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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with John Ebersole
Conducted by Jason Stewart
Date April 8, 11, 20 2011
Transcribed by Angel Nguyen**

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.

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1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University, conducting an oral history interview with Dr. John Ebersole. Today is April
3 8, 2011. I'm in Lubbock, Texas in the Special Collections Library on the campus of
4 Texas Tech and Dr. Ebersole is joining me by phone from New York. Is that correct, sir?

5 John Ebersole: That is correct.

6 JS: Alright, why don't we begin, if we could with a little bit of biographical
7 information? First of all, when and where were you born?

8 JE: I was born in 1944 in Warrensburg in Missouri.

9 JS: Okay. Alright. Could you tell me a little bit about growing up there? Also,
10 perhaps a little bit about your parents and what they did for a living?

11 JE: Sure. My father was a World War I veteran who had been wounded in a
12 Meuse-Argonne forest campaign. For most of my recollection, aftereffects of that
13 experience, he suffered from tuberculosis, which he was actually confined to a
14 sanitarium—or sanatorium I guess in Leavenworth, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri
15 for over a year. He had one leg that was about an inch shorter that was result of a bullet
16 wound from that campaign. So, my father who was much older than my mother was sick
17 almost all of my childhood. I didn't really know him very well at all. My mother—we
18 had a country store about eight miles outside the little community of Windsor, Missouri.

1 We operated a very small farm in addition. My mother continued to operate that through
2 my father's illness up until about the mid—well I guess the late 1950's then she went to
3 work in the local shoe factory. She worked in that shoe factory until her retirement just a
4 few years before her death which has been several years ago now. So, I grew up in a rural
5 setting, much like any farm kid, I had animals. I had to milk cows. I had a one-room
6 country school that I went to. All eight grades, all subjects, one teacher. I was one of
7 those that walked the mile through the snow to school and I then went to high school in
8 Windsor, which is where I graduate in 1962.

9 JS: Alright.

10 JE: It was after seeing that I wasn't going to have money to go to college, we
11 were certainly living hand-to-mouth in those days so I enlisted in the United States Coast
12 Guard and later learned that I was only the second person in the history of my draft board
13 who would ever do so. My predecessor had entered the Coast Guard in World War I.

14 JS: Okay. Wow.

15 JE: I have a distinction that I'm not sure makes any difference one way or the
16 other but the decision to go into the Coast Guard was really to escape the farm.

17 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Let me ask you a quick question here: your father's World
18 War I service, did he ever talk with you much about it?

19 JE: No, he really didn't. I have a suitcase full of letters that he wrote to his mother
20 during the First World War, and I have a suitcase full of letters that I wrote to my wife
21 and children at the time from Vietnam. I thought that sometimes I would sit down and
22 read those sets of letters and see if there were the makings of a book there.

23 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, well growing up as a kid, you talked about wanting to escape
24 the farm and that being one of the major reasons why deciding to leave and join the Coast
25 Guard, but growing up as a kid, did you have much interest in the military?

26 JE: Not really. We lived under Whiteman Air Force's runway. Whiteman is the
27 home of the stealth bomber. At that time, it was the strategic air command site that later
28 became the home of the Minutemen missile site or missile base. So, I had seen the Air
29 Force up close and personal and didn't really care much for it. We also saw some Army
30 from Ft. Leonard Wood and I didn't have much attraction to the Army, and I really didn't
31 know anything at all about the Navy. My attraction to the Coast Guard, really, I can track

1 it almost back to the exact day. There used to be an old television program. It was
2 called *The Big Picture*. I think it was sponsored by the U.S. Army and it showed on
3 Saturday afternoons as I recall. I guess it would've been probably the spring of '62, they
4 were doing a salute to the Coast Guard on the occasion of its umpteenth birthday. I was
5 quite struck by the humanitarian work of the Coast Guard, rather ironic that I eventually
6 become involved in Vietnam and quite a warrior, I think, but at the time my grandfather
7 on my mother's side was a minister in the Church of the Brethren which is one of the
8 historic peace churches. I was pressured quite a bit to become a conscientious objector,
9 but that feel quite right to me either perhaps because of my father's service and urging by
10 my grandparents who didn't necessarily ascribe to the church. They were actually
11 Southern Baptists. The Coast Guard looked like a good compromise to me at the time,
12 Jason.

13 JS: Yes, sir. Alright. Well once you made that (coughs) excuse me. Once you
14 made that decision to go ahead and join the Coast Guard, what was your—what did your
15 parents think about that?

16 JE: Well, even though I was eighteen, I still needed my mother's consent and my
17 father had died just as I was entering high school, so I had gone through high school
18 pretty much being the man of the house. I was the eldest of two boys. My mother had
19 remarried my senior year. My stepfather and I, who later in life, became quite good
20 friends were fighting quite a bit at that point so I think my mother was quite happy to
21 have me go into the military.

22 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Alright, one other question I meant to ask you a little earlier, if
23 we could back up for just a moment?

24 JE: Sure.

25 JS: Again, as a kid growing up, were you cognizant of what was really going on
26 in the world with the Cold War and the Soviet threat, that type of thing? Did you pay
27 much attention to that?

28 JE: Yeah, we had a constant reminder that the *B47* bombers and the *KC97* tankers
29 kept taking off over our house. So, we probably were a little more cognizant and we had
30 a renter—he and his family rented a home from my mother next door to us. He was
31 directly involved in loading or unloading atomic weapons from those bombers. We

1 probably had a little higher level of awareness than might be true of others for
2 particularly kids my age elsewhere.

3 JS: Alright. I guess getting back to the chronology. Once you made that decision
4 to join the Coast Guard, was it directly into an induction right after high school or was
5 there a little time in between?

6 JE: there was some time in between, Jason, but I can tell you that that time in
7 between only reinforced my motivation to do something else. I wasn't going to college,
8 and I was just doing odd jobs for various farmers. I was pulling weeds, making fence,
9 taking care of our own livestock. I just saw no future in that, so I graduated from high
10 school the first or second week of May and by the end of June, I was at the recruiter
11 center.

12 JS: Okay. Alright. When you went to join, did you have a specific job in mind
13 that you would like to do or not really at that point?

14 JE: Not really, Jason. In fact, it was almost an accident that I got enlisted at all.
15 The recruiting center—the only Coast Guard recruiting center—there were two, one in St.
16 Louis, which was a couple hundred miles away and Kansas City, which was about eighty
17 miles away. I drove out to Kansas City on a Saturday morning. I'm not sure why I
18 thought they would be open. But as luck would have it, one of the recruiters was actually
19 in on Saturday morning, putting up some paperwork so he let me in, administered the
20 entrance exam, they call it the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude battery)
21 today. It seems like we called it something else in those days. Anyway, I took the exam,
22 and I must've done fairly well because he got pretty excited about carrying me off to boot
23 camp right after that.

24 JS: Right. Alright, once you took that exam, was it directly to boot camp pretty
25 much after that then?

26 JE: It was two weeks. He had to do a little bit—he had to get my mother's
27 information. There was a hurricane that tramped through the East Coast and the East
28 Coast recruit center, which was at Cape May, New Jersey, which is normally where I
29 would've been assigned. But it had been damaged, and they were reducing the number of
30 recruits they took in, so he had to get information for me to go to Alameda, California
31 and recruit training on the West Coast.

1 JS: Okay. Alright, once they received that permission to send you there, how did
2 you get to Alameda?

3 JE: Well, it was interesting. He offered me an opportunity to take an airplane,
4 which I had never been on before. And I don't know, at this point, I guess I felt like I
5 wanted a little time to convince myself that I just made the right decision. Anyway, I
6 elected to go by train.

7 JS: Okay.

8 JE: So, I took a train to Richmond, California and was met by the Coast Guard
9 training people for Alameda.

10 JS: Alright. If you wouldn't mind, if you could talk a little bit about the boot
11 training there, what a typical day was like, how the training was structured, and how you
12 adjusted to it?

13 JE: Well, I remember my first day, and I was early, apparently the rest of the
14 recruits of my company which was November 37, which was the designation of my
15 company. The rest of the recruits didn't show up until the weekend or maybe—I'm not
16 sure why but I was there by myself for a day or two before the rest showed up. I spent
17 most of that time, standing at attention outside of the barracks for hours at a time. I
18 briskly thought, "Boy, did I make a mistake." Then the others arrived, and my company
19 was very unusual. I was the only—it was called "regular". Everybody else that came to
20 the company was a reservist, who'd come in on a reserve program of what we used to call
21 the 6x8 Program. Six months of active duty and eight years of total service. The rest—we
22 were a company about sixty, so they were about twenty reserves and the other forty were
23 all Filipino. They were being prepared to become cooks or stewards, officer stewards. So,
24 it was a very interesting experience for a kid who came off a farm in the Midwest who
25 had never been around, what we would've called foreigners at that point. Your point
26 about what would be a typical day, you know we'd be up at 5:30 (AM), we'd be out
27 doing calisthenics. We would take some classes in a classroom, but we'd also be out
28 rowing boats, standing watching at the helm of a little harbor tuck that they used for
29 training purposes, we'd learn how to tie knots, and we learned Coast Guard history. A lot
30 of time marching in formation within one.

31 JS: Alright.

1 JE: As I recall it, Jason, recruit training was thirteen weeks at that point.

2 JS: Okay. Alright, could you talk a little bit about your instructors? What were
3 your impressions of them?

4 JE: Well, it's interesting – getting ahead of myself here, but I actually came back
5 to run this recruit training center. That was toward the end of my career. So, I got a
6 totally different perspective after coming back to run it, but at the time, I saw them being
7 pretty hard-nosed. Nobody physically touched you, but they really got in your face.
8 Everything was hard. It was the acculturation process where they pretty much strip you of
9 your civilian identity and they start building you back with a new identity, your military
10 identity. It was the haircut, the uniform, the discipline, the expectations. My recruit
11 trainer, a fellow by the name of Nalley. That would be N-A-L-L-E-Y, I think. The first-
12 class radarman had come off one of the ships and he became a human being for the last
13 third of recruitment training. The first two-thirds, he was an animal as far as we were
14 concerned. The last third, he started to become—as we shaped up, he started taking pride
15 in us.

16 JS: Were there any discipline issues, and if so, how would he enforce discipline?

17 JE: Well, you have the demerit system. If you got so many demerits, you couldn't
18 go on to what we called "liberty". It means we couldn't go off base. We have liberty
19 privileges toward that last third of recruit training, but you would restrict to the base if
20 you had too many demerits. You could get a demerit for your bed not being made right or
21 your kick line, meaning your uniform, the way it was lined up, dirty leggings, I mean,
22 there was no end of things that they could get you for.

23 JS: Alright. Did you guys receive any sort of weapons training?

24 JE: Yes, well let me think about that. Yes, we did. We did go out to the Life
25 Marines which was located in Pleasanton, California. I remember us taking the bus out
26 there. I think we fired both the rifle and the pistol, but I didn't qualify on either one. I got
27 familiarized, but I didn't prove myself to be much of a marksman at that point.

28 JS: Right. Well, overall, how would you rank your training there at boot? Was it
29 sufficient as far as preparing you for a career in the Coast Guard, or no?

30 JE: It did a good job of preparing me to be aboard ship. That was the primary
31 focus of the training: ship aboard training. We didn't spend any time on the ship other

1 than maybe an afternoon cruising the San Francisco Bay on this 65 ft. tug. That was
2 really the focus. One of the things that I remember, Jason, about the training I had at age
3 eighteen and the training I was responsible for twenty years later was that when I took
4 over recruitment training in the early '80's. It was almost all classroom. We were getting
5 a lot of feedback from ship commanders that the kids didn't know anything. So, one of
6 the things that I did was to take them out of the classroom and create more simulations so
7 we didn't have a ship we could use but we created a concrete outline of one and we
8 learned how to throw heaving lines and make them up. We still—you think about the kids
9 that go into high school or into recruit training in the military at seventeen, eighteen, or
10 nineteen, years of age. They're not necessarily— (audio cuts out).

11 JS: Hello? Hello?

12 JE: (ringing) Jason?

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 JE: Okay, I'm driving to the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts so we may do
15 this one or twice.

16 JS: Okay, sure. No problem.

17 JE: I was just saying, Jason, that the people that are going into recruit training,
18 whether it be the Coast Guard or any other service, don't necessarily see themselves as
19 scholars. If they were cut out to go to college in their own minds at least, they would've
20 gone to college. Being in a classroom didn't feel all that comfortable. I think that our
21 training improved when we started giving them more experiences.

22 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, at the time that you were going through as a young recruit
23 there, did you feel that as you were going through that eventually you were adjusting to
24 the military pretty well?

25 JE: I don't know. I think I still have the rebellious personality of many teenagers.
26 I was pretty strong-willed; some may even say I still am. I was proud of the Coast Guard.
27 They did a great job of indoctrinating us into the history and the traditions of the Coast
28 Guard. I came out of it not totally sold, I'm sure because I'm still at the bottom of the
29 pyramid, I also was still a little fearful. I didn't know what the future was going to be
30 like. I still didn't know what the real service was like.

1 JS: Well before moving onto your next assignment, any memorable moments or
2 funny moments, anything like that that sticks out from your mind from boot?

3 JE: well, actually what sticks out of my mind is what a dynamic place the Coast
4 Guard training center Alameda was at that point in time. There were three large Coast
5 Guard gutters that tied up there that were doing weather station patrols. It was a very
6 active, dynamic place. Lots of coming and going, lots of energy, you know, there were
7 several hundred recruits there. It was a very busy place. I think back on it, when I went
8 back years later, the place was a state of decline, the base had been neglected because of
9 budgetary compacts, it was disappointing years later to go back. Now, it's back to being a
10 more dynamic place than it was in the '80's, but that's the thing I remember most.

11 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, well once you completed boot, what was your next
12 assignment at that point?

13 JE: well, it's interesting. Because of my performance on that exam and a couple
14 that I took later, they decided that I was cut out to be an electronics technician. So that
15 was a pretty high demand, a lot of need for electronic technicians, and it required quite a
16 bit of schooling. So, I was sent to Brock in Connecticut right across the river from New
17 London.

18 JS: Alright.

19 JE: There was a whole castle that had been reconstructed from Scotland which
20 was main estate and then there was a gatehouse and several other stone buildings right
21 out on a place called, Avery Point, looking out on to the Long Island sound. It was a
22 beautiful, beautiful place. The Coast Guard, I don't know how they acquired it, I guess
23 during World War II, converted it into a training center. Much of the Coast Guard's
24 enlisted training was conducted at Avery Point, which was – everybody referred to it as
25 Brock. I lasted all of two weeks in electronics training. All of those classes in Algebra
26 that I slept through caught up with me. The people in charge and I agreed that I was not
27 all that cut out to be an electronics technician after all. So, what was interesting was,
28 during the time that I left California and I went to Brock in Connecticut that was October
29 of 1962, so the Cuban Missile Crisis was going on at that time. Interestingly, I got
30 married during that time and had no recollection whatsoever of the Cuban Missile
31 Crisis.

1 JS: Right. Alright, well once you determined and the Coast Guard determined that
2 being an electronic technician was not the thing for you, where were you sent at that
3 point then?

4 JE: Well initially, they just sent me to the Galley. They made me a mess cook. I
5 spent the next—this would've been through December to January, I guess I spent
6 February, March, and part of April as a mess cook, getting up at 4:30 (AM) in the
7 morning to prepare breakfast for all hands. So, it was sort of an unpleasant duty that they
8 wanted to make sure that nobody saw any reward for flunking out of school. It was
9 constructed to be a little bit of punishment for having cost the Coast Guard the price of
10 chickens across country (laughing). I went out of the Galley, the best cooking routine, I
11 think I was April of '63 and I was sent to the Coast Guard Cutter *Nemesis* in St.
12 Petersburg, Florida.

