere else and they decided they need you over
23 here?” And that one I didn’t care as much about, like losing the platoons. But then I
24 didn’t care if I left the rear area.

25 KC: Right. Well, where did you go next?

26 JG: Next, they needed a liaison officer, between the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne
27 and the 1st ARVN [Army of the Republic of Vietnam] Division. So, I went over to this
28 fire base which was the 3rd Regiment, 1st ARVN Division. And I was to be the link
29 between the 101st Airborne and this ARVN Division [correction: Regiment].

30 KC: What would your role be?

1 JG: Mainly—the only thing I did that was really important is that each day I
2 would go into this big regimental map, and copy down the locations of each one of the
3 ARVN units in the field, and then that would be put into code and read—oh no, we didn't
4 put it into code, in fact the radio itself was in code, the radio itself would put it in code. In
5 the company you had to use a little code sheet and code everything in the field, but this is
6 at the fire base where they had a sophisticated radio that would automatically put it into
7 code as soon as you get ready to talk. And I'd transfer these coordinates back to the
8 division and they would put it on their division map. That was my only real true job.

9 KC: So as a liaison it wasn't like you were dealing with ARVN officers here,
10 American officers here, you weren't trying to coordinate intelligence from one or the
11 other; it was a matter of literally copying down locations of ARVN units and providing it
12 to American planners.

13 JG: Right. And that was my top, number one, only job really.

14 KC: And that's a liaison.

15 JG: Right. [The primary purpose of liaison is to provide an in person,
16 communications link between the two commands. Since both commands operated
17 independently, there was little communication or coordination between the commands
18 except in the area of artillery fire support.]

19 KC: As you've experience it.

20 JG: Now, they also had an artillery liaison out there too, another American
21 lieutenant. And I had a couple of radio operators with me. We all took turns; you know
22 watching the radio all the time, at nighttime too and I pulled my shifts just like the
23 soldiers. I couldn't go in there with only two people and say, "Y'all people do the radio
24 work, I'm going to sleep." So I did my job. And you had a lieutenant colonel, American
25 Army, who was the advisor to the Vietnamese. He had a couple of support personnel.
26 There was the artillery, he had a couple of personnel, I had a couple—so there were
27 probably a dozen of Americans on that base.

28 KC: Now where was this base?

29 JG: I'd like to say T-bone, T-bone, it's a fire base. Right outside Hue, adjacent to
30 the 101st Airborne area—

31 KC: Okay, so you're still staying in the same area then.

1 JG: Same area, right. I'd just crossed the division boundary; I was over with the
2 1st ARVN Division.

3 KC: Okay.

4 JG: And let me regress one second, back to the fire base with the Americans. One
5 time they told us—I had little confidence in the intelligence because they told us big
6 attack tonight, it's coming tonight, this is it all across Vietnam, 50 percent alert, every
7 other person had to be awake all night—nothing happened. I didn't have any confidence
8 in American intelligence. Later, I had a chance to read some of them, and I didn't think it
9 was any good. Anyway—okay, now I'm with the Vietnamese. The Americans had a little
10 hooch [house] where they supplied food for ourselves and they told me, "What we need
11 for you is to bring in water." And I'd tried to talk to brigade into bringing water in, and
12 they said, "No, we're not going to transfer five hundred gallons of water for three
13 people." And I said, "Well, it's really for 12." And they said, "No, that's their problem,
14 they work at this water solution."

15 KC: Right.

16 JG: And it was very interesting because for once, I had a chance to really get
17 close to the Vietnamese. Prior to this I had never seen that many Vietnamese. You know
18 you see them around the rear areas, but out in the field, it was free fire [unrestricted fire
19 zone], and they said there were wood cutters out there, but I never saw any wood cutters.
20 But it was free fire and you never saw any Vietnamese except for the Kit Carson Scout
21 who was in our unit. But now I found myself in the minority, I was surrounded by
22 Vietnamese.

23 KC: What was it like working for the Vietnamese?

24 JG: Very interesting. First, I wish I had language skills because I could never
25 carry on a conversation with them like I could with you right here. This is where I tried to
26 learn the Vietnamese, I worked very hard at it but of course it was painful both for me to
27 speak and for them to hear. Sometimes they would die laughing, they would say, "Say
28 this." And I'd try to say it and they would say, "You called your mother a dog!" (Both
29 Laugh) Because it's a sing-song language, it's very hard. But I tried and I think they
30 respected someone who made an effort to learn their language. I always felt that the
31 Vietnamese—they'd been at this war for many years, and I felt—we had an American

1 advisor, but what was he supposed to advise them. I mean, my gosh, they were all career
2 military there, they were in the war. They were in there to fight this war. Whereas we
3 were in the process of getting out, low morale, they were in the process of living there.
4 So, it was a different side to the coin. I only met one Vietnamese who truly had an anger
5 and hatred toward the communist. His mother and father had been taken out of Hue and
6 killed, back in Tet of '68. So he actually had a true hatred of them and said he wanted to
7 kill them, and I believed him. The rest of the Vietnamese, they were just kind of like the
8 Americans. They were doing their job. You know, you're getting paid, what else you
9 going to do? Are you going to quit and go home? Or you going—hey you're going to
10 make money, how you feed the family? And periodically they'd have parties for us. And
11 it's very interesting, they'd stack the coke cans up like a pyramid. And then feed us some
12 kind of chicken broth that still had the chicken head and feet in it and stuff.

13 KC: Right.

14 JG: I'd say, "Oh boy." And one lieutenant colonel, of the Vietnamese Army
15 called me over and gave me some clam shells. You crack the shell open, and he said,
16 "Don't eat the lungs it'll make you sick." You know and you (makes sipping noise) and
17 as I was doing it as an old guy from West Texas that wasn't something I particularly
18 enjoyed. But I thought, "Well I can't—I got to be nice and friendly here." And of course
19 he had an ulterior motive, he wanted me to go to the PX and buy him a television, and I
20 told him, "No, I can't do that." And he was friendly from then on, but he didn't invite me
21 in for any more clams! But you know I'd look funny buying a television set to take back
22 out into the field. I mean it's obvious what I'd be doing.

23 KC: Right. Was there a lot of that going on, do you think?

24 JG: Yeah, I think there was. The Vietnamese, they were good people. They were
25 nice people. They were smart. You know in their culture, like I said, if I could have
26 spoken their language I think I would have learned a lot more about them and the true
27 depth of their knowledge, experience and culture. Sadly I couldn't, so the conversations
28 were of pidgin English, you know, "You go here?" "Yeah" "I give you eight *dolla*, you
29 buy GI [Government Issue, used to describe members of the US Army] eight *dolla*." You
30 know like that. They weren't really good conversations. But the one thing that impressed
31 me of Vietnam is the grinding poverty of it. I mean, every American should have a

1 chance to go to a third world country and see poverty. The poverty was terrible. So you'd
2 tell—these people, you'd say—you could never carry on a conversation about
3 communism or democracy, but you'd say, "Communism." They'd say, "Communism
4 number 10 [number 1 meant the best whereas number 10 meant the worst]." You know,
5 "No good, communism is no good." But if you fold a dollar bill out of your pocket, whoa
6 that was different, now they were excited. Money, you know anything. And the
7 Vietnamese, they would ask me, "How much money you make?" Which is something
8 you'd never ask here in America. And I'd embarrass them, I'd say, "Oh I'm making
9 about \$6-7,000 a year."—I think is what I made, is that about right—six? Yeah, it was
10 about 6 or 7,000 as a first lieutenant. And they'd say, "Ooo! So much money!" And I'd
11 say, "Yes, but rent and cost and cars and expenses." I'd said, "That's not a lot of money
12 in America." And then they'd say, "That's a lot of money." I did have one Vietnamese—
13 we were up on a—okay, I don't want to get too convoluted here—we were on a fire base
14 and this thing was incredibly high up, I mean we were up almost in the clouds. I never
15 worried much about enemy attack. The only way they could attack us is to come up the
16 road to the fire base, because the cliffs were just almost sheer. And it was—security was
17 provided by a Vietnamese company. And I always felt fairly safe, you know you always
18 wonder one of them could be a communist, you never know what could happen! They
19 had two batteries of artillery up there. 105 [mm, howitzers] and 155 [mm, howitzers], and
20 it was interesting once the Vietnamese fire the artillery—when they'd fire the artillery
21 they'd just come out in their underwear, whatever they were wearing and shoot the
22 artillery. Whereas the Americans always had to be in uniform, helmet and everything.
23 They were very much laid back. But it was an aggressive unit. I was there for three
24 months with them, and in three months they chocked up 88 kills in that area. I mean
25 that's what the chart on the board said. Was that the truth? I don't know. I did not go into
26 the field with them. It wasn't my job. I wasn't allowed. I did have a chance to see one
27 incredible fire fight. I mean it was incredible. I was up on this high hill, probably a mile
28 away. A Vietnamese unit encountered some enemy and they immediately got out of there
29 and fell back. And they called in all the artillery for the 101st Airborne the 1st ARVN
30 Division, and I Corps, all that artillery was coordinated on this one grid square, about a
31 1,000 meter square.

1 KC: Right.

2 JG: And I sat up there on this hill and it was almost like I was a Greek Gods in the
3 clouds. It was incredible. I mean, that artillery was just like popcorn, it's (makes firing
4 noise). And they'd fire for a while, then they'd stop, and then one battery would fire for a
5 minute, then adjust, and another would fire, then they'd all fire again. And I thought my
6 gosh if anybody is in that grid, there is no way they can survive that. And sure enough,
7 two or three days later they went in there, they could smell and find the remains of enemy
8 soldiers that had been killed. That was the ARVN, I didn't go in there.

9 KC: Right.

10 JG: It's just all from a distance, from my concern. They brought back all kinds of
11 weapons. I got a picture of, oh, 30 weapons. And one guy said, "Yeah, you can tell
12 combat weapons that have damage on them." Where bullets had hit them, you know all
13 kinds. Of course, I wish I could have gotten or kept one of those communist weapons
14 they brought back.

15 KG: Sure.

16 JG: All kinds of stuff, they brought back a flag—a picture of Ho Chi Minh, that
17 they gave to the American lieutenant colonel, he got that. And I got some money and
18 stuff that some of them had gave me, you know, but I didn't get anything—I should have
19 gotten a lot more and better stuff but at the time I wasn't collecting souvenirs as much as
20 I could or should have. One Vietnamese guy, he said—I can't remember the details, he
21 said, "Come with me, we go to Hue down there." And I drove through Hue, now that was
22 interesting. There was one big sign on the wall that said, "Strike down Americanization
23 of the Vietnam War". "Strike down Americanization—" No ,excuse me—correction,
24 "Strike down Vietnamization of the Vietnam War", it was something like that. I got a
25 picture of that at home. On the way I thought oh boy, whoever wrote that on the wall
26 wasn't happy with us. And I wish I'd spent more time looking around in the city of Hue.
27 But at that time I had a philosophy that you don't poke around where you shouldn't be.
28 You know, you don't mess around—you don't pick up things, you don't go into dark
29 allies or places. I wish I'd have gone into the old Imperial Palace and everything that had
30 been destroyed in Tet, but I didn't. I didn't want to mess around with that stuff. But that
31 Vietnamese took me out to an American—we were down there for a real purpose, I can't

1 remember what, but on the way back he stopped off at an American fuel dump [depot]
2 and filled up all the jerry cans [military fuel or water cans] on the jeep. And of course, I
3 knew what he was up to, but I thought this is the guy that's going to drive me back home.
4 And this is the guy that's out here to protect me.

5 KC: So he steals a little fuel—

6 JG: Yeah and he drove by his family's house got out and poured all that fuel into
7 another container and I knew what was happening. But I thought, "I'm not going to have
8 him do this again" You know this is not right, but—golly, I'm not going to be
9 somebody's taxi for stealing fuel. And they would put that fuel out on the side of the road
10 in little glass cans—glass bottles and sell it to motorists going by, to get money. Once
11 again they were terribly in poverty; I mean they lived an existence where \$20 was big
12 money to them. But they were good people, they were nice people. Let me think what
13 else at that fire base. I was up there for three months. And I remember once there was a
14 Christmas cease fire, and they got some intelligence that some enemy unit was meeting at
15 some crossroads and to heck with the cease fire, they started firing their artillery.

16 KC: Is that right?

17 JG: Yeah, and of course, I sat there and thought, "Hmm, well." And one time they
18 caught a prisoner and brought him into the base. I remember seeing him—that was the
19 only time I ever saw an actual enemy soldier. And they took him over in another area,
20 and I didn't know if they were torturing him or not. Once again, wasn't my business, if
21 I'd gone, it wouldn't have been my responsibility to go over there. I mean—you know, he
22 was a Vietnamese prisoner. He was their property, it wasn't my job to interfere. It wasn't
23 my job—I don't know what they did to him, maybe they didn't do anything! But he
24 started spilling the beans [talking]. And he told them everything. And of course they kept
25 it very quiet, they didn't tell me. Wasn't my business, they didn't want to tell me. But
26 they got an operation together and went out in the jungle and they said that, that prisoner
27 they captured was telling them, "Don't go here there's mines—don't go there its mines,
28 go this way." You know, he helped them. He took them out to this enemy camp and they
29 shot them all up. And they said the only person that got away was a woman who didn't
30 have any clothes on and she went running off into the jungle. Of course, I've always
31 wondered whatever happened to her. But they killed everybody else. And once again I

1 was on the base, I didn't see all this. You get all this second hand, and you're listening to
2 the radio and stuff like that.

3 KC: Were you ever in a position, when one of these ARVN units would be out—
4 or the ARVN 1st Division, were you ever in a position where you would call in anything?
5 Would you be in a position to help coordinate air strikes or air cover or anything like
6 that?

7 JG: I was not. The artillery liaison would. If they needed artillery fire from the
8 101 they would pass the coordinate to him. He would call division artillery and have
9 them fire the mission. But for myself, no. Like I said, I had that one job and then of
10 course some VIP's [Very Important People] came to the base, which they would about
11 once every week. We'd all line up in helmets and everything.

12 KC: What kind of VIP's?

13 JG: Oh, the division commander [101st Airborne] would drop by or the division of
14 the ARVN commander would come in, they were always coordinating, they wanted to
15 keep close relationships. So they'd come over there and sit and talk. I wasn't in on it, this
16 was the generals, you know in the back room there, with the colonels. As a lowly 1st
17 lieutenant, my only job was to suit, shake hands if they arrived. (Both Laugh) So yeah,
18 they'd keep the relationship. It was interesting, right near the end of my tour with the
19 Vietnamese they kept trying to pull back American support and give them less and less
20 American help so they could be on their own. And they finally told them one day there
21 would be no more American medevacs for the Vietnamese Army. And some guy got
22 appendicitis out there. And they were asking if we would send them medevac and the
23 101st said, "No, not anymore." They had them, but they wanted to wean the Vietnamese
24 off. They said, "No, we are not providing any more support for you. You guys got to take
25 care of your own people, your own way, your own self."

26 KC: Now were the Vietnamese providing their own medevac out the 1st ARVN?

27 JG: They had some helicopters, and I was always unimpressed with these
28 helicopter pilots when they'd land. These were Vietnamese and—some of them would
29 come in and kind slide to a stop, and I'd think, "Boy, that's not a very good helicopter
30 pilot." Anyway, I never flew with them, thank goodness, but the American colonel would

1 go with them a lot of times. And they had some helicopters but they didn't have as many
2 as the 101st Airborne, I don't think. We were airmobile, so—

3 KC: Right, right.

4 JG: One interesting things about that fire base is that it was covered with rats. At
5 night I would sleep under a mosquito net, and really it was a rat net. Because those giant
6 rats and their bodies were about six inches long and add another six inches for the tail. So
7 these things were about a foot long. At night they would come out, daytime they would
8 hide under the sandbags, beams, anywhere. But at nighttime they'd come out and you'd
9 be in bed asleep with the mosquito net and you'd hear this big thing falling on top of the
10 net, and you'd think, "Ah shoot, some big rat." He would crawl down the side and thump,
11 fall down to the floor, of course I'd keep that mosquito net tucked in all the way, I didn't
12 want to get bit by a rat. I had one crawl over me—no that [getting bit by a rat] never
13 happened. But at nighttime if you were on radio watch you'd see those little rats come
14 through the door, and they'd look around. If you held still they'd come over and dig in
15 the trash can looking for food. And some of the sergeants would take .45 caliber rounds
16 and pull the bullet out and put soap in there and go out and shoot the rats at night. Then
17 we'd take all the rats and burn them at the latrine. The way they worked it they had a big
18 barrel and they'd collect all the refuse under the latrine and then they'd take fuel, diesel I
19 guess and burn once a month or once a week—and once a week they'd burn it and they'd
20 just throw all the rats in there and burn them dead rats. But you could never wipe out
21 those rats, those things were everywhere. They were like—

22 KC: Sure, sure.

23 JG: But it was interesting to get a chance to actually be with the Vietnamese and
24 every day you worked right next to them.

25 KC: Compare if you would the facilities and the upkeep of the ARVN—the 1st
26 ARVN Division to say—the fire base just to one of the 101st fire bases. How is it set up?
27 What about the care of the place? The upkeep of the place? The defense of each of them?

28 JG: I'd say it was much better, but the ARVN of course—this was a regimental
29 headquarters, so it was rather ornate. The Vietnamese were very fascinating. They could
30 take a bag of cement, a little water, and a little sand, and they could pour a concrete floor
31 right in front of you in a matter of minutes. And I was amazed at how they could build

1 and paint and clean things up. And so the regimental headquarters looked pretty nice.
2 And they kept it clean, it was a tight unit. I've always heard the 1st ARVN Division was
3 one of the best Vietnamese divisions around and I agree. I never saw any—you know, I
4 never saw any FTA's [Full Test Approval] on that base, I never saw any discontent.