13 JS: Alright. Okay, what was the duties of *Nemesis*? What was their focus? At the
14 time that you arrived.

15 JE: The *Nemesis* was a very old vessel. It had been built in 1936. It was a sister
16 ship to the *Potomac* which was FDR's presidential yacht. If you could envision
17 the *Potomac*, you get a good picture of what the *Nemesis* looked like. The *Nemesis* was
18 165 ft. I think we had a crew of about forty. Our mission was picking up Cuban refugees.
19 We spent all of the time that I was on there off of the Cay Sal Bank, patrolling between
20 Cuba and the Florida Keys.

21 JS: Alright, once you had picked up Cuban refugees, what would be done with
22 them?

23 JE: We'd take them to Key West, Florida. This was in the days when they were
24 welcomed, and we'd do anything possible to bring them to the U.S. this was the early
25 '60's. They would be processed through the Coast Guard base at Key West. With
26 immigration help, they would be relocated, typically into the Miami area later.

27 JS: Could you talk a little bit about what type of conditions would you all find
28 them in as far as their health and what type of vessels were they using to try to get to
29 Florida?

30 JE: It was everything. We found 55 gallon barrels that had been converted into
31 rafts. We found people in very leaky boats. Most people don't realize it, but there's

1 actually a small land mass between Cuba and The United States called the Cay Sal Bank.
2 It's pretty much just a dry, barren land, but it was a place for the—it's under British
3 control. It was manned or owned by Great Britain and the refugees, in a lot of cases,
4 would get to the lighthouse. There was a lighthouse on Cay Sal Island and so they would
5 go to Cay Sal, and we'd go there to pick them up. Sometimes, the British guard ship
6 would pick them up and they'd transfer them to us.

7 JS: Okay. Alright, while you were all doing this duty, was there any threat or
8 concern from the Cuban government, from the Cuban Communists?

9 JE: Yeah, there was. In fact, I'll never forget it. So, remember I'm just a seaman
10 apprentice at this point. I'm lowest of low. Part of our sailing on one of the trips, I had
11 been chipping rust off the haul, I put my chipping hammer right through the haul of the
12 ship. That was how rusty is as. We fixed it with a boat, some oysters, and something
13 called Vondo, which you use to fix bodies on automobiles. Anyway, we're on patrol and
14 we run into a Cuban gun boat. They go to general borders so they're training their
15 machine guns at us. I'm thinking about one bullet at the waterline is probably all it would
16 take to sink this boat of ours, or our ship of ours. We had an old 3 inch fifty, a World War
17 II era gun on the front of the vessel. We're at the general borders so we're standing there,
18 holding rifles, and trying to manually crank these 3 inches fifty so that if they decide to
19 start shooting at us, presumably we could shoot back. On a later gunnery exercise, we
20 fired the gun; not at anybody, just an exercise, the concussion blew the doors off of the
21 vessel.

22 JS: Wow. Right.

23 JE: That gives you an idea—this was a—what was the name of the old vessel in
24 the San Pablo? The *San* something or other. Anyway, it reminds you of the vessel in the
25 sand pebbles.

26 JS: Okay. Right. Yes, sir. Alright, what were your—let's talk a little bit about
27 your duties there aboard the *Nemesis*.

28 JE: Well wouldn't you know, after spending two and a half months as a mess
29 cook at Brock and the training center, my first assignment aboard the ship was to be a
30 mess cook.

31 JS: Right.

1 JE: So that always goes to the new guy, and I send another as a mess cook, getting
2 seasick, peeling onions and getting seasick at the very smell of onions, but then I went off
3 of being a mess cook, and I went into the regular blocked rotation. Always, throughout
4 my entire career, I stood four to eight watches with four to eight in the morning and then
5 four in the afternoon to eight at night. My job was, in addition to standing lookout helm
6 watches, which is what you alternated an hour at one and an hour at the other on these
7 watches, I was also the ship's motion picture projector operator.

8 JS: Okay.

9 JE: So, the expectation was that I would show the ship's movies, I was trained. I
10 had to go to the Navy based in Norfolk, Virginia to be trained in how to show motion
11 pictures. So, I would wind up showing movies until nine or ten o'clock at night, so I
12 never felt like I had enough sleep. Waking up at 3:30 in the morning after not getting into
13 bed until ten and my bed was a hammock, by the way—it wasn't a hammock, but it was a
14 canvas bottom laced into a plate frame and it was eighteen inches from my canvas bottom
15 to the one above me. We were four to five high in a very forward part of the ship.

16 JS: Alright, well what was the crew size?

17 JE: There were about forty of us. I had a commander. An O5 (Lieutenant colonel)
18 was the commanding officer. An O4 (Major) was the executive officer. And then I think
19 there were three ensigns or lieutenant JGs—the deck watch officers. The warrant—chief
20 engineer was a warrant officer.

21 JS: Okay. Alright, how long were you aboard the *Nemesis*?

22 JE: Thirteen months. What happened was, I wised up after spending a few months
23 chipping paint outdoors and just all day, chipping rust and with undercoats in paint. There
24 was an opening for someone to help out the ship's office. So, despite, the fact that I
25 almost failed typing in high school, I all of a sudden was able to recall my typing skills.
26 With the proper motivation, it's amazing what you can remember.

27 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

28 JE: So, I put myself back to typing and I became an apprentice yeoman doing
29 clerical work.

30 JS: Okay.

1 JE: So, I worked on the ship's office, and I became formally designated as a
2 Seaman Yeoman and passed the examination to become a petty officer, but since there
3 was no billet for another ranked yeoman on the ship, I got transferred.

4 JS: Okay. Alright, you were there for thirteen months, I would assume that you
5 were aboard the *Nemesis* when the Kennedy assassination took place. Is that correct?

6 JE: Yeah. In fact, it's a rather interesting story, Jason. By this point, my wife and I
7 were expecting our first child and because I was spending so much time away, my wife
8 had gone back to being with her parents in Missouri. We had been told by the doctor that
9 we could expect the delivery of my oldest daughter on a particular date, so I went home
10 on that particular date. Well, the date came and went with no baby. So, I did that twice.
11 Turns out my daughter was a ten-month baby. The day that Kennedy was shot was the
12 day that she was born, but I wasn't there. I was dockside at St. Petersburg, Florida.

13 JS: Alright. Well, any other memorable moments, humorous or anything that
14 sticks out in your mind from this time aboard the *Nemesis* that we haven't discussed?

15 JE: Well, I was still pretty much the rebellious teenager. I remember—later in life,
16 I would tell my crews that “Look, I did a lot of things that you probably thought about.
17 The difference is I didn't get caught. You better not either because if you do, I'm going to
18 come down on you like a ton of bricks.”

19 JS: Right.

20 JE: I would come home off these patrols and if I had the duty but no particular
21 assignment, I would often times, go home in the middle of the night to be with my wife
22 then come back early in the morning so nobody would know that I had been gone
23 overnight. I remember that we used to keep booze in the ship safe because the officers
24 rarely looked there, but the other—the storekeeper and the other yeoman, we'd keep a
25 bottle of booze in the safe. I remember losing the shot record for the Chief Boatman
26 made who was sort of a tyrant. When he got upset overseas, we wanted to make sure that
27 he got special attention, so we lost his shot record for it. He had to get all of his shots
28 again.

29 JS: Right.

30 JE: I would say that while I was fairly conscientious, I was still somewhat of a hell
31 raiser.

1 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, where did you go from there?

2 JE: I went to Coast Guard Air Station, Annette, Alaska.

3 JS: Alaska, okay.

4 JE: Annette is an island, located twenty miles off Ketchikan. It's a very large

5 island that has a mountain on it, Mt. Ganges. It had been a World War II bomber base. It

6 had a long paved runway that commercial aircraft used. In most days, you've heard about

7 the Bridge to Nowhere that got some of Alaska's senators in trouble.

8 JS: Right.

9 JE: That was later—it'd have to have been a heck of a bridge in my day because

10 Pennock Island, which is where all Ketchikan passengers would come in, would fly in

11 on 707s from Seattle. They'd either fly in on Pan-American Airlines or Pacific Boarder

12 Airlines.

13 JS: Okay.

14 JE: They would offload at Annette and then they would get on a PBY or

15 a Grumman Goose which was sea planes and fly them the twenty miles to Ketchikan and

16 land in the water. They took them to shore at Ketchikan.

17 JS: Okay.

18 JE: We were flying the Grumman Albatross. That was our primary aircraft.

19 JS: Alright. I arrived simultaneous with the first deployment of helicopters to

20 Annette. We also had the Sikorsky HH-52 helicopter. We had two helicopters and three

21 fixed wing Albatrosses.

22 JS: Alright. What were your duties there?

23 JE: I was one of two yeomen in the office. It was a much larger facility. We had a

24 112 crew, about a little more than a third of which were commissioned officers, who

25 were the pilots.

26 JS: Okay.

27 JE: We were also responsible for maintaining the living area. The officers would

28 have their families with them. Most of them were living in World War II Quonset huts.

29 We had to maintain those facilities as well as provide the crews for the aircrafts.

30 JS: Okay. Alright, what was the major focus of the air station there?

1 JE: Search-and-rescue. I used to say it was a flying ambulance service. We would
2 take people who needed medical care to the hospital in Ketchikan. The hospital as pretty
3 second-rate. So, anybody that was seriously injured, we'd either have to fly them to
4 Anchorage or Seattle. There was a Marine hospital in Seattle and at that time, commercial
5 fishermen were entitled to be treated by the Marine hospital. The U.S. Public Health
6 Service took care of commercial fisherman. Also, the Native Americans—we had a large
7 tribe of Native Americans on Annette Island. They too were entitled to medical care at
8 the Marine hospital in Seattle. Other civilians, we might very well take them to
9 Anchorage, depending on what the problem was. There would be—the typical, you know
10 we'd have—this is pretty much still reminiscent of the Wild West. The lumberjacks who
11 would have trees fall on them or get a chainsaw that would kickback. The fishermen that
12 would get into knife fights after they got drunk. The Indians who got drunk and then
13 started suffering from the DT's (Delirium Tremens) because they'd get drunk on stuff
14 like on things like Sterno and rubbing alcohol rather than drinking alcohol. I remember
15 taking a very large Native American woman in straight jacket to be treated for the DT's. I
16 tell people that I saw more death and destruction in my one year in Alaska than I did in
17 my one year in Vietnam. I shipped seven bodies home from Alaska, and we only had five
18 Coast Guard people killed in Vietnam, so we actually had more fatalities in one year in
19 Alaska than we did in five years of involvement in Vietnam.

20 JS: Wow. Yes, sir. Would part of your mission also be rescuing sailors on boats
21 that would get in trouble out there on the ocean?

22 JE: Yes, it was. In fact, interesting story, Jason. I thought I wanted to go into
23 aviation so I was flying every opportunity I could get. So, one Sunday afternoon, we were
24 asked to drop pump to a fishing vessel that was sinking. I had the duty. On the shore
25 station, it's more a fire detail. If a fire were to break out, they wanted to have a hoard of
26 people that could fight the fire. Well, I couldn't find anybody willing to take my
27 assignment, so I wasn't allowed to go on the flight. The flight, an Albatross went out and
28 dropped a float pump to the fishing boat so that they could be salvaged. On the way back,
29 the weather closed in which is does famously in southeast Alaska so by late afternoon,
30 early evening when they came back in. One way was shut in, so the pilot had to take
31 a wave off and go around for a second approach and that was the last we ever heard of

1 the plane. It went into the side of the mountain and five of the bodies that I shipped home
2 were out of that aircraft crash. Interestingly enough, it's forty years later and I can still
3 tell you the names of all five of those guys, but the tragic criminal part was the boat they
4 dropped the pump to, well they gutted for the insurance money.

5 JS: Aww no. Yes, sir. Well, you mentioned that accident, did weather play a big
6 role in how you guys would operate? Did it have a big impact on it?

7 JE: Absolutely. The weather of southeast Alaska—first of all, they had two air
8 stations. They had one at Annette and they had another on Kodiak Island. Both were
9 challenging, but Kodiak was a cakewalk compared to southeast. We had, in my one year
10 there, we had over a hundred-and-seventy inches of rain and fifty inches of snow. We
11 saw the sun so rarely that when it came out, we'd declare a holiday. It didn't matter what
12 day of the week it was, if the sun came out, it was a holiday.

13 JS: Right. You mentioned there being seven casualties—

14 JE: Now the other two were young airmen that died of carbon monoxide
15 poisoning because of a faulty muffler on an old, beat up island car they called it. They
16 had illegally—there was a rumor that the single Coast Guard people could not mingle
17 with the Indians which had their own village at the end of the island, the village of
18 Metlakatla. These two guys had found a way around that. They met a couple of Indian
19 girls. They were parked having a little romantic encounter and all four of them died of
20 poisoning.

21 JS: Yes, sir. Alright. Well, any other memorable moments from this time period?

22 JE: Just how rough it was. A lot of alcoholism, even amongst the Coast Guard
23 personnel. The stress of the weather and the nature of the work had a lot of family
24 violence, again even amongst our own people. Had a couple of attempted suicides. We
25 had a pilot, an officer who you'd think maybe of a little stronger fiber go crazy one night
26 and shoot up the living area. It was a very unforgiving environment. So, when I talk
27 about greater violence in Alaska than Vietnam, I guess it made just an imprint on me
28 because it was so unexpected. You expected violence in Vietnam. It came at you from
29 everywhere in Alaska.

30 JS: Alright, how long were you there?

31 JE: A year.

1 JS: A year. Okay.

2 JE: Without my family, it was considered an isolated tour.

3 JS: Alright. Yes, sir. Well, where were you assigned next?

4 JE: Mobile, Alabama!

5 JS: My hometown!

6 JE: Really?

7 JS: Yes, sir.

8 JE: I went to captain of the port, Mobile, Alabama. By then, I'd been promoted a
9 couple of times, so I was again applying to the personnel office for not only the captain of
10 the port, but also, we had three units all under Sentinel command. We had the captain of
11 the port. We had a support base, and it was also a group command. We had small units
12 along the Florida-Alabama-Mississippi coast, and we provided the support of
13 administrating the logistics support for these smaller units.

14 JS: Okay.

15 JE: It was a pretty small flown operation. Several hundred people in all between
16 all of the different units. Let me take that back, maybe it was more like 120. It wasn't
17 more than a hundred. Probably about a 120. Out of everybody, we had a maimed
18 lighthouse in those days at Pensacola. We twelve rescue vessels at Gulfport, Biloxi. We
19 had eight navigation vessels over at Mobile and over at Panama City. We ran a maritime,
20 had a maritime station over in Cape San Blas, Florida. All of that was part of our
21 responsibility.

22 JS: Okay. Alright, what were your specific duties there?

23 JE: Well, daytime, I mostly processed correspondence paperwork and did the
24 average work of the yeoman, but I always had an interest—I was the editor of the school
25 paper when I was in high school. I even put together and ran a little station newspaper
26 when I was up in Alaska. So, I always had this interest in public relations work, so I sort
27 of became a public relations person for the commanding officer. I built a pretty good
28 relationship with the local newspaper and radio stations. It got us—I would write press
29 releases, just small stuff that I did of my own volition. I wasn't expected to do it, but I got
30 a lot of positive feedback from command for doing it. I also would have to stand a
31 twenty-four hour officer of the day watch where we would act as sort of a rescue

1 coordinator for any rescue operations in the Mississippi-Florida boundaries. We went all
2 the way over to the Louisiana border on the Gulf and all the way over to Cape San Blas
3 of the Florida panhandle.

4 JS: Okay.

5 JE: If somebody got in trouble, lost, missing, sinking, or accident, we'd
6 coordinate the rescue with the district command was in New Orleans if we needed
7 additional help, we could call the East Coast Guard District Headquarters and they could
8 send an aircraft out of New Orleans or help us in other ways, but usually if there was a
9 small boat rescue, we'd take care of it. I started taking on responsibilities for rescuing—
10 coordinating rescues on my turn. All the personnel E6 and E7 were taking turns having
11 this responsibility. They'd stay on board overnight, no crew on board at night other than
12 just the duty search.