5 KC: There was a whole different set of motivation between the two groups
6 obviously.

7 JG: I saw one ARVN soldier being disciplined. They told him to show up in his
8 helmet and full field gear and stand out in front of the headquarters like that for—I don't
9 know, I can't remember how many hours—he'd obviously done something wrong. He'd
10 obviously not shown up on time for something. But they were in it for the war. They
11 were in it for the end—the bitter end. I mean there wasn't any Vietnamization or any
12 turning it over to anybody else. They were there for the real thing.

13 KC: Since you were that close to them for three months, did you detect any anger,
14 bitterness, resentment toward the United States for turning this war back over to them?

15 JG: No, I did not. No, I didn't. I never asked that question either. I never asked
16 any of them that direct question. That would have been a very good question to have
17 asked. But no I didn't. I didn't detect any hostility. I think the main thing is they were just
18 amazed at how rich we were and all this money we had. They saw it as their war against
19 communism. Like I said, I only met one guy who was really into, gun-ho, wanting to kill
20 those communists. And that was more of revenge because of what had happened to his
21 family.

22 KC: Right.

23 JG: The rest of them were just doing their job and they were always looking for
24 any way to get a little more money. Any way to get something.

25 KC: Sure.

26 JG: But they were a good unit. I felt that they were a better, more effect combat
27 unit than the 101st Airborne by far.

28 KC: Really?

29 JG: Oh yes, because the Americans were sitting their doing our job, but to the
30 ARVN this war wasn't going to end. This war—there wasn't any end to this. So they

1 were much more aggressive in patrolling, getting out there, finding the enemy. There
2 were a lot more fire fights with the ARVN.

3 KC: And at that time of course, the 101st had been suffering from morale and this
4 kind of problems and the American part was ending and the Vietnamese were now more
5 responsible than they had been before; so it may have been out of necessity that they
6 became more aggressive and taking this way—

7 JG: Right, I can't speak for what the division had done before I got there, but for
8 that little three month period I was there, I felt that they were much better combat
9 soldiers. Because they knew there was a war on them and they had to fight it and they
10 had to go out there and find the enemy and kill them.

11 KC: Like you said, they weren't just putting in time toward it; they were there for
12 their life, most likely.

13 JG: Yes, most definitely, definitely. Yes, so *big* difference. Terrible thing to say
14 but yeah of course—it's the difference in the military pulling out and one still staying
15 there till the end of the war.

16 KC: Right. Now you were here for three months.

17 JG: Right.

18 KC: So this would've taken you into what say, January?

19 JG: December.

20 KC: December?

21 JG: Right. December, end of December.

22 KC: End of December of '71.

23 JG: Yeah.

24 KC: Now what is your next position?

25 JG: Okay, one last thing on the Vietnamese—

26 KC: Oh please!

27 JG: At Christmas they wanted to really be nice to us, so they gave us a cake. And
28 I thought, "Oh wow cake!" I thought, "Mmm! I hadn't had in so long!" It was a loaf of
29 bread that they'd put icing over. (Both Laugh) You know, but still, okay, "Oh, thank
30 you!"

31 KC: It's always the thought that counts.

1 JG: It's the thought. And other aspect—let me go back to my platoon days back at
2 the first of the war. You never saw any American women. You know that was just not
3 there, it was all American men. But one time I went out on a fire base, we were pulled
4 back to B-ham, the big fire base, and there were three—I don't know if they were called
5 donut girls, I don't know if they were with the Red Cross—

6 KC: Donut dollies maybe?

7 JG: Yeah and I stood there and I thought, “Golly!” I think I stood there with my
8 mouth hanging open. I'd never seen an American woman in probably two or three
9 months. And you're sitting there thinking, “Golly!” And I'll never forget that—I'd wish
10 I'd told them, “Thank you very much for coming out there.” But I think all I did was
11 stood there with my hanging open. (Both laugh) In fact, I don't think I ever said anything.
12 And the other thing that always kind of frustrated me, there are things you'd wish you'd
13 done; maybe some things you'd wished you'd not done, years later. But all the time we
14 were in the field in Vietnam—we only got one pack one time full of cookies for some
15 ladies up in someplace in Washington state, out of Seattle or some place. And they were
16 good, we were glad to get that, they had a little note there, with the names and address,
17 and thing saying, “We appreciate”. But that's the only thing we ever got and to this day
18 I'd wished I had written them a letter back, you know and said, “Thank you very much—
19 appreciate that.” But I didn't at the time and that's one of the things I've always regretted.
20 But yeah, finally in December the division was standing down. They were going back to
21 the States. And so they said, “Everybody's got to find a new job.” Of course there were
22 all kinds of rumors, oh my gosh.

23 KC: Of course.

24 JG: Rumors that you were going home early, that we were only going to be there
25 a few more months, you know and the division went home. But the one battalion I was in,
26 the 2nd of the 327, stayed on and went to Cam Ranh Bay and did security duty down
27 there. They turned out to have the reputation for being the longest, continuous, battalion
28 in US history in length of service in combat. So they were in continuous combat over in
29 Vietnam from I don't know, '66—I don't know when they went over, all the way up until
30 mid '72 or something. I don't know, three months in '72. So yeah, I'm proud of that the
31 division stands in the history books in that regard. So they went south and first I thought,

1 “I need to ask for the 1st Cavalry Division because that unit was still deployed in the
2 field.” And I thought, “Boy, that’d be neat, being in the 1st Cavalry.” But then I thought,
3 “Well, maybe I should just let luck flip a coin. And let destiny take me where it’s taking
4 me.” And so after six months in country, I got orders to go to Saigon. And I’m glad that I
5 had that, turned out to be very good for me. I was very fortunate in the war; I had a
6 chance to see many sides of the war. And at the same time, I didn’t have to pay any price;
7 I didn’t get any Purple Hearts [military medal for being wounded or killed in action], I
8 didn’t want any Purple Hearts. The only thing I wanted in Vietnam was the Combat
9 Infantryman’s Badge [CIB]. That was the only thing I ever wanted, and I got that. That
10 was all I wanted. Once I got that, I didn’t carry anything else. Yeah, I went to Saigon.

11 KC: What were you going to be doing there?

12 JG: Well, they assigned me to an intelligence unit. Now, they didn’t call it—it
13 was a 519th Military Intelligence Battalion, but they called themselves the 519th Combat
14 Support Battalion. And they had a unit code for some place, they put them in San
15 Francisco—you know this is intelligence so everything had to be hocus-pocus.

16 KC: Sure.

17 JG: Well, they looked at me and I was infantry. And they said, “Oh gah, well
18 you’re not trained in intelligence. We don’t know what to do with you.” So they sent me
19 to the 504th Signal Battalion [correction: 504th Signal Detachment], which was
20 responsible for providing signal communications for all the intelligence units across
21 Vietnam.

22 KC: Okay.

23 JG: And they were located in Tan Son Nhut Air Base, right next to the morgue in
24 Tan Son Nhut. There was a little lake between us and the morgue. And that was
25 interesting. I’d never went into the morgue because it was off limits and I had no business
26 in there and I had no desire to go in there. But you could smell the smell coming out of it,
27 chemicals and also dead bodies. And when the wind would blow from the south all across
28 our compound, you could smell it. And I thought, “Gee, this must have been what the
29 people in the extermination camps in Germany smelled—all those dead bodies.” There
30 was not a lot of casualties at that time in the war. And I mean it had really—but every so
31 often you’d see a helicopter come in and land at the morgue and take off. It had big red

1 crosses and they said they had the biggest ice maker in South East Asia. They had
2 unlimited ice.

3 KC: I'm sure of that.

4 JG: Anyway, so that was a little footnote my life there. I was assigned to 504th
5 Signal, and they said, "Well, what do we do with an infantry lieutenant?" So they said,
6 "We got two jobs open for you. We can either make you a supply officer or we can make
7 you the officer that greets new people coming in and gives them an orientation talk." And
8 so stupid me, I said, "Oh I don't care, wherever you need me." And they said, "Okay
9 supply." So now I found myself in charge of the supply office for the 504th Signal. And it
10 was a terrible job.

11 KC: You'd not had any sort of experience with this before, had you?

12 JG: No, I never worked supply. I mean I'd attended a class at Fort Benning, but
13 I'd never actually done the job. And there was a lieutenant there who I was taking over
14 from. We had about a, I don't know, three week, four week overlap.

15 KC: Quite a bit of time.

16 JG: Yeah it was a good time and he took me out, partied me, showed me Saigon,
17 had a great time. And then later I found out—I started looking at all those records and all
18 that stuff wasn't straight. And when I brought that up right as he was leaving, they
19 didn't—the company didn't want to hear that. So oh boy, that didn't start out very well. I
20 was able to weasel through it, but it was not an enjoyable job. And the other thing in an
21 intelligence unit like that, any time any guy would get in trouble, use drugs or anything
22 they would pull a security clearance. So he could not go into the intelligence areas. So
23 what do you do with the guy? You send him to supply. So I had about a dozen guys down
24 there in supply and all you needed was maybe, three people, myself and two others.

25 KC: Were they malcontents or just guys who got in trouble? Or a combination?

26 JG: Combination. They were good guys. I remember one guy he was brought up
27 on fraudulent enlistment. He'd stolen a car before he joined the army, and he didn't tell
28 the army he'd stolen a car. I shouldn't tell—so you know they said, "Your enlistment
29 here is terminated. We're sending you back and discharging you." And he was an okay
30 guy, you know nice—all of them were good guys. I didn't have any problems with them,
31 so they were all good.

1 KC: What did you do with all these guys?

2 JG: That was the problem! What do you do with all these guys? I didn't—you
3 know my gosh, you can't make work. You can't have them filling sandbags. So basically
4 they just lounged around in the supply room all day, you know waiting for their discharge
5 or waiting to be sent back. Their clearance was gone, they couldn't go back to any of the
6 secure areas. And it is interesting to note, I did go in the secure area. And what they had
7 was a bunch of teletypewriters. And they were getting all these teletype messages all
8 across Vietnam coming in. And I sat there and read some of them and of course, I don't
9 know, I didn't have an eyeball on the big picture of Vietnam, I didn't see the strategic—
10 the entire strategic thing, I just read a few cable but they all appeared to be so wishy-
11 washy. Some source reported some other [unidentified] source reported that some
12 communist were going to meet at this town at some [unknown] date of some night. And
13 I'm thinking, "This is just a bunch of bull." You know, there is no intelligence here. This
14 is just mishmash garbage running through here. And I never saw anything that I
15 considered, this is actionable intelligence, this is good. It was all just mishmash. I didn't
16 see anything any good. And like I said, I was just a temporary visitor. I'd just go in there
17 and look at some teletype messages.

18 KC: They didn't have any problem with that?

19 JG: Oh no, I had the clearance, so I could get through. Go in there. And I didn't
20 go in there very often, but when I did go in and when I did read anything it never
21 impressed me. And I had a company commander—you get along with some people and
22 some people you don't get along with. I never got along with him. In my opinion all he
23 did was sit in his office with his typewriter and wrote up derogatory reports against
24 people. And there was a lot of problems in the rear area then. I mean—oh that's where
25 you—oh, somebody took a CS grenade—that's kind of a riot grenade, tear gas, and threw
26 it into the NCO (Non-Commanding Officer) hooch one night. And of course that's kind
27 of a warning next time comes a fragmentation grenade. So there was a lot of mal—
28 discontent in there. I didn't have any problems with anybody, on the other hand I never—
29 I never got in anybody's face and yelled at them or anything. I never tried to be hard on
30 anyone, you know. I'd be—I'd say, "Okay, let's do this." And you know they did, I
31 didn't have any problems. There was a lot of drugs. I remember one poor guy was

1 wrapped himself around the latrine, the commode, throwing up, and when the medics
2 arrived they just said, “Okay, when you finish we’ll be out in the ambulance waiting for
3 you.” You know, at first I was a little shocked, I thought, “Oh my gah, why are they so
4 cruel?” But they apparently had seen a lot of bad reactions to drugs. And they recognized
5 it and they just said, “Hey man, when you finish, come on out, we’ll take you to the
6 hospital.”

7 KC: So is it likely a heroin, a bad reaction to heroin?

8 JG: Yeah, heroin, it was heroin. I’m sure there was some marijuana around there
9 but mostly heroin. And I saw a lot more of those little vials. It was around. I’d say out of
10 the 100 people you probably had, I’m going to guess three that were on heroin. That’s my
11 guess, there’s no science or statistics to back me up on that. I’d say maybe three out of a
12 100. Although when you multiply three out a 100 times the number of people in Vietnam,
13 that’s a lot of people.

14 KC: It’s probably especially concentrated I would think, in Saigon.

15 JG: Oh yeah.

16 KC: At that time in the war, because everything is kind of coming south to a
17 degree and Saigon and Tan Son Nhut is the hub of all of this activity so, it becomes more
18 and more concentrated as the days go on I would think.

19 JG: Oh yeah. It cost \$5. So any GI could plop out five bucks for a little vial of
20 heroin. I don’t know if they—I don’t know if they injected it, I think they smoked it or
21 something, put it in cigarettes and smoked it or something like that. I never had anything
22 to do with it. I remember one time, company commander gave me marijuana or
23 something to take somewhere and of course, I was never even—coming from West Texas
24 there wasn’t any drug culture in my background at that time.

25 KC: Gave you some marijuana to take somewhere?

26 JG: Yeah, it had been confiscated and I had to take it somewhere and turn it over
27 or something like that. You know, I was drug free, smoke free—so there was no way I’d
28 ever mess with any of that stuff coming out of the area here. I don’t know if that’s true
29 today, but in those days this was a non-drug, non-alcohol area. So I’m squeaky clean in
30 that regards. And I remember there was—I never knew him, but there was a mess hall
31 guy who overdosed on heroin and died. And they had a little—what do you call it, a

1 memorial for him. And once again, I regret I didn't go to it. I never knew the guy but I
2 should have gone at least. I regret I didn't go, I don't know who was there. But in the
3 mess hall they had a little memorial for him. He overdosed, died, and shipped him back. I
4 never saw him or met him. But you know, it was there. At the base we were at, like I said
5 was up on the north side of Tan Son Nhut, and that was one of the areas that in Tet of
6 '68—that's where the enemy came right through. That was one of the prime assault
7 corridors into the air base. So they were always telling us that. And we—I was out there
8 probably for, oh a month, with the company commander. I never liked the company
9 commander. We never got along. It was just oil and water. I'm sure he had his opinions
10 of me and I had my opinions of him but my opinion of him—one time we were in the
11 jeep driving along, I was sitting in the back seat. There was jeep in front of us that was
12 Vietnamese, and they had berets and one of berets blew off some guys head and landed
13 on the street, and that company commander veered his jeep to run over that guys beret.
14 And I thought, "You blank, blank dog, you know." That's—I didn't have any respect or
15 like for him at all. It was very mutual. So for six months I was in that job in Saigon.

16 KC: Six months?

17 JG: Yeah, six months.

18 KC: More than half your tour?

19 JG: Yeah, half my tour. And it was bad—

20 KC: As a supply officer?

21 JG: Yeah and it was miserable and it just wasn't interesting. The only nice thing
22 about it is first, I had to room with the company commander. And I even thought I could
23 throw a fragmentation grenade in here easily on him. But I wouldn't do that! But I
24 thought, "No, you can't do that, you can't do that." And you know that brings up another
25 little aspect on Vietnam. You always hear about these war crimes and shooting and
26 everything, killing civilians and stuff. I remember those sergeants said, "I yield to that.
27 You're out there, you see somebody killed, you'll be the one that did it." But I'd grown
28 up and my brother worked in a little 7-11 [convenience store], he brought home a bunch
29 of these men magazines that had not been sold, they'd rip the front cover off. And I used
30 to as a little kid, go through there and read the articles and they had a bunch of Holocaust
31 articles in there and you know Nazi atrocities in the war, and so I'd decided long before I

1 went to Vietnam, I thought, “There’s no way in the world I’m going to commit any
2 crimes.” I thought, “That’s just unbelievable.” It was intolerable, I would never do
3 anything like that. And I—if some lady had a weapon, sure you shoot and there wouldn’t
4 have been any second thoughts in my mind. But just to take civilians out and shoot them,
5 I mean when I was at Fort Benning you had your William Calley trial going on, at Fort
6 Benning. And so I heard all that, but I had decided long before that there are things you
7 can do at war and there are things you cannot do. And you just can’t shoot civilians. It
8 was never a question in my mind and I was never confronted with a situation where I was
9 faced with anything like that. Thank goodness. But I knew from the beginning that would
10 never happen from me. And anyway, yeah after about a month, some other captain came
11 in. So they said, “Whoop, you’re getting kicked out of the company commanders hooch,
12 you got to find some other place to live.” So darn, I had to go downtown Saigon and live
13 in a hotel.

14 KC: Is that right? That’s rough. (Laughs)

15 JG: Oh, it was an old French hotel.

16 KC: What was the name of it?

17 JG: Oh I can’t remember the name [Idaho BOQ, Bachelor Officer’s Quarters]; I
18 know where it’s at on the map. I can—if I got a map of the city, I can’t remember the
19 name of it. It was in some suburb but it had all this link fence wire all across the front to
20 prevent rocket grenades from hitting the hotel. And it was—you had Vietnamese in there
21 and I had a room by myself. It was just an old hotel room. Hot as heck. It was right
22 around January—in March I moved in there. And once again, I was immersed in the
23 Vietnamese, with the Vietnamese. And I remember at night you would hear these young
24 Vietnamese boys walking through the city. And they had little pieces of wood, and they’d
25 go, click, click, click, click, click. And I’d think, “What is that?” One of the Vietnamese
26 told me that’s fast food, if you want fast food you call them over, give them your order,
27 they’d go out and the rice or whatever and bring it back to you. And all of our kitchen
28 staff on the top floor of the hotel was Vietnamese. All the serving was Vietnamese.
29 They’d give you this nice menu, and it had all these things listed, but you’d say, “Oh, I
30 want this.” “Oh, we don’t have that.” “I want this.” “We don’t have that.” “What are you
31 having tonight?” “Oh, we’re having this and this.” “Oh, I’ll take this and this.” But it was

1 so pleasant sitting up there on the top floor of that hotel, I was with a bunch of other—I
2 had my own jeep, which I'd ride in. Sometimes we'd go with other guys, you know. The
3 traffic in Saigon was awful. The war had caused—I understand that the city was a
4 1,000,000, but it had grown to 3,000,000. All these people were coming into the city.
5 There was probably a Vietnamese police officer every single block. I mean it was a very
6 well policed and secured city. But the traffic was so awful; there were no lines on the
7 road and basically the rule was who had the biggest vehicle had the right of way. And I
8 remember one day I saw a giant forklift going down the middle of the road, and boy
9 everybody was just getting out of his way. And I thought, "Yep, that's the rule of the
10 road; if you drive a tank you got the right of way. If you drive a little motor scooter you
11 yield to everybody." And once again the grinding poverty. I remember right out in front
12 of the hotel there was an entire family that lived in a little tin shack. It was about maybe a
13 yard high, maybe six yards long, maybe two yards wide. The daytime they would open
14 that up and they would do bicycle and motorcycle wheel repair, tire repair, fix flats. At
15 nighttime they'd close up the tin sides and live in that. And that was pretty typical. I
16 mean a lot of poverty, grinding poverty. And yeah, so it was a fascinating experience to
17 me. I went all downtown, I went everywhere.