13 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Time frame-wise, when would this have been that you were at
14 Mobile?

15 JE: I was there '64- '65. I was there about sixteen months. I had my second
16 daughter there at the Air Force base. I can't remember—do you remember the name of
17 the Air Force base there?

18 JS: Was it Brookley?

19 JE: Brookley Field, that's right.

20 JS: Okay.

21 JE: It was being converted. It was being shut down as an Air Force base, but my
22 daughter was born in the Air Force hospital there.

23 JS: Okay. Alright. This is '64- '65, I would imagine that during the time period
24 you're here that things were beginning to heat up a little bit in Vietnam. Were you paying
25 attention to what was going on there? Had you heard much about it?

26 JE: I had. I started volunteering to go. I was now an E6. There was now an E6
27 billet in Saigon. I started volunteering for it. I volunteered; I don't know at least three
28 times which were unsuccessful. Finally, got a shot of orders getting me as close as I could
29 get which was Guam. Coast Guard maintained a decal in Guam. So, I finally got a set of
30 orders very late in 1965? Probably early '66. Yeah, it would've been early '66. I got sent
31 orders to go to Guam. I had already detached from Mobile and had gone home to

1 Missouri to start the process of planning for my wife and I to move to Guam. I was called
2 and told that I had finally been selected to go to Officer Candidate School. I had applied
3 for that more than once and had not been successful through this point. In '66- '67, the
4 Coast Guard was really strapped for officers. Not only was it being asked to send 26
5 boats to Vietnam, but it was also sending some of its high endurance cutters to Vietnam.
6 The Navy had turned over all of its icebreakers to the Coast Guard. So, Coast Guard
7 needed more officers than it had. So, I think my OCS (Officer Candidate School) class as
8 probably the largest in peacetime history. I think there were almost 250 of us that went
9 through in '66.

10 JS: Oh, wow. Yes, sir.

11 JE: Anyway, I got recalled. Instead of going to Guam, they assigned me to the
12 Coast Guard Headquarters in New Orleans for most of the summer of '66 until the class
13 started—the OCS class started in the fall of '66.

14 JS: Alright, well before getting into your time at OCS, could you talk a little bit
15 about what made you decide to volunteer for Vietnam?

16 JE: That's a very good question that I've thought a lot about over the years, Jason.
17 I think at that rock. It was a spirit of adventure. It was, by this point, I had ended my first
18 enlistment. I had a family, a wife and two daughters. I decided I wasn't going back out
19 into the civilian world and start all over. I also attained the rank of E6 and was finally
20 getting a paycheck big enough to support us. So, I had made the decision to make the
21 Coast Guard a career at that point. I actually had reenlisted for six years in '66. So, I also
22 saw that this was a defining moment in American history. I felt like I wanted to be a part
23 of that. I didn't know what part I'd play, but I wanted to get as close to it as I could.

24 JS: Alright.

25 JE: I also knew that a tour—I'd been in long enough to know that a tour overseas
26 was going to help me in terms of a career.

27 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, did you figure that you would eventually probably be going
28 anyway, or no?

29 JE: No, not really. As an enlisted person, I really thought my odds of going in one
30 in several hundred because there was only one billet in all of Vietnam for my particular
31 specialty.

1 JS: Okay. Do you know—what was the Coast Guard’s role in Vietnam at that
2 time period? Do you know?

3 JE: It was Operation Market Time. Operation Market Time was a maritime
4 blockade of the entire coast of South Vietnam. It consisted of large vessels patrolling out
5 to two hundred miles. Navy ship chasers patrolling out to five hundred miles. The Coast
6 Guard 82 ft. patrol boats patrolling inshore to about twenty miles from the coast to about
7 twenty miles out.

8 JS: Okay.

9 JE: We would be in the twenty mile by twenty mile block and then we’d have
10 three or four of those blocks. Then one of those Navy destroyers or Coast Guard high
11 endurance cutter. Inland in the rivers and really close, you’d have the Navy swift boats,
12 but the Navy didn’t have any vessels that had the seakeeping capability to be out in open
13 seas particularly during rough water. The swift boats were fine for the rivers, but they
14 were no good offshore.

15 JS: Alright.

16 JE: It was because we did our jobs so well, I would have you go that it became
17 necessary for the North to create the Ho Chi Minh trail.

18 JS: Yes, sir. When did the—do you know when the Coast Guard began the—?

19 JE: Yeah, in late 1965.

20 JS: Oh, alright. Yes, sir. Well before getting further into Vietnam, could we talk a
21 little bit about OCS and what that was like for you? And how you felt getting that
22 assignment?

23 JE: Well, OCS was a very interesting experience. It’s a lot less of marching in
24 formation and drilling with arms than boot camp had been. Some actual time on a ship,
25 standing watches. We were on the old voice of America broadcasting ship called
26 the *Courier* which had been in Rhodes, Greece as part of the *Voice of America* from the
27 late ‘50’s into the early ‘60’s. They decommissioned it and brought it to VA training
28 vessel for OCS, kind of like the *Eagle* was cadets of the Coast Guard Academy. We spent
29 a few weeks on the *Courier* and also on the *Cuyahoga* which was a twenty-five ft. patrol
30 vessel going back all the way back to Prohibition era. Interestingly, the *Cuyahoga* was
31 later sunk in an accident in Chesapeake Bay. It got rammed midship and just got cut in

1 half. That wasn't when I was there, of course, but we spent a lot more time in classrooms.
2 We were learning things like navigation. We were learning how to pilot, how to do
3 celestial navigation. We were learning theoretical damage control which required a
4 knowledge of physics and geometry. It was a fairly intensive academic experience with a
5 share of calisthenics and physical education, but it was really all about the book learning
6 and learning the skills necessary to be a deck watch officer or a student engineer.

7 JS: Okay. How long was the OCS training?

8 JE: I want to say I graduated on January 27th of 1967 so I went in September. So,
9 September, October, November, December, January so what is that? I think it was about
10 seventeen weeks because we took Christmas off, so I think about seventeen weeks.

11 JS: Alright. Now how did you do in OCS? Was it fairly easy for you? Were some
12 aspects difficult?

13 JE: Here's where—by this point, I was starting to grow up. I was now—I don't
14 know what was I? In my twenties, early twenties and I found that the book learning came
15 much easier to me than I'd expected. I had not done particularly well in high school
16 probably I was working part-time and having problems at home. My senior year was
17 pretty much a disaster. All of a sudden, I was doing pretty well academically in OCS. So,
18 I wound up graduating second out of the 248 of us.

19 JS: Oh, wow. Alright, did you find that the OCS training was valuable as far as
20 your career was concerned?

21 JE: Absolutely. In fact, it's still valuable to me in a number of ways, Jason. Some
22 of which I didn't realize until later in life that at this point, other than one avoided attempt
23 at going to college, I'd gone to a single course when I was in Mobile. You remember the
24 University of South Alabama?

25 JS: Yes, sir.

26 JE: Well, at the time, I went there in 1965, there was one building. I took a course
27 in Political Science and did not do well. I came down with chicken pox. My eldest
28 daughter gave me a case of chicken pox. In fact, the reason I didn't do well was probably
29 because of the chicken pox, but the fact is I didn't do well and so I kind of internalized
30 that. I didn't know—I hadn't been a good student my senior year. This one course didn't

1 turn out all that well. I think I got a C, but I really did well in OCS. So, I got some
2 motivation to think about going to college.

3 JS: Alright. Well, anything else from OCS?

4 JE: No, it was I'd have to say all in all a very positive experience. I felt very—I
5 was really locked in at this point. I bled Coast Guard.

6 JS: Okay. Alright, well once OCS was completed, what was your next assignment
7 at that point?

8 JE: I went to the Coast Guard cutter *Chilula* in Port of Morgan City, North
9 Carolina.

10 JS: Okay—

11 JE: Jason, could we take a quick break? I've got another call coming in from my
12 wife. I'll just tell her that we're on this call if I could. Could you call me back in just
13 about five minutes?

14 JS: Sure. Absolutely. No problem.

15 JE: Okay, be right back.

16 JS: Okay. Yes, sir.

17 JE: Thank you.

18 JS: Sure. Bye.

19 JS: Alright. Okay, you were talking about joining the *Chilula*, could you say
20 where it was based at again? I think the phone cut out when you said that.

21 JE: Morgan City, North Carolina, right at the outer banks. The *Chilula* was a
22 World War II Navy fleet tug. Two hundred and five feet long, carried a crew about
23 seventy-five, a big heavy—it was the size of—a tug [boat] is almost a misnomer. It's a
24 sized vessel that would handle battleships and aircraft carriers.

25 JS: Okay.

26 JE: It was really a deep water vessel. I went on there as a brand new ensign.

27 JS: Alright.

28 JE: My job was communications officer, so I was both the deck watch officer. I
29 was responsible for the code books, the maintenance, the training of our communications
30 staff, our radio staff. This was still the days of the radio telegraphs, so we mostly

1 communicated using radio telegraphs. We had some what today seems like some Dark
2 Age voice radio capabilities, but it was very short-range.

3 JS: Okay.

4 JE: We did not have at that point, FM radios which came during the time I was on
5 there but was still not being used for marine purposes.

6 JS: Alright.

7 JE: Guess what we did for our mission?

8 JS: Some sort of search-and-rescue? Wait no, what am I thinking? You were a
9 tug.

10 JE: We were picking up refugees off of Cuba.

11 JS: Really?

12 JE: Yeah! So, from 1963-1967, not much had changed in terms of Cubans trying
13 to flee Cuba.

14 JS: Yes, sir.

15 JE: When we weren't doing search-and-rescue of other types, we were pulling
16 two-week patrols in Florida off the coast of Cuba. That *Chilula* was a very busy search-
17 and-rescue vessel. We used to stand what we'd Bravo II. That was the ship's status which
18 means from a cold call, we could be underway in two hours. So that meant that the crew
19 was restricted to being with a telephone contact; they either had to be at home or close to
20 a phone for recall purposes at all times. Very restrictive. Remember this is the day before
21 cell phones.

22 JS: Right.

23 JE: So, you couldn't even go out to the movies without having to go check in
24 every hour. I remember being recalled in the middle of *Dr. Zhivago* and I didn't get to
25 see the movie. The Coast Guard prides itself in being the life savers. The truth of the
26 matter is in my Coast Guard career I was involved in a lot of rescues probably running
27 into the hundreds. Virtually, none of those could I say that if it had not been for us, life
28 would've been lost. When I was on the *Chilula*, we actually had a sinking offshore at
29 night where had it not been our being on-scene as quickly as we were, people would've
30 died. I can point to one rescue in my entire twenty-one year career that we made the
31 difference between life and death. It was very traumatic. Again, my interest in public

1 affair, public relations, I also carried out as a collateral duty on the ship so I would take
2 pictures and write stories about our efforts. I have a very traumatic picture of us bringing
3 the people we rescued out of the water back to the ship in the dark of night. This is also
4 the ship that I rescued or was involved in the rescue of Ted Turner.

5 JS: Oh!

6 JE: I rescued Ted Turner twice.

7 JS: Really?

8 JE: On the *Chilula* was the first time. Ted was 29 years old. His family was still in
9 the billboard business. Ted was just learning how to sail. He had entered a new vessel to
10 race in the Southern Atlantic Racing Conference. This would've been, I think in the
11 winter of '67. In the event, his new vessel was not done in time for the races. So, he
12 chartered a former America race contender by the name of *Valero*.

13 JS: Okay.

14 JE: When Ted got off at Cape Hatteras, I used to say that Ted was still learning
15 the limits at this point in his sailing career. He blew the sails out. After blowing the sails
16 out, he managed to get the rigging tied up in his auxiliary propeller. So, Ted and his crew
17 were en-route to Diamond Shoals and had it not been for our Texaco tanker coming along
18 and giving him a lead, which kept them going aground until we could get on-scene, who
19 knows? They're might have been a CNN.

20 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

21 JE: In the event, we got up there. This was when we were recalled and went up
22 there and put a line on him and towed him to safety. As was practiced after any rescue
23 like that, we would do a boarding. A law enforcement boarding along the vessel to see if
24 they had the proper equipment and if there were any negligence involved that we could
25 blame them for, for having got them troubled is what it boiled down to.

26 JS: Yes, sir.

27 JE: Anyway, I was the guy who was chosen to go do the boarding. So, I went
28 onboard, and I got to tell you Ted was one really happy camper. He couldn't have been
29 more grateful for our rescue. I'll remember him pushing a bottle of Bacardi rum on me as
30 a gift of gratitude of having been rescued. Anyway, it was the less famous people that we
31 rescued others over the years—over the year. I was only on there for thirteen months. I

1 spent a lot of time don in the Cay Sal Bank. One of the most interesting events to occur—
2 we'd made a port haul in Nassau in the Bahamas. We were there at the time it was given
3 its independence from Great Britain. That was a very momentous and celebratory event
4 that we had a chance to participate in. Then we went on patrol, and it was on this patrol
5 that we encountered a group of counter-revolutionaries. These counter-revolutionaries
6 were former Cuban refugees that were very upset with the Castro regime and were trying
7 to create an insurrection in Cuba. They were mounting these raids from the coast of the
8 United States. This was of course a violation of our neutrality laws.

9 JS: Right.

10 JE: So, in this particular case, one of the revolutionary groups had a fairly fast
11 thirty ft. pleasure boat and a thirty caliber machine gun. Their intent was to interject the
12 Soviet ships that were bringing oil and various needed supplies to Cuba. We were
13 instructed to intercept them. They had been spotted by a Coast Guard aircraft. They had
14 scared the Coast Guard aircraft away by shooting at it. So, we were told to interject them
15 and arrest them. Mind you, we're on a vessel that was built in 1945, that's about 1700
16 tons, has a top speed of about 16 miles an hour. Them, a thirty ft. cruiser, they'd probably
17 do thirty-forty miles an hour. So, the best that we could do, was to try to keep them in
18 radar range. So, this is really an interesting story and that we traced them all the way up
19 until the Cuban coast. We were twelve miles of the Cuban coast, and we were closing
20 because as they got close – they didn't know we were still following. We went out of
21 sight. We were probably fifteen-sixteen miles behind them, following them, and keeping
22 them on radar. So, they slowed down to where we could actually close the distance.

23 JS: Okay.

24 JE: As we started getting close, its night fell. Because we had radar and they
25 didn't, we knew where they were, but they didn't know where we were. So, when we got
26 within, I don't know, four-five miles of them, we put our search light onto them.

27 JS: Alright.

28 JE: They were so fearful of our attracting the Cuban gunboats, they came back
29 and gave up to us. So, we captured them with a search light.

1 JS: Wow. Alright, let's see. You mentioned also, rescuing the Cuban refugees
2 again at this time, what—did we still have—did the United States still have the same
3 policy at that point as far as—

4 JE: Yes, pretty much. You know the policy toward Cuba didn't change until we
5 had Haitian refugees.

6 JS: Okay.

7 JE: And I hate to say it, but I believe it was pure and simple racism. By then, the
8 people we were picking up were no longer the professionals. When I was on *Nemesis*, we
9 were picking up college-educated people of wealth. I remember picking up a doctor. By
10 the time the *Chilula* was picking up, we were picking up the working class.

11 JS: Okay.

12 JE: It wasn't until a few years later that Castro emptied his jails, that we started
13 getting the real riff raff. Between the fact that we were getting criminals and the fact that
14 the Haitians were expecting the same sanctuary, same haven of freedom that all of
15 sudden, the policies changed and now if we caught them before they made land, we took
16 them back. So, everybody was trying to at least make it to shore.