18 KC: You feel safe in Saigon in '72?

19 JG: The only thing that was happening is every so often you'd read about some
20 rocket coming in. But I never—I was in—on some bases up in I Corps when some
21 rockets came in. You know, I heard them (makes boom noise). But they were half a mile
22 away. So I never worried about that. And right, the rockets would come in but none ever
23 hit near us. I never had any close. So yeah I felt fairly safe. I was there when they had the
24 Easter Offensive in—

25 KC: Tell me about that, what you saw in Saigon.

26 JG: Well, I saw about as much in Saigon as I would here in Lubbock. It was only
27 about 50 [correction: 90] miles away. But it might as well have been about a 1,000 miles
28 away. We got Armed Forces Television, I guess it was, so they would tell us about it.
29 And it was really spooky because they were talking about Fire Base Bastogne being
30 overrun by the North Vietnamese up north. And I was sitting there thinking, "My gosh, I
31 was in that area." And they [North Vietnamese] were firing artillery on [to] Fire Base B-

1 ham. And I was thinking, “I was just there a couple of months ago!” So you know, it’s
2 spooky to hear that on the TV. But actually in Saigon the only thing that I saw that
3 showed me that, other than television, that showed me that there was an Easter Offensive
4 underway, is that the Vietnamese government told all the bars in Saigon that they could
5 no longer be bars. They could no longer be serving drinks like that during time of war. So
6 the very next day, every one of those bars turned into a restaurant. And everyone had
7 white table clothes over these tables.

8 KC: Now why would the order come down, no longer could they serve just
9 alcohol?—

10 JG: I think the Vietnamese government felt that it was not good to be fighting a
11 war 50 miles from the capital when you have all these bars and oh, there were plenty of
12 bars because they were built up for all the American presence. Now, all those Americans
13 had gone, so when I’d go downtown there wouldn’t be anybody there. I mean, no
14 Americans. I’d be walking around and there’d be nothing but Vietnamese all around me.
15 And if you went into a bar, you’d probably be their only American customer that day!
16 And they were so excited. They had these little tables that were probably as high as this
17 table about a foot off the floor, with little chairs. And you know the Vietnamese people
18 are much smaller than big ol’ Americans. And I would ride in their taxis and of course
19 gah—one American would fit in one Vietnamese taxi, little tiny cars. They’d put out a
20 rule that all Americans were not allowed to ride—they had a kind of an open taxi, that
21 consisted of a motorized tricycle and there was a seat up front, and too many Americans
22 were riding on those things and having crashes and getting hurt and killed. So there was
23 rule that Americans could not ride in those anymore. But you could ride in a taxi. Of
24 course you’d get into the taxi and you’re squeezed in. But yeah, I’d go downtown and eat
25 the Vietnamese—one thing I learned out of that, I thought, you know you can go
26 anywhere in the world and all you got to do is show up at the airport, say taxi, say hotel
27 and you’re taken care of. So I learned, from that I did a lot of world travelling later in my
28 life, because I realized it’s so easy. Some of the Vietnamese food I never liked. To this
29 day, I don’t like white rice anymore. I can’t take that anymore.

30 KC: Got a stomach full of it—

1 JG: I can take a Rice A Roni or Mexican—Spanish rice, but I can't take white
2 rice. And what else happened in Saigon? Oh, there was a lot of Amer what do you call
3 them—Amerasians kids? Kids who had been fathered by Americans, both Black and
4 White. You could tell, you could see some little kid going along and you could look at
5 them and oh, you could see the American features or Black features. And I always felt—
6 it's so sad, that—the U.S. Military of course, didn't take any responsibility for that at all.
7 I guess they couldn't stop it or anything. And I always felt sorry for them because in a
8 Vietnamese culture like that, I never knew how well they'd fit in. There were always
9 little kids on the street trying to sell you things and oh, there were prostitutes everywhere.
10 You could go to bars—I went to one with some other guys and the only time I ever saw a
11 completely naked floor show. Some you know, Vietnamese woman is up there, and oh
12 boy. I never had any interest in marrying any of the Vietnamese. Some guys did. Some of
13 the young Vietnamese were very beautiful and wore that traditional Vietnamese dress [ao
14 dai]. I never did. I'd look at the older Vietnamese that were 60-70 years old and think,
15 “Now is that what I want? You know, 60 years from now?” So I never wanted to have
16 any sexual relationship with any of the Vietnamese and I was probably in the minority.
17 Once again, I came from a strict West Texas background. No drinking, no smoking, no
18 cussing, so I didn't do anything out of line over there. For me—I used to just ride the bus
19 through Saigon, just to get out and see the people and the building and the culture. I loved
20 just riding around. The bus had wiring all across the windows to prevent any kinds of
21 grenades [from coming in]. Periodically we'd go up to Bien Hoa, to a supply base up
22 there to turn electronic equipment in or pick something up. So myself and one other
23 would ride a jeep up there. I was always worried somebody would toss a grenade or
24 something into that jeep, you know because you're just riding in the open.

25 KC: Right.

26 JG: I always had that rifle sitting up there ready to go, but nothing ever happened
27 thank goodness. Went across the Newport Bridge many times and when Saigon fell, on
28 the news I was looking at that thinking, “Oh my gosh, that's the Newport Bridge! That's
29 where I used to drive across every day.”

1 KC: Did you keep a short timers calendar while you were there? When you were
2 100 days in or a 100 days from going home? Were you keeping an eye on how much time
3 you had left?

4 JG: I knew mentally. I didn't write anything down. But I knew mentally when I
5 was going home.

6 KC: Did you look forward to it?

7 JG: Oh yes! Everyday a [Boeing] 747 would land at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and
8 that was called the Freedom Bird and every day I'd see that thing land or take off. And
9 I'd think, "Oh man—can't wait!" And so, anyway it was kind of depressing. And you
10 mentioned earlier R&R, I went to Hawaii and the time I went to Hawaii, you know I was
11 a little depressed. You know my gosh.

12 KC: So were you at this job in Saigon when you went to Hawaii?

13 JG: Yes.

14 KC: Okay, okay.

15 JG: It was a—I looked at it as poor commander, ratty job. You know, you did
16 your job, the guys were fine. We got along, we'd go down and open up supply office at 8
17 o'clock in the morning and sit around and some guy might come in and check out. And
18 there wasn't much to do. And you know after you'd get everything all cleaned up and
19 [paperwork] filed what else can you do?

20 KC: Certainly very different from what you had envisioned, what you'd trained
21 for over the years.

22 JG: Yeah.

23 KC: Had a small taste of it but—

24 JG: And so much of war, so much of military, a lot of it is just stand around and
25 wait, you know. I mean there is a lot of dead time. But yeah, so it wasn't the highlight of
26 my tour by any means. I was glad to see it over with. One thing that did fascinate me in
27 Saigon, my gosh, the first time I ever flew in down there, I wasn't able to get to the unit
28 until the next morning. So I was stuck at Tan Son Nhut Air Base overnight, the facility
29 with the passenger terminal. And man, I just laid down on the concrete and went to sleep
30 because I had been out in the field and everywhere else, and I had no problem sleeping on
31 the concrete. And later when I got to the unit, I went around Tan Son Nhut and I was

1 amazed they had a swimming pool, they had a fast food facility, they had milkshakes,
2 they had hamburgers. I was just sitting there with my mouth hanging open thinking,
3 “Gah!” I mean, it’s like, my golly, here’s a swimming pool! Here’s grass, growing green
4 grass. And I thought this is incredible! I mean, it felt like I had come to a different world.

5 KC: And it really was a different world.

6 JG: Oh yes. And when Saigon fell years later, I thought—of all those facilities,
7 those buildings, all that equipment, big storerooms, all that stuff, just overrun by the
8 enemy. I thought, “Man.” Let’s see if I can think of anything else near the Saigon area. I
9 talked to a lot of the Vietnamese; we had Vietnamese security guards at the gate. They’d
10 you know, you’d have Vietnamese women search Vietnamese women when they’d go in
11 and come out. And I talked to a lot of them. Once again, I didn’t have the language skills
12 so there wasn’t any way I could really get anything. And that’s pretty it. I’m trying to
13 think—one of the worst experiences I had in Vietnam, we were pulled back this one time
14 to this area. And this is when I was up north in I Corps, and we slept in culverts, I’ll
15 always remember that. They had sandbags and those sandbags were hard as rocks. And I
16 laid down—I was in there by myself and I put the poncho liner over me and mosquitoes
17 started coming around, of course I had insect repellent but still the mosquitoes get
18 through it. And so I put the poncho liner over me, and it started getting hot and sweaty, so
19 I pulled the poncho liner down, here came the mosquitoes, sweat, mosquitoes, sweat,
20 mosquitoes, next morning I thought, “That was the worst night I ever had in Vietnam.
21 That was awful!” But Saigon was very nice. Very interesting. I bought the sugar cane on
22 the street, you couldn’t eat it, but you just chew on it, from the little kids. Oh and they
23 had a cantaloupe that was in season when I got there and you could buy that off the street.
24 So it was a very—personally it was a very enjoyable tour down there in Saigon.
25 Incredible! But professionally and job wise, no, gosh.

26 KC: As you sit there for the last six months of your tour in Vietnam, what were
27 you thinking about doing when you got back home? Or what did you want to do?

28 JG: I still didn’t know.

29 KC: Still didn’t know.

30 JG: Didn’t know what I wanted to do.

31 KC: Considered the military?

1 JG: No, no. I knew I didn't want to stay in the military, particularly after all that. I
2 thought, "Man, no. Nuh-uhh." But it had never been a real desire of mine to make a
3 career. All I wanted was that infantry experience, I wanted that Combat Infantryman's
4 Badge. And I wanted it so when I read a history book about the Civil War I could sit
5 there and say, "I know what they are talking about, I can feel that." So that was it, that
6 was Saigon. And so finally the day came, and once again, before I left Saigon I had to do
7 a urinalysis. And I thought, "Man, I'm an officer, I haven't done this stuff." You know it
8 kind of—it's like having to sign for those orders. And I thought, "Man—"

9 KC: Right, very similar to that.

10 JG: "—I don't do that stuff." And I remember I had one GI drove by the jail in
11 Saigon for the GI's and I remember he was just looking at it and a few weeks later he had
12 to go there! He was using drugs. And yeah, but that's it. The tour was over, I went over to
13 Saigon, turned all my money in, they gave me American dollars. I got an airline ticket, on
14 Pan Am [Pan American] Airline and had a flight to get on that 747 and fly back home.

15 KC: What was that flight like?

16 JG: Oh my gosh! I don't think anybody will tell you it was disappointing. It was
17 so nice, I got in there—it was freezing cold in that airplane, I got all the cover I could on
18 me, still was cold. But it was so good to know you were going home. Going over, we
19 only occupied every other seat. Every other row in the airplane, big 747, incredible
20 airplane. Once we landed in Hawaii, all these tourists got on board. So we were with
21 civilian tourists.

22 KC: What was that like, dealing with these civilians? Was there any resentment,
23 was there any difficulty? Well you wouldn't have it, did others have difficulty controlling
24 their language or behavior or anything?

25 JG: Not that I saw, no. And my row was all American GI's, the row in front of
26 civilians and the row behind us, civilians, and up front more GI's; we were spread out to
27 balance the aircraft. And they were coming off their vacations from Hawaii, and I don't
28 remember any exchanges. They got on, we got on, you flew, you sit there, nothing was
29 ever said between—I never turned to a civilian and said anything; they never turned to
30 me and said anything.

31 KC: This would have been June of '72 right?

1 JG: Yeah would have been right around the 2nd of July, 3rd of July.

2 KC: Okay, in July then.

3 JG: Yeah because when I left I think 4th of July had just occurred and when I got
4 back 4th of July had just occurred so I think I arrived back on the 5th of July or something
5 like that. And we landed at San Francisco International Airport.

6 KC: What was it like when you got off the plane?

7 JG: I got off, I was so glad to be home. I mean thank goodness, is there a way to
8 be thankful to be home? And I went over to the Delta Airline desk and got a ticket to
9 Dallas, Texas. Dallas, Fort Worth. They didn't have DFW [Dallas-Fort Worth
10 International Airport] then, it was Love Field, I think I went into. And you know so many
11 GI's talk about resentment and being spit on and cussed and told things, "baby killer", I
12 never saw anything like that. No one ever said anything. It was just you know, just like
13 I'd gotten off a plane from Baltimore. I mean there wasn't any comments. I had on my
14 khaki tight [correction: TW] uniform, I called it TW's it's a little higher grade than khaki
15 and officers would wear. And you weren't allowed to wear your combat fatigues back or
16 anything like that. And we were allowed to ship one crate back and I collected all kinds
17 of Vietnamese stuff. I had a Vietnamese hat, the cone type hat, I had this thing you
18 carried water in, the pole thing. I crammed all that—and the Vietnamese were packing all
19 this stuff, and they were laughing at all the stuff I was putting in there. I guess they had
20 never seen a GI collect so much junk and stuff in the culture and throwing it in these
21 boxes. And later my nephew threw all that stuff away.

22 KC: Oh!

23 JG: He was on drugs and so that stuff went out—I don't know if he sold it. I guess
24 he sold it with my combat uniform I had worn, boots, everything.

25 KC: What a shame.

26 JG: Yeah, he was—once you're on drugs your downhill. But that happened many
27 years later. If I had been smart, I would have kept that stuff from my parents' house and
28 kept it with me. And most the stuff I did, but not the uniform, boots, and stuff like that;
29 Vietnamese stuff. Anyway. So yeah, so I got back and flew to Dallas and got there
30 probably about 10, 11 o'clock at night. It was late so—I don't know, I wasn't smart
31 enough to go get a motel, hotel for the night. I just walked around the airport. Because the

1 airplane was leaving I think at five or six in the morning, for Lubbock, Texas. And I
2 walked around the airport; I found one plaque that said, “Lyndon Johnson was sworn in
3 as President at this location,” you know, “1963.” And finally 5 o’clock in the morning I
4 got on that plane, quick little flight, right back into Lubbock, Texas.

5 KC: Right.

6 JG: And there was one guy at the [Lubbock] airport, he said, “Oh, you’re just
7 back from Vietnam.” “Yeah, just got back.” And he didn’t say anything, you know.
8 When I got back, nobody ever said anything. There wasn’t any—you know my parents
9 were glad to see me they were—

10 KC: Were they at the airport to pick you up?

11 JG: Well, they were a little mad at me because I didn’t call them until I got to
12 Lubbock. And then I called them up and said, “I’m here can you come down and get
13 me?” And they said, “Why didn’t you call from Dallas so we could be there to greet you
14 when you got off the plane?” You know, and no one ever said anything. No one ever
15 said, “Hey, how was it? Welcome back. Glad to see you.” No one said anything, no one
16 asked, I didn’t say. I still had to be back, I got—to finish this whole thing up real quick
17 here, I got my box in from Vietnam, that came. I got all my letters and got them all
18 together. Put all this stuff in the ammunition thing [container]. Closed it all up. Glad to be
19 home. Didn’t know what I was going to do. Orders came; I was still in the Army.

20 KC: Right.

21 JG: And I was ordered to Fort McClellan, Alabama. And once again, these things
22 always come up, you always wonder. When the company commander at the 504th left, he
23 was ordered to go somewhere, and he didn’t like, so he talked to the brigade commander
24 and they said, “We’ll fix you up.” And he was sent to Hawaii. And I was sent to Fort
25 McClellan, and I thought, “I wonder if they didn’t call somebody in the Pentagon and
26 say, ‘We got this lieutenant we don’t like, and we want you to give them a bad
27 assignment’ ” I don’t know! You know, I don’t know!

28 KC: Well what was your assignment there at Fort McClellan?

29 JG: Well Fort McClellan, it’s now closed down, it’s a national guard base for
30 Alabama. First of all Alabama is a nice place. I love the south, I love the food. But
31 Alabama for a young guy, unmarried, no kids, there wasn’t much to do up there.