17 JS: Right.

18 JE: The Haitians were doing it up off Miami Beach. I never participated in any of
19 the Haitian rescue patrols.

20 JS: Alright, well I know you—to get back to Ted Turner for a moment. I know
21 you said you were involved in rescuing him twice. Could you talk about that second one
22 now? Or is that something we should save for later?

23 JE: Well, it's a nice segue until my next vessel.

24 JS: Okay.

25 JE: Not realizing it at the time, The Coast Guard had developed a way of
26 preparing its officers for command in Vietnam. They did that by giving us, instead of
27 giving us a two year tour which would've been the normal assignment aboard one of our
28 smaller search-and-rescue vessels, we did a year in the States and a year in Vietnam.

29 JS: Okay.

30 JE: So, I was given my year in the U.S. I was a Coast Guard Cutter on *Cape*
31 *Morgan*.

1 JS: Alright.

2 JE: *Cape Morgan* was home port to Charleston, South Carolina. I went there as
3 commanding officer as the lieutenant junior grade. Guess what we did?

4 JS: Search-and-rescue.

5 JE: And back to Cuba!

6 JS: Back to Cuba.

7 JE: We were doing search-and-rescue and we were also doing Cuban patrols and
8 we'd go down for two weeks at a time. We'd spend a week out in the Keys picking up
9 Cubans. A three-day weekend in Miami Beach at the Coast Guard base in Miami Beach,
10 and then go back out to patrol again. One of the trips, I'm headed South, but I get
11 diverted from my trip to Miami and I get sent to Nassau to pick up *American*
12 *Eagle*. *American Eagle* had gotten de-masted and left sails on so we de-masted in a
13 Miami to Nassau race. Guess who the captain was?

14 JS: Alright.

15 JE: Okay?

16 JS: Yeah.

17 JE: So not so dramatic this time. I just towed him from Nassau to Miami, turned
18 him over to one of the small boats that based in Miami to take him to the Merrill-Stevens
19 shipyard in Miami. What's a little different this time also is that I'm out on dry Tortuga
20 doing my patrol and the waters are so crystal clear, the guys are going over the side,
21 swimming. They're primarily just snorkeling, but one of them comes up and says,
22 "Skipper, one of our rudders is missing." I said, "What?" And he said, "Sure enough. Our
23 rudders are missing." So, I got a scuba tank to go down and sure enough—I don't
24 remember if it was left or right, but one of our rudders is missing. Well, I go—I get sent
25 by the seventh Coast Guard district. They tell me to go to the Merrill-Stevens shipyard to
26 get my rudder repaired or replaced so I'm sitting on the ways next to *American Eagle*. So
27 *American Eagle's* getting his mast re-stepped and I'm getting my rudder replaced.

28 JS: Right.

29 JE: Well, first they want to do an investigation. Do you know how I happen to
30 lose my rudder? By morning in Charleston, at low-tide, I'd actually set the silt so the best
31 we could figure it was our rudder came off—got worked off by virtuous setting in the silt

1 and the tide working against it, but we never found it, so I don't know whether that was it
2 or not. The truth was, we never ran aground which is what they were trying to find out,
3 we never did.

4 JS: Right.

5 JE: We also did law enforcement work. At the time that I was on *Cape Morgan*,
6 Charleston was a major port for the Navy's nuclear submarines. So were part of a
7 security force to ensure the security of the Navy's stops. We conducted daily patrols of
8 the harbor. We also interestingly—now this is 1968, but we're doing drills to practice for
9 terrorist attacks in 1968.

10 JS: Wow. Okay.

11 JE: We were on the Cooper River Bridge. We were setting up scenarios where
12 terrorists were coming and blowing up the bridge which if they could drop the span of the
13 Cooper River Bridge, it could block all of our nuclear submarines upriver the Cooper
14 River. So were working with the Coast Guard auxiliary and local marine law enforcement
15 in South Carolina doing exercises to apprehend suspected terrorists. We were setting up
16 exercises to interject them and to keep the bridge from being blown down.

17 JS: Alright. Was there any sort of intelligence to believe that that was an actual
18 threat at that time?

19 JE: If there was, we didn't know it.

20 JS: Okay. Well—sir?

21 JE: Yo! Yeah, I'm here.

22 JS: Alright, back to Ted Turner for a moment. Did he remember you from the first
23 time?

24 JE: I didn't see him the second time. It wasn't until many years later when I'm in
25 charge of the Coast Guard Auxiliary out in Southern California. Because of all the work
26 we do with the recreational boating community, I got invited to be a part of the Head
27 table of the Congressional Conference out of Long Beach.

28 JS: Okay.

29 JE: Ted Turner by now, he's won the America Cup. He's a legend in
30 ocean racing. He was on the head table with me. At one of the breaks, we're both at a

1 urinal in the men's room. I reminded him of our previous meeting. He didn't want to
2 remember it, Jason.

3 JS: I'm sure.

4 JE: His memory had grown foggy at this point.

5 JS: Right. Well, I'm assuming from looking at your questionnaire here, after the
6 Cape Morgan was Vietnam, correct?

7 JE: Yep, that is correct.

8 JS: Okay. Had you volunteered—I know you said you volunteered two-three
9 times. Had you volunteered again this time?

10 JE: Yes, I did.

11 JS: Okay. Were you keeping up with developments throughout this time period?

12 JE: Yeah, everybody—I don't know if you've had any other Coast Guard
13 interviews, but it was during I think—I want to say either late '66 to early '67 that the
14 Coast Guard cutters weren't welcomed. It was attacked by a U.S. Air Force aircraft
15 thinking it was a Vietnamese troller with loss of life. The commanding officer and one
16 other were killed. Very tragic story so this was a friendly fire situation, but it really drove
17 home for those who knew we were going over that all of the problems weren't
18 necessarily with the Viet Cong. We also carried out what turned out to be the last
19 interceptions of the Vietnamese junk, trying to smuggle weapons in. One of the Coast
20 Guard Cutters in the northern zone along De Nang intercepted a major shipment that was
21 trying to be interjected—it was a real success story for the Coast Guard.

22 JS: Yes, sir.

23 JE: We were paying attention to that sort of thing.

24 JS: Alright, well prior to being assigned to go to Vietnam, did you undergo any
25 further training to prepare you for Vietnam?

26 JE: Yeah, we did. First, I'm going to tell you a little story here that's probably not
27 one of our proudest accomplishments for the Coast Guard, but it gave you a little color
28 for the story.

29 JS: Okay.

30 JE: While I was still commanding officer at *Cape Morgan*, I told you that we
31 spent a lot of time, our time between patrols at the Coast Guard base in Miami Beach. My

1 crew learned that it was possible for us to buy alcohol in case lots through the Coast
2 Guard Exchange. We could buy it at the duty-free price. I didn't understand how that
3 could be possible. Well, the foreman, who was the civilian manager of the Exchange told
4 me it was because when they brought it from the custom-bonded warehouse, because
5 Coast Guard officers are also Customs officers, we could sign for it. So, we'd only have
6 to pay the law of price. We were paying like twenty or thirty bucks for a case of gin or
7 Bacardi rum. As the only commissioned officer aboard the vessel, I would sign for it.
8 What she didn't tell me, and I wasn't smart enough to think through was this—when I got
9 to Charleston and I landed that same booze in Charleston, all of that duty was now
10 collectible. Well, this went on I guess it had been going on even before I went to *Cape*
11 *Morgan*, but virtually every floating vessel in the Seventh Coast Guard District had
12 engaged in this process, thinking that it was legal. The executive officer of the Coast
13 Guard base had set this whole thing up and was a facilitator of this practice and an audit
14 of this warehouse that Customs found that there had been more than eight thousand cases
15 of booze over a couple year periods of time delivered to the Coast Guard base.

16 JS: Oh, wow.

17 JE: They said, "There's something wrong here."

18 JS: Right.

19 JE: So, they started following the trail and discovered that nobody was selling it
20 for profit. We were just drinking, but it blew the federal attorney in Miami who wanted to
21 prosecute, and everything got really hushed up. In fact, I've never read an inkling of this,
22 but there was something like thirty or forty officers that were involved, who had signed
23 for this booze. There were hundreds of thousands of these cases and the Customs people
24 wanted somebody's head to enforce the law here. It (inaudible) that this many people
25 could get away with this large of a smuggling operation that that they thought.

26 So luckily for me in hindsight, I had decided to share this terrific opportunity with
27 my boss, so I sat down with this Coast Guard captain, this four-striper, this O6 in
28 Charleston. I said, "Can I bring you back some booze? I know you do a lot of
29 entertaining." He says, "Well, how does this work?" And I told him, and he didn't think it
30 any more through than I did. "If I find this stuff out of a Coast Guard Exchange, it's got
31 to be legal!"

1 JS: Right.

2 JE: Well, it wasn't. I brought him back a couple of cases and so when the shoe
3 fell, when the hammer came down on us, he got nailed as well. He was one of the most
4 senior O6's in the district. So, the deal was that we struck with the federal attorney was
5 that Coast Guard Admiral who was the commander of the Seventh Coast Guard District
6 would discipline the Coast Guard personnel involved. We wouldn't go to the press. We
7 wouldn't let anybody get wind of this and embarrass the Coast Guard. We would just
8 clean our own house. Well, the federal attorney agreed to that. So just like before, I was
9 at home on leave, waiting to go to Guam when I got news that I was going to OCS. I'm
10 home in Missouri again, getting ready to go the training for Vietnam and I get a call
11 telling me that I need to come to Miami, Florida. I go to Miami, Florida to find that
12 they're going to be good to me because I had told my boss, clearly, I did not have intent
13 to violate the law. I was just dumb. So instead of giving me a court-martial, which they
14 did give some of the others, I get a captain's mast, what's called an Article XV
15 preceding. So, I get a letter of reprimand put into my permanent file, reprimanding me for
16 my poor judgement, but in terms of not paying this Customs duty.

17 JS: Right.

18 JE: So, I now also have to pay the duty on all a hundred cases that we brought in
19 over a several month period of time. That's amounts to several thousand dollars. I want
20 you to know and something that I'm extremely proud of, I wrote a letter to each member
21 of my crew. I was able to piece through records of who bought what. Only one member
22 of my crew, including the captain, even the captain—that ended his career. He had to
23 retire after that. A real tragedy. I felt very bad because it ended his career. He sent me a
24 check for the duty. Everybody in my crew sent me a check for the duty with the
25 exception of one person. They didn't have to do that, but they did. So consequently, I
26 only had to pay for the cases that I bought for myself.

27 JS: Yes, sir.

28 JE: Anyway, that was the little transition. I get a captain's mast in between my
29 tours as captain at *Cape Morgan* and my headed for Vietnam.

30 JS: Obviously, we're not going to finish today. This is probably a good place to
31 go ahead and take a break. Is that okay?

1 JE: Okay. That's fine.
2 JS: Alright, I'll go ahead and stop the recording.
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Interview with John Ebersole

Session [2] of [3]

Date 11 April 2011

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University, continuing and oral history interview with Dr. John Ebersole. Today is April
3 11, 2011. This is interview session #2. Okay, last time we left off, you were with Coast
4 Guard Cutter *Cape Morgan*, and you were just about to get to your assignment in
5 Vietnam, I believe. If you could, did you undergo any sort of training prior to going to
6 Vietnam?

7 John Ebersole: Yes, I did, Jason. Actually, it was fairly extensive. In addition to
8 training that was provided by the Coast Guard at the training center in Alameda, I also
9 underwent training with the Navy and the Marines down in San Diego. The Navy at their
10 infantry base gave us training—it was more or less acculturation. It was giving us the
11 history of Vietnam, some of the customs, something of the general culture of the people.
12 The Marine Corps trained us primarily in weapons (sirens in the background). We went
13 to Camp Pendleton and went through weapons training. One of the things that previous
14 groups had gone through, which I did not go through was the mock DOW (Died of
15 Wounds) experience.

16 JS: Alright, could you talk a little bit about the weapons training and what types
17 of weapons were you being trained on?

18 JE: Well, it was primarily the M16, the M79, and the M60.

19 JS: Okay.

20 JE: We might've fired, but we were already pretty accustomed to firing the 81
21 Elevator and the fifty calibers because I had that weapon system onboard in *Cape*
22 *Morgan*.

23 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. As far as the acculturation training is concerned, did you find
24 it to be pretty valuable, pretty helpful to you?

25 JE: In all honesty Jason, I don't recall that it was. I think it did give us a little bit
26 of help in terms of – in all honesty, I think I came to see Vietnam as more of a civil war
27 and not as a communist aggression that it was portrayed at the time. Oddly enough, some
28 of that perception was so in the training that when I got to Vietnam and saw what a

1 revered figure Ho Chi Minh was, even in the south, it sort of gave a little bit of credence
2 to that.

3 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Alright, well do you remember much about the acculturation
4 training itself? Could you talk a little bit about some of the things they were teaching
5 you?

6 JE: Yeah, it was—I remember getting a few basic language elements, things that I
7 would need to know, particularly to stop and board vessels. I saw—we did a little bit of
8 war gaining over at the Amphibious Center in terms of how we were blockading the
9 coast. I got a little better understanding of the geography and the very different kind of
10 coastline between the South which is where I ultimately was assigned, and the middle
11 and northern parts were far more mountainous and more rugged in terms of their
12 coastline. There's always—any time there's a group of Navy and Coast Guard people
13 together, there's always the sea stories that get swapped as well.

14 JS: Right. Alright, overall, how long did this training last would you say?

15 JE: I want to say that I arrived in Alameda for the end of July of 1969, and I don't
16 think—I think we spent almost the entire month of August, maybe a little bit of
17 September in training. I remember flying from Alameda down to San Diego and then
18 back at a later point. I want to say we were down there at least a couple of weeks. I think
19 in retrospect, I think it was about six weeks of training.

20 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Alright, one question I meant to ask you a little earlier: when
21 you finally received those orders to begin your training in order to prepare you for
22 Vietnam, how did you feel about well receiving those orders to Vietnam? What was your
23 reaction?

24 JE: Well by this time, Jason, I had started volunteering two years before while I
25 was still enlisted. By now, I had three children, so I had my wife and three daughters. I
26 still wanted to go. I still felt all the same reasons that I mentioned to you before, but I got
27 to say, that I was probably a little less enthusiastic than before. There was a little bit of—
28 regret's not the right word, but there was sort of a soberness about the fact that I was now
29 actually going to do it.

30 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, well could you tell me a little about your trip over? How you
31 got to Vietnam.

1 JE: We flew over in a chartered airline. I seemed to have think it was continental,
2 but I'm not sure. Anyway, it was a charter airline and the flight over, I seemed to
3 remember we went through Subic. It was a—I'm not sure. I tend to think we went first to
4 Anchorage and then across to Subic and then to Saigon. I know we landed in Saigon, but
5 I'm not sure of the immediate stops.

6 JS: Yes, sir. What was the mood like on the plane ride over?

7 JE: We were trying to get as many free drinks as we could. I remember that.
8 That's pretty difficult for unescorted males of our age. I remember sleeping a lot. I think I
9 had some reading material that had been given to us in Alameda. Actually, we flew out of
10 Travis Air Force Base as I recall now. There were not many Coast Guards in the group.
11 There were just a few of us. Most of everybody else was Army or Air Force.

12 JS: Alright, upon arrival there in Saigon, what was your first impressions of the
13 country once you got there?

14 JE: Hot and crowded! People everywhere. I never got off Tan Son Nhut, but Tan
15 Son Nhut was filled with civilians as well as it was a military air base. There are a lot of
16 civilians there. After having watched the American media for a few years beforehand, I
17 assumed that there could be a satchel bomber or a boarder landing at any moment. I will
18 admit to having just a little bit on the uncertain side. I wouldn't say I was fearful, but I
19 wouldn't say I felt comfortable in my surroundings at that point.

20 JS: Yes, sir. Well, what was in processing like?

21 JE: Well, I spent—seemed to me like I spent just two days cooling my heels at
22 Tan Son Nhut. Finally, it was waiting and waiting and waiting and never being sure
23 where to go for information. You had to be pretty full active. Nobody was coming to look
24 for me. I seem to recall I think it was myself and a couple of Navy people, finally got
25 herded onto I believe it was called a caribou type of aircraft that flew us to the Naval Air
26 Station at Vung Tau. I was met in Vung Tau with someone with a Jeep from our
27 particular division, Division Thirteen.

28 JS: Prior to arrival, did you know that you were going to be assigned to Division
29 Thirteen or was that something you received when you got there?

30 JE: No, I knew I was going to Division—well actually you're right, that's a good
31 question, Jason. I'm not sure. I didn't know enough about how it was organized at that

1 point. But I can say with certainty that I knew exactly where I was going to. There have
2 been three different divisions at an earlier point in the war. There have been—Division
3 Thirteen which was in the North out of Da Nang. Division Eleven which was our division
4 at Cat Lo and then there was Division Twelve which was located all the way down at the
5 very tip of Vietnam, the southern tip. I don't remember the name of the community
6 where that one was located though. Anyway, the one at the tip, that one had been closed
7 and the units dispersed to Vung Tau and Da Nang. So, there were only two divisions at
8 this point.

9 JS: Alright, at this point, you said that Division Thirteen was at Cat Lo?

10 JE: That's right. Vung Tau was a larger community right on the point of Cape St.
11 Jacques. Cat Lo was a naval base which was little but up the river.

12 JS: Alright, what would've been there at Cat Lo as far as – was its division
13 headquarters? What types of things would've been there?

14 JE: Well, it was a fairly good sized base. It was RVN, Republic of Vietnam Naval
15 base. You had RVN naval vessels, primarily Chokes, operating out of there. You also had
16 the Navy that had a division of swift boats there, PCF's (Patrol Craft Fast). Then you had
17 the Coast Guard and at that point, I think we had about twelve vessels that were
18 headquartered there. It was a pretty good sized base. We had a large Navy and Coast
19 Guard contingent there. We had a chaplain. We had a dispensary, but there were several
20 hundred of us. We were all mixed together. The Army—oh, no sorry, it wasn't the Army.
21 The Navy, the Coast Guard, and the Vietnamese were all pretty much intermingled.

22 JS: Alright, in the – how much time would you have spent there at Cat Lo? I
23 would assume very little, correct?

24 JE: well in the greater scheme of things, you would be correct although there were
25 times that if you had an engine malfunction, you needed to have the paperwork done so
26 sometimes that can take you out of your patrol rotation and you'd be there longer than
27 you'd otherwise intended. Pretty typically, if you went out on patrol for five to seven
28 days and you'd be in port for two or three, rarely would you be there longer than that, but
29 I'm sure over the holidays and some scheduled repair work, you'd be in for five.

30 JS: When you first reported to Cat Lo, how long were there at that time?

1 JE: Well, I was assigned to boat almost immediately. They'd already decided
2 which boat I was to be going on. When I arrived, it was on patrol. They put me on
3 another boat which was just getting ready to leave to sort of get me to familiarization. I
4 was on this other boat for four or five days before going back and being assigned to my
5 own boat the *Point Grace*.

6 JS: What was going to be your assignment there on *Point Grace*?

7 JE: I was commanding officer of the *Point Grace* and unlike the *Cape Morgan*
8 which only had one commissioned officer. Even though the *Point Grace* was a smaller
9 vessel than the *Cape Morgan*, it had the same sized crew primarily because of the watch
10 requirements and to man all of the armaments and you had two officers. So, you had a
11 commissioned executive officer well as the commissioned commanding officer.

12 JS: Okay. Could you describe the *Point Grace*?

13 JE: Yeah, it was in pretty bad shape when I got on board. I remember going up to
14 the catch or the bridge and the hand railing came off by hand. I got up to the bridge and
15 almost all of the windows had been shattered by one type of—it wasn't bullet holes, but
16 they've beat up due to something. I don't remember what anymore. I went aboard at
17 night. The next day I went back, and we had rust everywhere. On the first patrol, we had
18 this big ready box that was probably six feet across and four feet wide and about three
19 feet tall that we would store fifty caliber machine gun rounds in. The main deck gave way
20 on one of the legs so we actually to poked through the deck because of erosion. I think I
21 used the example the last time that we talked, the sand pebbles and the old vessel that
22 Steve McQueen inherited. This reminded you of that.

23 JS: Alright, well how well-armed was the *Point Grace*?

24 JE: Pretty well! I'd have to say that the vessel of its size, it was incredibly well-
25 armed. We had the 81mm mortar. We had the fifty caliber machine gun piggyback on
26 it, so you had to decide whether you were going to use the machine gun or the
27 mortar. During the year that I was there, we got increasingly more sophisticated types of
28 ammunition for the borders. We got something that was called a Flechette round which
29 propelled thousands of little metal darts, which was a great ambush topper. We also got
30 white phosphorus rounds which were good for creating fires and also for firing into
31 concentrations of people. I think that later became something—I don't know whether it

1 was the amendment to the Geneva Convention, but I think using white phosphorus for
2 anti-personnel was forbidden later on. Anyway, you had quite a bit of variation in the
3 type of ammunition in addition to just gold plated high explosives. Then you had two
4 waist-gunners with fifty calibers and two tail-gunners with fifty calibers. And then you
5 had a M60 light machine gun bounded by the pilot house up on the pilot house. The good
6 thing is whether we're going into the rivers, we might even catch somebody in black
7 jacket up the mask with a sniper rifle and we had typically a couple of people
8 carrying 79 grenade launchers.

9 JS: Okay, alright could you talk a little bit about the crew? What was the crew
10 size?

11 JE: Well, it got bigger toward the end of the Coast Guard involvement there,
12 Jason. I think the normal crews, as I remember, in addition to the two officers—we had
13 two chief petty officers, one a boatsman mate and one was our engineer. Then we had
14 one first class boatsman mate who was ironically someone who served with me in
15 Mobile. We'd actually been friends in Mobile and created a little awkwardness. Here I
16 was, now as officer and his boss and actually he'd been senior to me when we were
17 enlisted. No problem, we worked through it really well. He was given the opportunity to
18 go on another boat and he turned it down. I saw that as quite a vote of confidence. We
19 had a cook and then a gunner's mate, an electronics technician, and then everybody else
20 was unrated. They were either seamen or firemen, depending on whether they were
21 standing deck watches or engineering watches. Toward the end of the Coast Guard
22 involvement in the war, people would have their popes turned over before they were
23 processed, and their tour was up to back to the U.S. So, you had a lot of crews just
24 hanging out in the barracks, bored out of their minds. So, they volunteered to—there's
25 extra numbers out on patrol. They're rather out on patrol then just hanging around doing
26 nothing in the barracks.

27 JS: Yes, sir. Could you talk a little bit about I guess your impressions of the crew
28 itself? You don't have to use specific names if you would prefer not to, but could you talk
29 a bit about the crew, some things about morale, that type of thing?

30 JE: Yeah, these lucky officers that I inherited from the previous CO
31 (Commanding Officer)—he was a very quiet individual. I could never say I really got to

1 know him very well, but over time, I did come to trust his decision making and his
2 capabilities because I actually in late October, I had to go home because of my wife's
3 illness. So, I had to turn the boat over to him, but the commodore of division as we called
4 it wanted to know whether my XO (Executive Officer) could run the vessel or whether
5 we needed to put another officer on board. I said he could stay because I really had come
6 to trust him.

7 JS: Yes, sir.

8 JE: My boatsman's mate at the time had been a cook at one point and had done all
9 his time as a postman in the Great Lakes. So, he'd only been on freshwater. That partly
10 explained his rather lackadaisical attitude about rust. He was somebody that I got
11 transferred off very soon after arrival. The initial crew—I pretty well turned them over in
12 the first few months. I was running a little tighter ship than my predecessor had. I wanted
13 to see haircuts and at least a semblance of uniform. We never got too crazy about
14 uniforms, but we didn't run around in speedos all day. I also became a little obsessed
15 with hitting this vessel hot. The *Cape Morgan* had been the pride of the Seventh Coast
16 Guard District. We were absolutely the sharpest looking vessel in the district. That was a
17 play of great pride and to come onto *Point Grace* in the fall in '69, it was quite a come
18 down. I also believed that crews performed better to take pride in both their appearance
19 and the appearance of their vessel. So, we embarked upon creating some pride in what we
20 did.

21 JS: Alright, how did the crew react to that?

22 JE: Not well. That's why we had to make some changes.

23 JS: Given that it was fairly late in the war when you arrived, how was morale
24 among those first crew members and among those that you got in later?

25 JE: Well, morale later became quite good. I can't take all of the credit for that, but
26 I think there was a certain amount of pride that was also created, Jason by the fact that we
27 were a very aggressive boat. My predecessor, you know he had a lot of discretion about
28 where you spent your time. You could pretty well stay off the coast and just board and
29 inspect those fishing vessels that came out your way and the trade-off was that you got
30 beat up more by sea conditions, it was more uncomfortable, but you never had to worry
31 about getting ambushed or somebody shooting at you. I decided to take the war inland

1 and so I spent a lot more time in the rivers. So, we did get shot at and we did quite a bit of
2 shooting. We not only went in the rivers, but we also went in the canals. This is the thing,
3 we were fairly aggressive and not stupid, I'd like to think, but we took calculated risks.

4 JS: Okay. How about racial issues? Were there any racial problems aboard the
5 ship?

6 JE: Well, there were. I had had racial problems. Well actually, I didn't really have
7 racial problems at all in Vietnam. It was actually after Vietnam in 1973, I went to a buoy
8 tender in Morgan City, North Carolina and by that time, the personalities of the Coast
9 Guard had become so acute that we were bringing in both white and African Americans
10 who didn't meet the same standards that we had earlier, and we had some racial problems
11 as a result of that. But we didn't in Vietnam. My cook was African American.

12 JS: Alright, you mentioned a little earlier about the possibility of staying off the
13 coast or going into the rivers and into the canals. Can you talk a little bit more about the
14 area of operations? What's your total area of operations were where you would be
15 operations?

16 JE: Typically—I want you to know our patrol areas were quite diverse. You had
17 these two hundred mile squares that were divided up along the coast into these twenty
18 mile sectors. I say twenty, but it might have been a little more than that. Technically, our
19 area responsibility ranged from Cam Ranh Bay all the way to south of the Mekong River.
20 It was pretty much inshore. You didn't go offshore more than twenty miles, but you also
21 had and were allowed to go into the mouth of the primary rivers. We had the Co Chien,
22 the Mekong or the Bassac as we knew it, and also there was another one and I'm not sure
23 if I remember. We had the Saigon River which came out right there at Vung Tau and
24 from that point south was very pluvial land, very jungle-y, very low and everything north
25 of Vung Tau was much more rocky, no real beaches above Vung Tau, and it was no
26 rivers above Vung Tau. I do remember we made one trip to Cam Ranh Bay which was
27 pretty impressive. We didn't particularly care for our patrols when we were north of
28 Vung Tau because they were pretty boring. There was no place to go sneakily so if you
29 had lousy sea conditions, you just got beat up.

30 JS: How about—did you guys ever go in or near the Rung Sat?

1 JE: No, the Rung Sat was to the south if I remember correctly. We did go out to
2 Bassac. We went into several of the rivers for several miles. We would go in and
3 typically, you can go visit the Army sectors that were usually located with ARVN (Army
4 of the Republic of Vietnam) or some of the local militia or there might be an RVN navy
5 base where they had junks. They would have a Navy unit attached to it. They all had beer
6 which we couldn't carry on the boats so we'd find excuses to go visit the various Army
7 or Navy subsectors so we could get beer.

8 JS: Yes, sir. Could you talk a little bit about the *Point Grace's* role in the war?
9 What you guys were doing?

10 JE: Well primarily, we went over with the intent of interjecting any kind of
11 seaward infiltration or from sea infiltration by the guard. I believe the *Grace* was actually
12 involved in a couple of crawlers captures. By the time I got there in '69, the war had
13 completely moved inland. There were no attempts being made to infiltrate from sea. So,
14 about the only thing that was happening was there was a little more south movement
15 close in and there was certainly movement up and down within the rivers by the Viet
16 Cong and the north. Also, there were some more south canals that were inside the
17 coastline that had been dug by the French when they were there. They provided fairly
18 substantial passage. They were about ten feet, twelve feet deep, at high tide anyway. So,
19 it was possible to get into these canals and run parallel to the coast. That made for a really
20 easy transport at night by the Viet Cong. They were able to move goods and supplies
21 laterally so to speak. They'd bring them down from Cambodia to the rivers and they'd
22 distribute north from south using the canals. So, it's imperative that we go into the rivers
23 and canals if we were going to seriously interject anything. Staying offshore, there was
24 just no reason to do that anymore.

25 JS: Okay, could you talk a little bit about the daily routine and how you guys
26 would work?

27 JE: Well, the daily routine—everybody got into the routine pretty well. You'd
28 stay on your watch, and we typically would be dressed in khaki shorts or dungaree shirts,
29 T-shirts, and wearing a ball cap. That was pretty typical. Most people were wearing flip
30 flops as opposed to any kind of—you'd wear tennis shoes on boarding out, you wouldn't
31 do boardings in flip flops. When we started boarding the sand pan and the fishing vessels,

1 and we'd probably board up to thirty or fifty of these a day, depending on where the
2 traffic was.

3 JS: Okay.

4 JE: We'd go through it pretty well. We'd look to see if there were any kind of
5 weapons on board and we'd look for papers and see if they had identification papers. It
6 wasn't too difficult. We almost never found any weapons, but almost every boarding
7 we'd find somebody that didn't have the right kind of papers. Then we'd have to detain
8 them, bring them onboard the Grace, and transfer them to one of the local authorities
9 ashore, either the Army or the truck bases. Sometimes the truck base would send a truck
10 out and take them off and process their identity. But every once in a while—there's an
11 old saying in the Coast Guard. It's probably true in the Navy too about sea duty being
12 long and for long periods of abject boredom punctuated with periods of stark terror. We
13 had a little of that too. Every once in a while, we would get something out of the
14 ordinary. We would be involved in what would be called a sea lord operation. Sea lord
15 operations, they'd have some number after them, but typically these were maximum
16 search-and-destroy type of operations where they'd send us way up on a river to an area
17 that was known to be unfriendly. Essentially, we'd burn the village to the ground, or we'd
18 board everything in between and anybody that didn't have documents, we'd board. We
19 were on missions like this. I remember one off south of the Mekong. We were involved
20 in a blocking action for a sweep of Army troops that had known Viet Cong in the area.
21 The Army was sweeping up the river towards one of the canals. They put us in the canals
22 to observe and block any movement across the canal. I remember being in this same
23 canal some months later and being given permission to do a maximum destruction
24 mission with this village. By this time, I had enough experience in Vietnam that I knew
25 when we were seeing friendlies and when we were seeing unfriendlies. These people
26 weren't afraid of us. They stayed in their fief continuing to work. There were women and
27 children as well as males. I remember questioning my orders as to what I was supposed
28 to do. On three separate occasions, I was told I was supposed to destroy the village and
29 kill everybody in sight. I didn't do it. Later we got a message with some urgency saying
30 that someone had been reading the wrong coordinates. A mistake had been made and of

1 course, my thought later was had it not been for my willingness to disobey orders, I
2 would've facing the same kind of court-martial that Lieutenant Calley did.

3 JS: Yes, sir. Did issues like that have any impact on your own morale or your
4 thoughts on the way things were being handled in leadership?