1 Anniston, [Alabama] it's pretty far up, it's not near the coast. It's not near anything really
2 great except Atlanta, hour, two hours away. Wasn't much to do for a young unmarried
3 guy. At that time that was the WAC School of the Woman's Army Corps and at that
4 time, women were not a major factor in the military and sadly most of these young
5 women looked like they basically didn't have anything else to do in life. So they joined
6 the military. They also had the Chemical School there. So that was it, WAC and chemical
7 [also Military Police School]. I was put on the post staff. I was a post staff officer. And
8 I'd go out and inspect some of the WAC training and all these little WAC's were really
9 amazed—here's this lieutenant with brass and everything all the stuff. And that's
10 nothing; I never got any real medals out of Vietnam. Normally you'd get a Bronze Star. I
11 didn't get it, for the number one reason, I don't think I ever earned it. Second reason, I
12 never saw any really heavy combat so I didn't earn it. Third reason, Vietnam was
13 winding down and no one was interested in writing people up for medals. And then I'd
14 served in so many different units that you know—I didn't serve in one unit for a long
15 period of time. So it didn't bother me I didn't get any medals. I got the basic Vietnamese
16 Service Medal, the National Defense Medal, and the Combat Infantryman's Badge, that's
17 all I wanted was the CIB. I didn't care about the rest. So, and it was good people at
18 McClellan. I enjoyed it. It was staff work, it wasn't anything that great and you spend
19 most of your time sitting around; you know, looking like you're busy. But you didn't
20 really do anything serious. But nice people to work with, I enjoyed the office. They had
21 civilians in there. I got along well with them and I remember one major, and I was getting
22 out, so I got there summer of '72 and I was out of the Army in April of '73. And when I
23 got out I remember one major saying, "Well we would send you to this trip up in
24 Washington [D.C.] but since you're getting out, there is no sense in sending you on this
25 trip." And you know, big deal so what. But it was okay. But there wasn't anything there
26 that made me want to stay in the army. And so I got out, I discharged, and that was it. I
27 made a mistake; I should have stayed in until I was rifted [Reduction in Forces]. Because
28 if you're rifted I think they give you \$10,000. Stupid me, when I finished my
29 commitment, I just got out. And I should have hung around. They rifted some really good
30 people. I met one guy there, he was a pilot and he was an excellent officer, excellent
31 material for the army. Rifted. They didn't need him anymore. And I met him years later

1 and he was working in the national guard. And I thought, “They rifted that guy? That guy
2 was good.” But that’s the way it went. But I missed the big money. Which was stupid of
3 me. And I went back home and didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know what I was going
4 to do. I still didn’t know. Luckily I had the GI Bill [government assistance program for
5 veterans], thank goodness. So I came down here at Texas Tech, took some training,
6 became a teacher. I taught one year, 6th grade at Hodges Elementary School and that was
7 one of the hardest jobs I’ve ever had. It was harder than even being in combat.

8 KC: Why do you say that?

9 JG: When you’re in a classroom, I only had about 25 students, 20-25; I think it
10 was about 25. But teaching is hard. You have to constantly monitor the children. You got
11 to make sure everything is going well. You have to a lesson plan. You have to have
12 everything going all day. And I only taught one year, but that first year is very hard. All
13 the teachers said the first year is the hardest and after that you start getting trends,
14 paperwork all together. I enjoyed the students. But man that was a stressful job. All the
15 kids—I had one little girl, she must have had a lot of problems at home; she was taking a
16 razor blade and cutting her arm. And she gave the razor to some other little girl and she
17 was cutting her arm! And oh gosh! So you call—

18 KC: In 6th grade?

19 JG: Yeah.

20 KC: In West Texas?

21 JG: Yeah. And I thought, “Oh my gosh.” The principle called their parents. And
22 that’s sad and that’s not right. I had one little Hispanic boy, named Hector, and he was
23 much older than the others. He’d been set back a number of years. He was nice little guy,
24 but he was—he was in the 6th grade, but he should have been in about the 9th grade! So
25 it’s always hard fitting in and I was never a real strict disciplinarian. And I never stood up
26 there and said, “Ehh—!” I tried different ways and I was just never comfortable with it.
27 The kids were cute, I did enjoy them. I had one sweet little kid—this is off the subject,
28 came to me one time and said, “Mr. Green, why do they have *E pluribus unum* on our
29 coins?” And I said, “Oh, that’s a Latin, you know from many to one.” And he thought a
30 minute and he said, “Oh, that’s—” I said, “That’s a language of the Romans.” And he
31 said, “That’s in case a Roman came over he could read it.” I said—I should have said,

1 “You’re right” And gone on, but instead I said, “Well, the Romans they died out around
2 2,000 years ago.” And the little kid, his whole world just shattered. (Laughs) So it had a
3 sweet side to it and there was a bad side. And oh, one parent got mad at me and I can’t
4 remember—I don’t know there a lot of things. And you know it went back and forth. I
5 did get more out of that thing, because when I had my own children I had much better
6 understanding of children and kids, how to raise them and what to do, what not to do. So
7 it helped me more than the kids. And after one year they offered me a chance to come
8 back for another year and I met the principle said, “We always give people two years.”
9 And I thought, “No. This isn’t what I want. Gosh this is—.”And at the end of the year I
10 was making, I think it was \$6,800 a year. And that was a fair—teachers weren’t paid that
11 much. And even though I was from a teacher family I still, I just thought, “This isn’t what
12 I want to do.” So I quit and still had a lot of GI Bill left. I went to Florida State University
13 and got a degree in geography, a master’s in geography. And of course my parents said,
14 “What on earth are you going to do with that?” But I said, I enjoy it, it’s fun, I love it.
15 And when I was at Texas Tech getting my teacher thing I took a ballet course. And I met
16 my wife in the ballet course. And we got married and we—35 years and we’re still
17 married.

18 KC: That’s terrific!

19 JG: Two kids. And so, yeah, I don’t think I got much out of it. I always think I got
20 more out of that one ballet course than I got out of any of those college classes! So I
21 enjoyed, but it’s just kind of like music, I didn’t have any ability. But I enjoyed it. It was
22 just something different. So different from anything, I’d been doing in the past year there.
23 And so I went to Florida State, got a master’s degree in geography. And then I got a job, I
24 did some internship, at [Fort] Belvoir, not knowing I’d be there for many, many years
25 later. Anyway, I got an internship in Saint Louis, and I’d applied—I saw a thing one day
26 on the bulletin board said, “Central Intelligence Agency.” So I thought sure, so I sent off
27 the application. Not knowing it takes about a year, for an employment application to be
28 processed through the CIA. In the interim I took a job with the people in Saint Louis,
29 [Defense] Mapping Agency. And they were mapping the cruise missiles going into
30 Russia. Now, we weren’t supposed to know that, but all you had to do was look at the
31 map and you could see it. You could see where the missiles were supposed to be going

1 in. And after about six months at that job, I finally got a thing from the CIA, they said,
2 “Yeah, we’d like to hire you.” They flew out, interviewed and I got a job like that doing
3 the interpretation work and mainly in the military area, so I was very comfortable.

4 KG: That worked out well.

5 JG: And I spent 25 years in that, had two children. Vietnam, even though I think
6 about every single day, it has never really bothered or damaged my life. I’ve always had a
7 little bit of depression in my life, but I don’t know if that’s related to Vietnam. I don’t—
8 you know which came first the chicken or the egg? I don’t think it was. And I always told
9 myself, you know you can be depressed all you want, but in Vietnam or anything else,
10 and no one in world is going to care about it. You’ve got to do it yourself.

11 KC: You’re responsible for yourself.

12 JG: You’re responsible for yourself and you know you can’t go around moaking
13 [dragging] and moaning. So I didn’t, and I wouldn’t. And I shouldn’t and I didn’t.

14 KC: Let’s go back to this issue of Vietnam in your post-Vietnam life. Did you
15 keep up with the remainder of the war? Of course the United States is out, by the time
16 you’re out essentially, it’s a little bit longer but—

17 JG: Right.

18 KC: But did you keep up with the rest of the war until ’75?

19 JG: Oh, yes. Every day the news. Everyday all my life. Yes and I tracked it and
20 followed it. When South Vietnam finally fell, I was surprised at how fast it went. I didn’t
21 expect it to just crumble like that and collapse. And yes, much quicker than I thought.
22 And I was teaching school at the time and I didn’t have time to really moan and think
23 about it and worry about it. I got the news but I had to go to work the next day. So there
24 wasn’t any long thinking about it. But it’s almost like America had just said, “Enough is
25 enough, we don’t want to think about it anymore.” I heard that President Ford, I believe it
26 was, went to Congress and asked for more bombing, and I don’t know if he did that with
27 sincerity or kind of to get the historical record correct, because Congress said no way
28 Jose! And there wasn’t any desire by anyone to go back. I never heard many people
29 talking about it, it was all in the newspapers. Basically, people were just glad it was over.
30 Glad we were out of there. Glad that it was finished. Glad to close the door and move on,
31 and finish and go on.

1 KC: What lessons do you think this country has or should have learned from
2 Vietnam?

3 JG: Let me take—step one quick back, real quick here.

4 KC: Sure.

5 JG: One thing that happed at Saigon right before I left, which I thought was very
6 interesting. Right before I left Saigon I went downtown and I don't know if I was doing
7 some shopping or something to get some souvenirs to go back, and this large heard of
8 kids suddenly came up on me. And they were trying to sell me some pastry. And I said,
9 “No, no, no, no, no thank you. Di di [di di mau, Vietnamese for ‘go quickly’], go away.”
10 That's how you tell them, go away. And I didn't know it but when one of them reached
11 up pick pocketed and stole my billfold right out of my pocket. And my top pocket, I had
12 it up here, in the front, had it buttoned! And I thought I was immune to pick pockets, and
13 I had just gone over to financing and got all my cash to go back to the states with.