5 JE: Generally, we felt pretty good—the commander of this particular coastal
6 zone, this was coastal zone three, was actually Paul Yost. Paul was the Coast Guard
7 commander at that point. He went on to be Commandant of the Coast Guard. We had a
8 pretty high regard for him. I think it was just an honest mistake by someone much junior
9 and it really drove home how easy it would be to make a fatal mistake. One of my fellow
10 skippers was enforcing a quarantine at the mouth at one of the rivers one night. It was
11 absolutely understood that nothing was supposed to move on these rivers. He was
12 blacked out, just drifting at the mouth of the river. Through a starlight scope, was able to
13 pick up a sand pan loaded with people. Knowing that this was a prohibited zone, he went
14 in and took it under fire. When he'd finally illuminated, he found out he had a boat load
15 of women and kids. So, to your question, Jason, we did question the morality of what we
16 were doing at times. Back to the routine, one of the stupidest things we did that we could
17 hand this directly to Robert McNamara. He was big on metrics. One of his metrics was
18 “How many gunfire missions did you fire each day?” It was expected that we'd fire a
19 harassment and interdiction mission every single day, usually in the evening. Most of the
20 time, we didn't have any targets to fire at. So, we'd have to call up the Army and ask
21 them to give us the coordinates on someplace that we could shoot. Sometimes it was
22 nothing other than just a piece of vessel that was beached that we would fire on. We were
23 just wasting American taxpayer dollars on the ammunitions that we fired. There was also
24 this incredible emphasis on body count, how many KIA (Killed in Action) we would get.
25 Everybody was inflating the numbers. You could've been ambushed by two people and
26 by the time story got to Saigon, I'm sure it as a full platoon.

27 JS: Right. Alright, you mentioned a little earlier about this one village making the
28 decision to destroy it, despite your orders. Could you talk a little bit more about how you
29 were able to make that decision and I guess how you were able to tell the difference
30 between friendlies and unfriendlies?

1 JE: Unfriendlies, which I had had some experience with at this point, immediately
2 disappeared. At the first sight of you, they were gone.

3 JS: Okay.

4 JE: They would desert their villages and they'd hide. By virtue of the fact that the
5 Coast Guard 82 had such a large profile and such a large bridge set up—we set twenty-
6 thirty feet above the water, I could put people up on the mast who could see over the tree
7 lines. We could see people with guns, and they didn't know we could see them, usually.
8 It gave us an advantage point from which we could do sniping if we wanted to. We were
9 in full view—it wasn't just my vessel or two of us. I was the on-scene commander. I was
10 the senior captain of the two and every time we went in the river, we probably had two
11 boats, not always but usually.

12 JS: Okay.

13 JE: We went in and like I said, they were not fearful of us. They were not combat-
14 age males. They were either old males or very young males. They were much about the
15 business of cultivating their crops. There were women present. That wasn't something
16 you ever saw in a village that had a history of being unfriendly. After checking my
17 orders, a couple of times and asking to confirm the coordinates, I sent a message
18 explaining what I was seeing and why I wasn't doing what they asked me to. At that
19 point, I guess I had created a little bit of a seed of doubt with my higher ups because they
20 told me to check with the Army subsector. That's when I really knew that that was a
21 mistake because the Army said, "My guys know. We've been trying to pacify that group
22 for the last two years." And they were just starting to make some progress at
23 pacification.

24 JS: Right.

25 JE: So that was an example. I'll give you one more. I told you about my colleague
26 who made the horrible mistake of taking a boatload of women and children under fire.
27 We had received intelligence that said there were shipments of ammunitions and fuel that
28 were being sent downriver and were being stockpiled close to the entrance of the river
29 where we were. So, I developed an idea where I would tell my boss to loiter behind me.
30 I'd put a crew in it with arms and we would just cast it off as we got to the desired place,
31 maybe a thousand feet off the beach, still inside the river. We would then just gently

1 lower an anchor into I don't know fifteen-twenty feet of water and watch the beach with
2 our starlight scope and interestingly, my division had a standing order that anytime that
3 you were going to take anybody, there was a likelihood that you were going to take
4 anybody under fire, say you had an ambush type of situation, that there had a to be a
5 commissioned officer in the boat that ordered that.

6 JS: Okay.

7 JE: Remember now, there's only two commissioned officers aboard the patrol
8 boats.

9 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

10 JE: The other standing order was the commanding officer had to be aboard the
11 patrol boat at all times when underway. So now my executive officer always was the guy
12 who was in the small boat, always subjected to being shot at and ambushed himself.
13 Finally, my executive officer appealed to me on grounds of fair play that he thought his
14 odds were about to run out because he was always in harm's way. In this particular
15 occasion, I decided I'd go in the small boat. So, disregarding that I was violating an
16 order. So, I'm in the small boat with my gunner's mate and a seaman, just the three of us.
17 I'm on the starlight scope. The gunner's mate on the M60 and then we've got the seamen
18 on the outboards. He was controlling the outboards. We sat there for maybe an hour in
19 the dark. We started hearing voices on the beach. Then we started smelling cigarette
20 smoke coming from the beach. So, we knew our intelligence was good. We had a
21 contingent of the Viet Cong right there on the beach beside us. Wouldn't you know it,
22 coming out of one of the canals right at this point; this is one of these perpendicular
23 canals coming into the river. We started hearing this sand pan. We could hear the noise of
24 the sand pan coming down the river. So, we were faced with a bit of a quandary. What
25 are we going to do? If we eliminate—and I knew the story at this point about the mistake
26 that had been made previously—so, I wasn't about to take it under fire, but also, we were
27 at the point where they almost ran over us. To keep them from ramming us, remember
28 we're still on anchor.

29 JS: Right.

30 JE: I fired an illumination. That, of course told the Viet Cong that I'm there.

31 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

1 JE: So, the good news was that it was an old man and an old woman, just an
2 elderly couple in the boat. Nothing to indicate any weapons or anything. They were just,
3 who knows what they were doing there, but they were not threats to anybody.
4 Unfortunately, now I've now blown my cover. We get taken under fire, very, very heavy
5 fire. In fact, the fire is coming at us so hot and heavy, by this time, we just pulled our
6 anchor off, started the motors, and my seaman—the guy on the throttle, he gets totally
7 spooked because one round went so close by my face, I felt the heat of it, Jason.

8 JS: Oh, wow.

9 JE: I said, "Man, I've got to get down. I'm a sitting duck here." So, I throw
10 myself down on the boat. Well, he thought I'd been hit. So that scared him to death. He
11 gets disoriented. So, what did he do? He runs up the canal, away from our boat, away
12 from the *Point Grace*. This is I don't know two or three in the morning. My chief
13 boatsman's mate—this is very late in my tour, by the way. My chief boatsman's mate, a
14 fellow by the name—I swear this is true—John Paul Jones. John Paul has got the watch,
15 he's the OD. Oh, he comes in, guns firing. He comes roaring right up to rescue us,
16 meanwhile we've gone past the point where the VC (Viet Cong) are, but we still have all
17 this VC still clean us and the *Point Grace*. He finally—everybody's okay. Nobody's been
18 hit, but we now get turned around and we've got to run the gauntlet back out to the *Point*
19 *Grace*. The good news was the *Grace* was now at general borders. Everybody was firing.
20 The Viet Cong were, let's say having their fires suppressed. Anyway, we get back on the
21 boat. We get taken offshore so we're out of range and they bring this, I think it was about
22 a ten or eleven ft. Boston Whaler, a little bigger than the little guys that we usually carry.
23 They brought it onboard, and the thing has got so many bullet holes in the side of it. You
24 heard of people saying that their knees turned to rubber?

25 JS: Yes, sir.

26 JE: I actually had the experience. My knees actually turned to rubber. I
27 couldn't say it because I saw how close we'd come to being toast. We called in an
28 airstrike and did a terrific job apparently because we got a terrific secondary blast. We
29 got black smoke that you would associate with petroleum. We were pretty sure that we
30 got their armaments and their petroleum with the airstrike that we called in.

31 JS: Yes, sir.

1 JE: So that was another base of activity that we had during one of our patrols.

2 JS: Alright. Now that we're on the subject of this, could you talk a little bit more
3 about the enemy, your impressions of them, the way they operated, and that type of
4 thing?

5 JE: Okay, I'm convinced that I think it might've been NVA, North Vietnamese
6 Army off of the coast—not off the coast but in the Bassac River. Mostly our interactions
7 were with what I'm convinced were just the Viet Cong.

8 JS: Okay.

9 JE: I had occasion to see the Viet Cong up close a couple of times. We went up to
10 Co Chien River one night to rescue an outpost, a local militia type of outpost that was
11 being attacked by a Viet Cong mortar. We went out and fired illumination and some
12 relief for them. It fairly scared off the Viet Cong. On our way back downriver, it's dusk.
13 We see this sand pan in the river below us and I have a Vietnamese liaison officer on
14 board, who's jumping all over me saying, "Viet Cong. Viet Cong." We took it under fire,
15 and we hit one of the two guys in the boat. It was the mortar team; it was the guys who
16 had been taking the outpost under mortar fire. Anyway, a coastie is a coastie. You know,
17 the boatsman's mate that I told you actually had been senior to me in Mobile?

18 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

19 JE: Well, he had the instincts of a good Coast Guardsman and found this wounded
20 VC who was in the water, thrashing for his life. It was dark and we had the other VC who
21 was unhurt but scared who we had taken prisoner. Anyway, Pete Leigh was the name of
22 the boatsman's mate. Pete wanted to go in the water and rescue the guy who was
23 drowning. I wouldn't let him. I was too worried about him being lost. That's one of those
24 calls that I had to do over and over again, not that I would do it differently, but at the
25 time, I just felt like it was more important that I keep Pete safe than it was to save this
26 guy who had been shooting at us. These guys were just exactly as you would've
27 expected. They were young twenty-somethings; good physical condition and they'd been
28 convinced to fight for Ho Chi Minh.

29 JS: Yes, sir. And how would you evaluate their fighting ability?

30 JE: Pretty good. While there was a militia in the villages that were loyal to the
31 South, then these secret zones as they were called. Secret zones meant that whatever

1 operations were going on within them were usually classified as secret. These were
2 places where the B52s coming back from the North or Cambodia, they still had bombs
3 onboard and they were given permission to drop them into these zones. Definitely not the
4 way to win friends and influence people.

5 JS: Right.

6 JE: In the event of—these secret zones definitely had unfriendly folks in them and
7 anybody in there was fair game. We got a few KIA's by sniping from our mat in those
8 situations. They got one of our airplanes. I remember watching one of our reconnaissance
9 aircraft get shot down. It had the Navy intelligence officer for the region onboard.

10 Someone who had just prior to coming to Vietnam had been responsible for the seven
11 fleets nuclear contingency planning. He was considered a very high value loss. We saw
12 that when the plane got hit, both pilot and the passenger, the intelligence officer both fell
13 out and we saw both their parachutes to open, but they floated over this secret zone and
14 we couldn't get aircraft down there quick enough to see exactly what happened to them,
15 but we maintained a blockade with a full manner of Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Force.
16 The Air Force and Navy were overhead, and we had Navy swift boats and other Coast
17 Guard on the ground. My job was to control the search for the survivors which went on
18 for two or three days. It was during this period that we were in this secret zone that I
19 remember the smell of the defoliants that had been used in and around—you could see
20 the craters where the 55B, 52's unloaded their bombs, and you could see that all of the
21 station was gone. There was this constant odor, it was almost petroleum-like, and I now
22 know it was Agent Orange. I also know it because I got lymphoma a few years ago, but
23 in any event, we never saw the pilot or the intelligence officer again. We didn't work
24 with the Army to salvage the plane. I want to say it was a Mohawk, I'm not sure if that
25 was the type of aircraft or not. It was a twin propellered aircraft, light aircraft used
26 primarily for forward air control and intelligent reconnaissance. It was sort of ironic, we
27 took an Army group into the shallow water to salvage the engine off of the plane and see
28 what other documents and equipment that we could take off of it so that it wouldn't fall
29 to VC. This Army second lieutenant is on the bridge with me, and we started guessing
30 about where we're from and stuff we usually talk about. Turns out he was from Missouri.
31 I said, "Oh, yeah. What community?" And he said, "Clinton." I said, "My graces, that's

1 where my wife is.” And he says, “Well, that’s where my wife is.” Turns out they were on
2 the same volleyball team together. Imagine that. We had no knowledge of each other
3 prior to that.

4 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

5 JE: Or after.

6 JS: Could you talk a little bit about if you could, about how the enemy would
7 make use of the terrain?

8 JE: Well, this was a jungle. They could disappear into it pretty easily. What
9 surprised them, I think was our tenacity of pursuing them. We got pretty good. We did
10 what were called Skimmer Ops. Skimmer was a Boston Whaler, one of the standard ten
11 ft. size that you found as the small boat on Coast Guard cutters 82 footers in the United
12 States, just a little shallow vessel that you could carry people on. Or we had a seventeen
13 ft. one that we carried which would carry war people and more armament. I got to the
14 point where I would, I took a minigun. I don’t know if you’re familiar or head this term
15 before, “minigun.” It was like a very high tech gatling gun that would fire thousands of
16 rounds per second or per minute probably. I’m probably exaggerating. We got a hold of
17 them. It was one of those questions where I didn’t ask too many questions of my gunner’s
18 mate. He just came up with one, one day. We mounted in front of this seventeen footer. It
19 gave us some pretty formidable firepower when we do ambushes. We would typically go
20 into the canals at night and set up these ambushes. We try and use two, either two
21 Skimmers, two of these small boats or one Skimmer in an area you could also get into
22 with the 82 footer. So, you can back up your own boat which is what I was doing the
23 night we got ambushed. We were pretty aggressive. I actually took the *Point Grace* up
24 some canals that I couldn’t even turn around in and I got chastised for that. There was an
25 island hat was almost all overgrown with brush that had a fairly deep water channel in it,
26 but you had all these overhanging trees. We took down our antennas, we had fiberglass
27 whip antennas, we took those down and we found that we could actually go fairly deep
28 into the water surrounding this island and still clear, with the trees we had to do a little
29 hacking with machetes, but we found that we could get into these totally overgrown areas
30 with an 82 footer. I also found that going to ground which of course is the worst of sins
31 under normal circumstance, was not a big deal because it was all mud. We were in

1 muddy rivers, and I found I could power my way through some of these mud banks and
2 get into deeper water. For instance, at the mouth of the parallel canals, there would
3 typically be a large silt area, but if you could power your way through it and you could,
4 you could then get into these canals and you could spread all in and around these secret
5 zones. We were pretty effective at being able to disrupt the communications channels and
6 the activities of the Viet Cong. At least, I'd like to think we were.

7 JS: Yes, sir. I know you were talking a little earlier about one of your main jobs
8 was to stop the civilian bats or what was seemingly civilian boats at sand pans and
9 searching them, what would be the procedure for halting one?