14 KC: Oh, and you got—

15 JG: So I probably had \$3-400 in that.

16 KC: Oh no!

17 JG: In Vietnamese money, American money, I'm not sure. But anyway it was
18 there. It was stolen, and those kids were so quick and so fast. I was amazed. The whole
19 encounter took maybe three or four seconds. And it was over, they were gone. And they
20 just all poofed! Disappeared. And I (makes clapping noise), gone! But luckily, I went
21 back to army personnel, and since it had happened in a combat zone and all this jazz, I
22 filled some paperwork, filled out an MP report and everything, I got my money back. Six
23 months later they sent me a check.

24 KC: Six months later, so you still had to get home to get that money?

25 JG: Right, I went ahead and got some more. But that was typical army. They
26 messed up my pay. And they said, “Well, your pays all messed up, so we can't pay you
27 this month, but we'll give you an advanced pay.” Okay, the next month they said, “Well,
28 we got to take the advanced pay out. Now you don't have any money, so we'll give you
29 another advanced pay.” And it went on like that for nine months. Finally, one specialist
30 looked at it and said, “Sir, this is never going to end.” I said, “You're right.” So I said,

1 give me a month of no pay, and I'll do fine, get back on track." And the military is the
2 military. But your question was, oh boy what did I think about it afterwards?

3 KC: What did—what lessons do you think the U.S. did and should have learned
4 from this experience in Vietnam?

5 JG: Lessons learned. And I still wonder if we're learning these lessons today, with
6 Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a purpose for war; there is a time and a place for war. I
7 mean, yeah I can't say you can't have war, there are times. I can't see us not going
8 through World War II. We had that event. I couldn't see Nazi Germany controlling
9 everything from Russia all the way to Britain and Japan controlling China all the way to
10 India. So we had to have it. There is a need for war. But if you're going to go to war,
11 you've got to make sure—you've got to go in. You've got to make sure—what do they call
12 it the Powell Doctrine [General Colin Powell]? I heard the other day, he said he didn't
13 announce, the press announced the Powell Doctrine. Where you've got to make sure it's a
14 clear war. You've got to make sure you've got that clear objective. You've got to make
15 sure you know what you're doing. You've got to make sure that you use enough power to
16 get in there and do it right. You got to have some kind of exit strategy. You got to make
17 sure that you're not just wasting American lives and that's what's so sad. What is it
18 58,000 [American lives lost in Vietnam]? And it's pathetic that if something had
19 happened to me, I'd still be sitting up there in Plainview at age 24 for the rest of my life,
20 sitting in a grave over, done. And that's sad. And like I said, the thing that got me most of
21 the Vietnam war, it's okay to make mistakes in war, but when you see that you're making
22 a mistake you've got to stop and say, "Wait a minute, correct this ship, change course. Do
23 something different." And it's like the nation was on a one track and could not change.
24 And that's what frustrated me. And that's what I learned out of it.

25 KC: Well, let me ask you this last question. That is how has your experience in
26 the Vietnam War most affected your life?

27 JG: I don't think it's affected it in a negative way. I think I'm very fortunate and I
28 think I'm very lucky. I don't think I would have ever gotten that job at Central
29 Intelligence; I don't think I would have ever had the GI Bill to go back to college. I
30 don't—a lot of things happened to me, that I think were perfectly good. For me
31 personally, I think it was very good, very advantageous. I mean I should be relishing in

1 what a great tour I had, what a great time I had, and I did! But for the nation, I think it
2 was a very sad chapter. I think the nation lost a lot. Affecting me personally, I don't think
3 so. I think about it almost every day. But I don't moan about it or have any blue periods. I
4 was very glad to get that infantry experience, I was glad to get that Combat Infantryman's
5 Badge, I'm glad I was able to get it at such a low cost.

6 KC: Right.

7 JG: It didn't cost me anything. It's never been anything that's depressed me. Once
8 again, you got to go to work, you're married, you're raising kids. You can't mess around
9 with depression or anything like that. You got to get up and go to work. I was always
10 admired the pioneer farmer, family rancher when the husband or wife would die, they
11 still had to milk that cow at the end of the evening. They couldn't take three days off for
12 the funeral, that cow had to be milked. So you know you got to go on with life. That's
13 been my philosophy on it. I do feel sorry for the people who have PTSD [Post Traumatic
14 Stress Syndrome]. I don't think I ever had it, I don't think you can really define it as such
15 for me. I feel sorry for them on one hand because some of them did see some horrible
16 things and I think it is—and they do need a lot of help and assistance. I'm not sure the
17 government went as far as they could for these people or should have. For me personally,
18 I don't think I ever needed any help or assistance, I never sought any help. I was never in
19 any situation I felt that. On the other hand, it's always the double edge sword, two sides
20 of the coin, on the other hand I do think there are people who really did need help from
21 the PTSD, on the other hand you know like I said, the cow's got to be milked. You got to
22 keeping going. You can't break down at age 40 or age 50 because of something that
23 happened when you were 18. Some of those people I think were 18 years old, they were
24 drafted, they never had the chance to slowly mature into the war like I did. I had I think
25 six years before I actually went to the war. So I had six years, to sit there and plan for it,
26 think about, harden myself, prepare for it. I mean, I knew that I might see some horrible
27 stuff. I always took the character on the—[Mr.] Spock, on *Star Trek* series; he would
28 look at something and say, "Hmm, interesting." You know, no emotion and I thought,
29 "That's the way you got to be, its business." Like that company commander said, "It's
30 pure business." So, personally I don't think it affected me at all. I do think some people
31 may be milked that PTSD thing more than they should have, and there are some other

1 people that truly had some traumatic experiences and needed help. But it's hard, the
2 person who comes to you and complains about the PTSD experience—it's the shell shock
3 experiences, I never called it PTSD, I called it battle fatigue or something—Is the same
4 type of person that comes to you and complains about malingering, you know I want to
5 get out here, you know lazy. The characteristics are the same, even today in Iraq and
6 Afghanistan. The same soldier that is a goof off and the sad sack, the gold bicker [Terms
7 describing avoidance of work and duty.] is the same soldier that complains that he is
8 having trouble coping with the combat. How do you tell the difference? How do you
9 separate them? How do you split that? You can't look at a guy and say, "You're a gold
10 brick." And look at another guy and say, "Yeah, you got some serious problems." So
11 that's still the difficult thing for the army to cope with today. Even today, because when
12 these soldiers seek help, particularly if they are career, thinking about a life in the
13 military, it's a—no matter what they say it's a blemish on their record, and that's sad. So
14 back in Colorado where I'm from they've had a lot of people commit suicide down in
15 Fort Carson, and it's sad. So I don't have any answers on it, I can only speak for myself.
16 And it's a double edged story; there are two sides to it.

17 KC: Well, is there anything else you would like to add before we end the
18 interview?

19 JG: No, I think that's it, I think I have covered everything, one aspect or another.
20 But once again, I want to say thank you very much, for doing this job out here at Texas
21 Tech. I think it's great.

22 KC: You're welcome.

23 JG: It is interesting, I never expected anybody to thank me for my service. Never
24 expected it and never got it. But in year 2000 or 2001, I was sent out to Hawaii, part of
25 my job out there, and I was with a bunch of military people, and this one air force
26 sergeant said, "Thank you for your service in Vietnam." And I thought, "I've never been
27 told that before. Ever." And I was kind of in shock, I thought, "My gosh, I've never been
28 told that by anybody." You know, I never expected it either. I felt kind like the World
29 War II veterans, you came home, you went to work. You didn't sit at home waiting for
30 somebody to give you a parade or anything. And that kind of surprised me, shocked me.
31 Now I've heard that a lot since then, because it became kind of a fad. And I remember I

1 was in Washington, D.C., when they had the Vietnam Veterans Parade. And I was
2 working that day on a Saturday. But I went ahead and took off lunch and I went out there,
3 and I didn't actually get in the parade, but I stood on the sideline and watched. I
4 remember when the 1st—101st Airborne went by, they went double timing and jogging
5 and I thought that may have been the old parachute airborne before my time. But that
6 wasn't the airborne that I saw when I was in it. But I had a lot of respect for the 2nd of
7 [the] 327th Infantry, 101st Airborne, the artillery; those things have always impressed me.
8 I was very glad I did that. Like I said, for me personally, I got it at a very low cheap
9 price. Forever I've been thankful. Because if anything had ever happened to me, I mean
10 my wife—I look at my children and think, they wouldn't be here! And that's scary, that's
11 spooky. And for many veterans that's what happened to them. Very sad. So I'm hoping
12 that maybe, this institution at Texas Tech perhaps will teach some lessons and maybe
13 somebody will learn. I'm not sure we're learning as much as we could. I know this is not
14 a current day affair, but Iraq and Afghanistan, I still wonder, how is that going? I see a lot
15 of parallels with Vietnam. I hope the best for America, and I hope the best for those
16 troops over there. But it still worries me just like it did in Vietnam.

17 KC: Alright. Well, I think we're done.

18 JG: That's it! Okay Dr. C—

19 [The manuscript *My Vietnam War Experiences*, by Jim B. Green, August, 2010, along
20 with pictures, can be found in The Vietnam Virtual Archive at Texas Tech University.]

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