10 JE: We would call out the words in Vietnamese are "Ngung lai" which means
11 "stop." If they didn't stop, then we'd fire shots in the air, and then if they didn't stop after
12 that, we'd fire shots close to them. That usually was all it ever took. I don't recall that we
13 ever had to do any more than that. We'd typically put a flak jacket, a bullet proof vest on
14 the boarding party and they'd wear a helmet. They'd actually go aboard full armed as if
15 they were in danger, though never were they. It was a case where you'd put on your long
16 pants and your flak jacket and your hard hat when you went aboard. They didn't take
17 very long to go through. The Viet Cong had gotten very clever at being able to have
18 hidden compartments and have caches of arms and things wrapped up in various kinds of
19 containers underneath some of these boats. It would take us awhile to do a very thorough
20 inspection. I'll never forget, myself and another 82 footer—the *Point Grace* and another
21 82 footer were given an assignment of going into an area that was known for its fertile
22 rice paddies and a lot of commercial traffic around it. These containers of rice were great
23 places to hide weapons, too. So, you'd be going through these bags of rice to make sure
24 there weren't any weapons in them. If you can imagine that you've got this river that's
25 perpendicular to the coast and then you've got a crescent canal that intersects with the
26 river both upriver and downriver. The master plan was that the one Skimmer would go in
27 on the low end of this crescent and I go in on the high end. We'd create a pincer reaction
28 so that no one could get away from us. If anybody tried to get away from one boat, they'd
29 go in the direction of the other boat. So, we're coming at each other from the opposite
30 ends of this crescent. We're boarding everything in sight, and nobody has papers. They're
31 all from communities where the Viet Cong's active and influential, so nobody has papers

1 and I'm detaining right and left. I've got about twenty civilians, old people and kids, on
2 the fan tail of the back of the boat. Luckily, we went in the morning, and I told my crew
3 mid-watch that they had to get up. They couldn't sleep in. That wasn't always the case,
4 but this was expected to be a rather challenging operation, so I made everybody get up
5 which turned out to be pathetic because the Viet Cong saw my calling and his boat go by.
6 Then I think probably assumed that he was going to turn around and come back. He
7 didn't know that the other boat was with me. We passed each other and I'm going back
8 out the canal toward the mouth of the river and all of a sudden, my Viet Cong—Viet
9 Cong, that's Freudian because I did think he was Viet Cong, but my liaison officer starts
10 getting exciting about the Viet Cong. There's this young man in black shorts standing up
11 on the edge of the canal. Well, he disappears, and about the time we're already at general
12 borders, but about the time we pull even with where we'd seen him, we start taking
13 rocket fire. We took these—I forget what they're called now, but they're rocket grenades.
14 One of them struck just below the gun mount. It was obviously aimed to knock out our
15 forward gun mount, but we have these battleship fenders that we had strung to keep from
16 getting beat up when we went alongside these junks. These were big black rubber
17 cylinders about three feet across. The rocket exploded when it hit the haul and all of the
18 shrapnel instead of going up on the gun crew and wiping them out, got absorbed by this
19 big battleship fender. Another round went through and exploded below decks where my
20 crew would've been sleeping, or some of my guys would have been sleeping if I'd let
21 them sleep in. It blew up and it blew up the bulk edge, the walls out and next to the other
22 side of the vessel. It started fires. We had fires going on and I remember my chief
23 engineer going down into the smoke and literally taking the burning clothing and bedding
24 and just bringing it up on deck without fear of burning himself and throwing it overboard.
25 I put him for a medal for that, actually.

26 JS: Yes, sir.

27 JE: Here I am, getting shot at by the Viet Cong who's doing a pretty good number
28 on us. We're full of holes at this point. I got these twenty-one civilians on the sand pan
29 going crazy. Again, instead of staying there and fighting the Viet Cong, I took the
30 civilians to the mouth of the river where I was able to transfer them onto a junk from one
31 of the Junk Forces and then we went back in. In the meantime, we got some air cover to

1 come in to drop some heavy ordnates in the area. Later, I was eventually told that I'd I
2 had stayed and fought it out and put those civilians at risk, I'd have gotten the Silver Star.
3 As it was, they decided that all I would get would be a Bronze Star.

4 JS: Yes, sir.

5 JE: I never regretted that decision.

6 JS: Sure. Yes, sir. Well, when you guys would halt the civilian boats, what was—
7 were they generally pretty cooperative or angry or what?

8 JE: Not always, it was a might-makes-right situation. We had all he guns, and
9 they were tide alongside of us, you know three feet guns, here we are with a six ft. gun.
10 I've got people standing on deck with rifles so nobody's going to give us any slack. But
11 they'd be surly. And if they were young and without ID, we'd arrest them and put them
12 onboard.

13 JS: Yes, sir. What was your general impression of the Vietnamese civilians?

14 JE: Earnest, hardworking, poor people. I've got some pictures of them that we
15 took. Gnarled hands and feet, just trying to make a living. I was convinced that they
16 wanted this all to go away. They wanted the Americans to go away. They wanted the
17 military of the South to go away. They probably would've liked for the Viet Cong to go
18 away. They just wanted to be left alone and live in peace. I was totally convinced of it.

19 JS: Yes, sir. Oh, a question that I meant to ask you a little earlier: could you talk
20 about your first encounter with the enemy and what you remember about that?

21 JE: Well, the first encounter where—I only had one encounter where I saw them
22 face-to-face. That's the one I told you about. We did get shot at with some
23 regularity. Early—I'm not sure of the chronology so I'm not sure whether this was earlier
24 or late in my tour, Jason, but again we're in the rivers. I had received intelligence that
25 there was 57 recoilless rifle site being manned by they thought the North Vietnamese
26 Army. They were taxing the local civilians to give them food and money if they could get
27 it. It was in the area not far from where we were. I decided we'd go look for it. We're just
28 starting back. We'd been up past the point where it'd been reported to be and all of a
29 sudden, we start taking fire. I've got shrapnel all over the deck. I've got rounds falling in
30 front of me and beside me. I say, "What the heck, this must be the 57 recoilless site." So,
31 I put everybody in general quarters and start returning fire. Well, about three minutes into

1 returning fire, I get a call from the Army subsector saying they're friendlies in the area
2 and that the friendlies are under fire and can we come in and support them. Well, it turns
3 out that the friendlies were ARVN, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. And they were
4 prepping a tree line not knowing that the river was on the other side of the tree line. The
5 fire I was taking was from them.

6 JS: Right.

7 JE: Unfortunately for them, when I returned fire, I hit some of them. They wanted
8 my head. Another friendly fire situation, only this time, we were the ones that came out
9 the better end of it. So, the ARVN commander for the area wanted me disciplined and I
10 remember Paul Yost, who I told you about earlier was the commander of the naval zone
11 for both Navy and Coast Guard. He called me in and asked me what happened, what
12 precautions I'd taken, and I told him how it unfolded. I told him what I did. And I told
13 him that if I had to do it over again, based on the knowledge I had at the time, I'd do the
14 same thing, because I felt like my number one duty was to protect my boat and my
15 crew.

16 JS: Right.

17 JE: He agreed with me. It's kind of funny. He's long now retired. I had breakfast
18 with him about a month ago. I recounted—we hadn't seen each other in years. He didn't
19 even remember me. I recounted this incident to him and had the opportunity to express
20 my gratitude for his supporting me because that was the last, I ever heard of it. That was
21 the end of the matter.

22 JS: Yes, sir. Speaking of the ARVN, in general, what was your impressions of
23 them?

24 JE: Not very high. They weren't very well-trained, and they weren't very well-
25 motivated. I wound up turning the *Point Grace* over to the Vietnamese Navy, the South
26 Vietnamese Navy. That was a real eye-opening experience. It was interesting. There'd
27 been a couple of boats turned over before the *Grace*, but I remember coming back from a
28 patrol in the North and seeing this Coast Guard 82 footer now flying the Vietnamese flag,
29 the South Vietnamese flag anchored offshore. So, we decided to come up alongside of it.
30 There wasn't a soul onboard. We didn't know what had happened, so I actually put the
31 small boat over to go over and visit it. They'd abandoned the vessel. They'd gone ashore

1 and nobody was left onboard. They certainly didn't like my aggressiveness. They did not
2 like being in the rivers and they didn't like being where they could be taken under fire. It
3 was not a very aggressive group of folks, not very well-trained either.

4 JS: I know you mentioned your Vietnamese counterpart there and wondering if he
5 was VC himself. Could you talk a little bit more about that? What kind of led you to that
6 impression?

7 JE: Well, let me be clear. There were two different people at ball. In one case, it
8 was my Vietnamese liaison, who I took with me on every trip. He was bilingual and
9 would be my interpreter. I was assigned the equivalent of a first class boatsman's mate in
10 the U.S. service. That would be his equivalent. I caught him copying the code book. He
11 just made statements that led me rather strongly to believe that his sympathies resided
12 with the Viet Cong. Now the other fellow was actually a commissioned officer. He was a
13 graduate of their naval officer program. I don't know if they had an academy or not. He
14 was going to be my counterpart. He was the fellow I was turning the boat over to.

15 JS: Okay.

16 JE: He was a pretty decent fellow. I have to say. He just did not have an interest in
17 making war. He was going to do his job, but he wasn't going to do any more that was
18 required of it.

19 JS: Alright. Yes, sir. This liaison, was anything done to him? Did you make any
20 sort of effort to try to have him removed or anything like that?

21 JE: I asked if they'd do a background investigation—I didn't have enough
22 evidence on him to be certain. He ultimately sailed with us a couple more times, but I
23 never trusted him. He spoke really good English which was probably the one thing that
24 recommended him to us, but I did ban him from the bridge. I didn't let him go on the
25 bridge anymore. He compromised his usefulness if he really was an agent of the Viet
26 Cong.

27 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, well speaking of the Vietnamization effort in turning over
28 the boat to the South Vietnamese. Could you talk a little bit more about that? What types
29 of things you guys were doing to turn it over to them?

1 JE: Well, this was really interesting, Jason. For reasons that I'll never understand,
2 we weren't going to turn the boats over the way we'd operated them. You remember me
3 telling you that mine was practically ready to sink at the dock when I went onboard?

4 JS: Right.

5 JE: I was expected to operate it. But before that we could turn these boats over to
6 the Vietnamese, we had to go to Singapore and go through a complete shipyard
7 availability and rebuild them from the keel up. The fact that I'd gotten ambushed and
8 gotten these holes into my haul expedited that process. They sent me down earlier than
9 they would've otherwise to get put back together, but they also put me through this
10 complete renovation as preliminary to the turnover. The effect of that was that I spent two
11 months in Singapore on full per diem, living in the community, getting my boat rebuilt. I
12 took my whole crew with me. We lived like kings in Singapore for those two months.

13 JS: Right.

14 JE: I think we were getting a princely sum of sixteen dollars a day in those days.

15 JS: (Laughing) Yes, sir. Alright and once, you returned at that point, did you have
16 the entire Vietnamese crew onboard, training them or how did that work?

17 JE: Yeah, they'd phase on. The more senior people came on first in the place. I
18 never had a total Vietnamese crew. Actually, I got called to go to the division and be the
19 operations officer for the division and so my exec. was the one who finally turned it over.
20 I didn't turn it over.

21 JS: Alright. I know you mentioned your counterpart seeming like he was a nice
22 enough guy, but not really wanting to fight the war. Did you—given the way things were
23 going and what you were seeing, did you have much confidence in the South Vietnamese
24 ability to defend themselves and continue the war?

25 JE: Well, I got to tell you that the stories I heard about the Army of the Republic
26 of the Vietnam, which was uneven, but some of the Army subsectors, you know, they
27 were there with actually more militia which were sort of the like Vietnamese answer to
28 the National Guard. They would cut and run at a moment's notice. The Jump Force
29 which was the Vietnamese Navy. They operated their selves with a little bit more
30 professionalism than what I saw in this "deep waterside." The ground water guys of the
31 Vietnamese Navy, I thought were more professional. And maybe it was the fact that they

1 had Navy advisors, U.S. Navy advisors. A lot of them might be SEALs or people that
2 really had pretty strong professional credentials of their own, but I thought that the jump
3 bases were pretty good. I didn't think the ones that I met that were part of their deep
4 water Navy were very good. That's who was taking over our vessel.

5 JS: Alright.

6 JE: Then I forget, when I was operations officer for the division, we theoretically
7 had the Thais as our allies. They had a 12 ft. PGM, which is a patrol gun boat that was of
8 U.S. construction, but it had been turned over to the government of Thailand. So, the Thai
9 Navy sent that patrol and operate with us. As operations officer, I started putting the
10 division's boats into places where I had been when I was a boat skipper. They started—
11 every once in a while, just like we had, they'd get ambushed or get shot at. Right after
12 this Thai PGM, which spent almost all of its time that I was there in maintenance. We
13 had a patrol where they got shot at. Within a week, I had a delegation from the Thai Chief
14 of Naval Operations asking my commodore and me not to put that boat in harm's way
15 again.

16 JS: Did you guys work with any other allied countries?

17 JE: Yes, we did. I serve with Australians, Special Forces. I inserted South
18 Koreans. I got to tell you. Those guys were tough. Those were real warriors, in both
19 cases.

20 JS: Okay. Could you talk a little bit about what gave you that impression? How
21 were you able to come to that conclusion?

22 JE: Well, good point. The type of operations – they got sent into some of the
23 worst secret zones. While the U.S. Navy SEALs would evaluate and evaluate and
24 evaluate and evaluate, most the Aussies and the Koreans would be given a mission, and
25 they'd just go. They did not put as much planning into it, but they seemed to get better
26 results. All of that was secondhand in terms of their effectiveness, but I know that on
27 some authority, the Viet Cong were very fearful of the Koreans because the Koreans
28 were such ferocious fighters and while it was never said, I had the suspicion they never
29 took any prisoners.

30 JS: Would you work (audio starts cutting up) with inserting SEALs as well?

31 JE: With who?

1 JS: With (inaudible)? Hello?

2 JE: You still with me?

3 JS: Yeah.

4 JE: With the SEALs, was it?

5 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

6 JE: Yeah, we operated with the SEALs, but frankly, we weren't very impressed.

7 They always showed up the day after the Viet Cong left the area.

8 JS: Okay, I keep getting a bit of feedback here. Sorry if it's—are you hearing this

9 as well?

10 JE: No, just a little static here. You broke up a little on me. That's all.

11 JS: I'm hearing myself.

12 JE: Do you want to call me back?

13 JS: Yeah, let me go ahead and do that. Just a moment.

14 JE: Okay.

15 JS: It seems to be it, sir.

16 JE: Okay.

17 JS: Alright, before moving onto your time as the ops officer with the division, are

18 there any other operations or missions that stick out in your mind that we haven't talked

19 about at this point?

20 JE: Well, I remember—it was interesting, you hear about when the CIA is playing

21 a very influential role in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were doing the same in Vietnam.

22 We would find very high powered speed boats in the rivers from time to time and they'd

23 have these people in completely civilian attire who we later learned were CIA so I think

24 the CIA was responsible for collecting some of the intelligence that would then be acted

25 upon either by the SEALs or by these other Special Forces groups.

26 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Did you guys ever work with them at all, or you just came

27 across them?

28 JE: No, we never did. We never knew where the intelligence came from, but we

29 did act on intelligence from time to time. It might very well have come from them.

30 JS: Okay, alright. The intelligence that you guys would get, was it generally pretty

31 good or were there problems with it?

1 JE: It was a mixed bag. I gave you an example of a case where it was dead on and
2 then there are other instances where it couldn't have been further from the reality.

3 JS: Alright, let's see. How long were you into your tour before you were
4 transferred to division?

5 JE: They transferred me as soon as I came back from Singapore.

6 JS: Okay.

7 JE: I came back from Singapore in March I think it was. That was a rather
8 interesting trip back, by the way. There were two 82 footers travelling together. And the
9 distance in the South China Sea is about six hundred miles and one of the things that you
10 have, there was no such things as GPS in these days and LORAN (Long Range
11 Navigation) didn't work very well at all. We had a LORAN receiver, but it was very
12 difficult to use it. Most of our navigation was piloting or celestial.

13 JS: Okay.

14 JE: We were in this Vosper 40 cross shipyard for a couple of months and the
15 magnetic field of the vessel was totally disturbed. The only compass you have in 82
16 footers is the magnetic compass. One of the things you need to do is to create a new
17 deviation table which takes into account the magnetism of your vessel, the resident
18 magnetism. You have variation and you have deviation. Well, variation is geographic.
19 Deviation is specific to your vessel. So, we'd have all of this metal disturbed so the
20 magnetic field of the vessel was totally different than our deviation table reported. This
21 was pretty important because you are going to be setting a magnetic course back to
22 Vietnam. Well, if your compass was off and you didn't know it, you weren't necessarily
23 going to get back to Vietnam. I didn't have a Polaris, which I the type of instrument that
24 you use normally to make a comparison between what your compass is telling you and
25 what you're able to determine from points onshore. So, I used my gun, I used the mortar
26 up on the bow which had an aiming ring which gave—this is sort of technical, but it gave
27 a 360 degree circle around its base so that you could aim it relative to the boat. Anyway, I
28 was able to build a makeshift deviation table, using this.

29 JS: Okay.

30 JE: Well, a couple of days after leaving Singapore en-route to South Vietnam and
31 Vung Tau, we were supposed to be passing within radar range at Con Son Island, which

1 is LORAN station, about a hundred miles off the coast. Well, we don't see any sign of it.
2 We know our radar is working because the other vessel, who by the way is letting me do
3 all the navigation, his radar—he sees me and I see him so we know both of our radars are
4 working, but we are not picking up any land mass well past the time when we should
5 have.

6 JS: Yes, sir.

7 JE: So, we have no idea where we are. At that point, I undertake what I call
8 “forensic navigation” and I start trying to recreate our track line. My executive officer
9 who drew the track line totally disregarded to deviation table and drew a true bearing line
10 from Singapore back to the coast of South Vietnam allowing for now deviation or
11 variation in the magnetic compass. When I applied the deviation and variation to the
12 track line, I saw that it was taking us more than fifty miles further to the east of Con Son
13 than our track line called for. It's one of these—the further you go, the wider it becomes.
14 You know it's like a triangle. We're varying from the track line by more and more
15 distance every mile we go. I then use just plain and simple reckoning because we had this
16 terrible overpass. It was monsoon season so I couldn't see the sun and I couldn't see any
17 stars. I couldn't do anything celestially. It was pure dead reckoning and what we did was
18 we determined what our speed had been using our engineer's log and converting that to
19 knots or sea miles per hour and determine where along this line we were. With my
20 reconstructed track line and my progress based upon dead reckoning, I then plotted a new
21 track line to the coast of Vietnam. I got to tell you; I was one happy camper when I saw
22 the loom of the lighthouse of Cap Saint Jacques. We were dead on. I mean, talk about
23 luck. It was pure dead reckoning, but we hit it dead on.

24 JS: How long in total did the trip take you?

25 JE: I think it was about four days. It was interesting. There was such a threat of
26 pirates even then, in the Straits of Malacca and off the coasts of Malaysia that while
27 Singapore officially required us to arrive unarmed, they allowed us to take small arms,
28 hand arms; pistols and rifles to fend off any pirates that might attack us.

29 JS: Yes, sir. During the trip, did you guys encounter any other types of vessels?

30 JE: No, not at all. In fact, it wasn't until we were off the coast of Malaysia and
31 getting close to the Straits of Malacca that you see this incredible tanker traffic that goes

1 through there. We might be tracking a dozen radar blips at one time because there was
2 that much traffic at one time ten or twelve miles of us.

3 JS: Yes, sir. Once again before moving onto division—to your ops officer
4 assignment with division, did you—I want to ask you this. Sorry, how would you spend
5 your free time if you had any at all? What types of things would you guys do if you had a
6 little bit of down time?

7 JE: There was no down time when we're on patrol because when we weren't
8 boarding vessels, we were doing maintenance on the vessel, or we were going through
9 drills and training.

10 JS: Okay.

11 JE: One of the things we'd do to break things up a little bit, we might go out.
12 There's one thing we'd call the "guard ship." Past the twenty mile patrol area of ours was
13 this much larger block of ocean that was being patrolled either by a Navy destroyer or a
14 Coast Guard high endurance cutter. We would go out and we'd take on fresh water and
15 get ice cream. That was always something people looked forward to.

16 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

17 JE: We got good at going alongside other vessels even in the fairly good size
18 seas.

19 JS: Okay, well anything else from your time—from this time and before, prior to
20 moving on to division?

21 JE: No, I think I've given you several of the interesting points. I guess the only
22 other interesting incident and again I don't remember the time frame, but a barge loaded
23 with seamen broke free of its tug in Andaman Sea and went aground in one of these
24 secret zones. We had to go in and inspect to see if we could take it off with our vessels
25 and we were able to determine that it was so far aground that there was no way that we
26 were going to be able to salvage it. We had these visions of every Viet Cong in the area
27 having their own concrete bunkers as a result of this. Ultimately, we had to call in the
28 Navy to do an airstrike on it to blow it up, so the Viet Cong didn't get their own supply of
29 concrete.

30 JS: Right. Yes, sir. One other question I meant to ask you a little bit earlier about
31 combat – this is something you can talk about it if you want to, if you don't want to,

1 that's fine as well, but did you guys take any losses, any casualties during your time as a
2 skipper?

3 JE: No, I have to tell you, Jason, that's the thing I am most proud of. We were a
4 very aggressive vessel. We, as the poets would say, went in harm's way. I brought back
5 every single one of my guys unhurt. Today, literally in the last few months, one of my
6 seamen, who was burned by some spent shell casings asked me to help him try to get a
7 Purple Heart. But other than second degree burns from hot shell casings that was as close
8 anybody got to being injured.

9 JS: Yes, sir.

10 JE: In all, the Coast Guard lost five people in Vietnam.

11 JS: Okay. Yes, sir.

12 JE: Two of those were lost to friendly fire at the Point Welcome incident where
13 the U.S. Air Force mistook one of our vessels for a troller. The Captain and one of the
14 crew were killed. One of our senior officers was seriously wounded in an ambush and
15 one of the people with him was killed when they were trying to do an ambush of their
16 own. Let's see, that's two, three, - chief petty officer was killed by a sniper out in open
17 ocean when they were boarding fishing vessels, and I honestly don't remember who the
18 fifth person what or what the circumstances were.

19 JS: Yes, sir. That's pretty amazing that the casualties were so low considering
20 some of the work that you guys were doing.

21 JE: I agree. I have to think that it was in part because of good training, and I have
22 to think it was because—well I don't know. You'd like to that we used good judgement.
23 Keep in mind, I think I was all of twenty-three years of age, so my judgement probably
24 wasn't all that great. I know my bosses had problems with me from time to time. They
25 also respected what we did because that's why they ask us to take on greater
26 responsibilities later, so I really felt like it was a professionally rewarding tour for me. I
27 became a heck of a good ship handler. I really became a great seaman, if I do say so. I
28 really felt like we did the job that we were sent over there to do. I've also come in later
29 life to conclude that we had no business being there. I totally lost faith in the mission.

30 JS: Was this something that developed while you were there or something that
31 you'd thought about later on?

1 JE: It was later on. I looked at the people and saw what they endured and what
2 seemed to be important to them. I'm absolutely convinced there was no—the only
3 Communist involvement came after we were there. Ho Chi Minh espoused communists,
4 but he was truly a nationalist and I really do believe it was a civil war and the side we
5 backed was about as corrupt as it could possibly be. One thing I'll share with you, this is
6 not really about combat, but it adds a slight apocalypse flavor to this.

7 JS: Okay.

8 JE: The American ambassador to Vietnam during the last part of the time that I
9 was there was a fellow by the name of Ellsworth Bunker.

10 JS: Yes, sir.

11 JE: Ellsworth Bunker was a real sailor. He loved to recreational sail. The
12 people—I don't know whether this was a State Department decision or a Navy decision,
13 but they decided what the Ambassador needed was a sailing vessel. They brought a thirty
14 ft. sloop and put it in Cat Lo, our base for us to take care of us and have ready for him to
15 go sailing at any time he wanted. As you can imagine, he never had time to go sailing.
16 But we did! So, when you talk about recreational down time, I was often times at the
17 helm of this thirty-two ft. sloop sailing off Cap Saint Jacques as if we were you know in
18 the Mediterranean.

19 JS: Right. Yes, sir. Well, once again, we're kind of getting to that point where we
20 need to go ahead and take a break for today, if that's okay.

21 JE: Okay, fine with me!

22 JS: Alright, I guess we can pick up on your time at division next time.

23 JE: Alright, it'll probably need to be a week out, Jason because as I told you,
24 today is really the only day this week where I could be available to you at least for any
25 period. Why don't I look at my calendar tomorrow and I'll send you an email and we'll
26 see what we can set up for next week?

27 JS: Okay, sounds great.

28 JE: Alright.

29

30

Interview with John Ebersole

Session [3] of [3]

Date 20 April 2011

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University continuing an oral history interview with Dr. John Ebersole. Today is April
3 20, 2011, and this is interview session #3. Okay, last time when we left off, we were just
4 about to begin to discuss your assignment to division thirteen, I guess to the headquarters
5 there. Could you talk a little bit about that assignment, how you received that assignment,
6 that type of thing?

7 John Ebersole: Surely, I came off of *Point Grace* after my return from Singapore
8 and my executive officer actually then turned the vessel over to the Vietnamese. I was
9 named the operations officer for the division and what that entailed was doing the patrol
10 schedules for the various vessels, the Coast Guard vessels there, intelligence information,
11 we would analyze intelligence and share it with the patrol skippers so they knew what to
12 expect, and occasionally we would even design some special activities—I think the last
13 time we talked, Jason, I mentioned that I had put the Thai government, the Thai's Navy,
14 PGM into an operation with a few of our Coast Guard cutters and then had a visit from
15 the head of the Thai Navy saying that they didn't want us to put it in harm's way again.

16 JS: Right:

17 JE: I held that position I guess it was from April of '70 until my rotation back to
18 the U.S. which was sometime in July of '70. So, I only held the job for a few months, but
19 that was the capstone, I guess of my time in Vietnam. I spent most of my time
20 on *Grace* and then finished up in this job.

21 JS: Alright, where was the division headquarters located?

22 JE: It was located at Cat Lo, which was near Vung Tau on the Saigon River.
23 You'll recall that this was a fairly good sized installation that housed both the U.S. Navy
24 as well as the Vietnamese Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard division. The way the Coast
25 Guard was organized, we had a Coast Guard captain, an O6 located in Saigon, and he
26 was part of the staff of the Commander Naval Forces Vietnam, or Com. Nav. For. V., as
27 we referred to it. That was almost purely an administrative function. The actual operation
28 command was entirely under the Navy, but the Navy would substitute Coast Guard
29 officers for naval officers in some commands. I think I mentioned last time that was true

1 for the third coastal zone which is where we were and the head of the third coastal zone
2 was Commander Paul Yost. We had Division Thirteen in the third coastal zone. The
3 Coast Guard Division Twelve which had been down in the An Thoi area had been
4 disbanded and the vessels distributed north. Division Eleven was in Da Nang. So, by the
5 time I got there, it was just Divisions Eleven and Thirteen.

6 JS: Yes, sir. You mentioned this interspersing of Navy and Coast Guard there
7 together, was there any sort of inner arms rivalry between the two, any difference in
8 treatment or anything like that?

9 JE: No, not at all. It was a very cordial relationship. I don't know how it was on
10 the base between the commander of the base and the Navy commander, but the
11 commander of the base was actually a Vietnamese Naval officer then there were these
12 two commanders under him – I'm not sure if they considered themselves under him, but
13 they were. The U.S. Navy commander who was running the swift boats and our
14 commander who was running the WPBs (Patrol Boats). I'm trying to remember the name
15 of our division commander at that point, but he was actually a lieutenant commander at
16 that point. He later became an Admiral—oh I know, Bill Lahey. I had two different
17 division commanders and Bill Lahey was the one who asked me to become his operations
18 office.

19 JS: Okay. Alright. A few moments ago, you mentioned the use of intel, could you
20 talk a little bit more about that? What different types of intel you guys would be using
21 and different sources and how you would determine the reliability of it, that type of
22 thing?

23 JE: Well, it was interesting. Most of it came to us from the commander of Naval
24 Force Vietnam up in Saigon. Then we had some local intelligence. The Army operated
25 a—the Army and the Navy both had aircraft located in Vung Tau. There was an airstrip
26 at Vung Tau and the Navy operated OV10's and also some of the attack
27 helicopters, Cobras. They had the Cobra and the OV10 which I think they called
28 the Black Pony. Both of those were light aircraft that could provide gunfire support to us.
29 Then the Army operated another type of propeller aircraft, also a light observation
30 aircraft. I don't remember the designation of that, but it was while I was on *Grace* that we
31 had the incident that I told you about where we actually had the third coastal zone

1 intelligence officer, a Navy officer onboard the aircraft when it was shot down. He
2 would've been—and had previously fed information to us. And his successor continued
3 to provide information to us based upon observations that they made in the area, but
4 interestingly a story that comes to mind is that I planned an operation—something that
5 I'd always wanted to do when I was on *Grace*, was that I mentioned these French canals
6 that ran perpendicular to the coast.

7 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

8 JE: There was one of these that ran between two of the rivers. The My Tho and
9 the Bassac if I remember correctly. At one time, you could tell right there on the coast
10 there had been a population center because there was a fairly large church. You could tell
11 it was a church though it had grown up a lot of jungle around it. It had the architecture of
12 a small cathedral or something, probably a Catholic church. There had been a bridge
13 there at one time which one of my colleagues managed to get his propellers into the
14 submerged structure. It'd actually been bombed at some point, I gathered. Anyway, I
15 remember one of my colleagues taking one of his propeller blades off on the bridge. In
16 any event, we (inaudible) into these canals and come within maybe a few hundred yards
17 of the coast. There was a break in the canals where the water was actually running into
18 the ocean. According to the maps, charts that we had, you could see that it had a depth, at
19 least showed a depth that would be sufficient for one of our WPBs to transit. It provided a
20 point of either entrance or exit. My thought was in planning an operation was that at high
21 tide, the WPB would come in from oceanside, which would be totally unexpected by the
22 Viet Cong in the area. This was an area with considerable VC activity. This is the area
23 where the intelligence aircraft had been shot down.

24 JS: Okay.

25 JE: So, (sound audio fluctuating) I was going to bring the WPB in from the coast
26 to catch them by surprise at the same time another WPB would come in from the river
27 which was the usual manner of entrance. We also had a swift boat that was going to join
28 us as well. I think we had a couple navy swift boats plus the WPB. Anyway, we had a
29 pretty good sized force going into the area. On the morning of the operation, the division
30 commander decided to personally go along and see how things went. Well, I don't know
31 to this day whether it was a miscalculation on the part of the skipper of the WPB that the

1 commodore was aboard, but he didn't find the navigable route that I was led to believe
2 was there. So, they ran aground, and the tide let out all of them. They're left high and dry.
3 In the meantime, the Viet Cong become aware that they're there and start taking them
4 under fire.

5 JS: Right.

6 JE: We had to bring aircraft down from Vung Tau to essentially maintain a patrol
7 overhead until we could refloat the WPB at high tide. So, my credentials as a master
8 practitioner took a real hit on that particular plan. We validated that we had significant
9 Viet Cong presence there which we already knew, but we didn't inflict any damage on
10 them and luckily, no damage was really done on us either other than some bruised egos
11 and mine chief among them.

12 JS: Right. Yes, sir. There seems to be a little bit of trouble with the reception here.
13 It's breaking up at times. Could I call you back and see if we can get a better line?

14 JE: Okay, that's fine.

15 JS: Okay, sir. It seems to be. It was just beginning to break up. I could understand
16 everything you were saying, but it was just starting to break up so.

17 JE: Okay. Well, that's the magic of cellphones. We've done all three of these
18 interviews on my cellphone because I've been out of my office in all of the three times
19 we talked.

20 JS: Well, given what happened with that particular operation, did it negatively
21 impact you at all?

22 JE: No, the commodore and I had a really good relationship. He understood. Like
23 I said, I'm not sure what the plan wasn't a good one. All that it would take, the water was
24 so shallow that it would've been unforgiving of any navigational error and of course there
25 was nothing to mark navigation. It was strictly dead reckoning, a seaman's eye. No,
26 actually the commodore and I got along really quite well. He asked me to stay on and
27 become his chief of staff, but that would've meant extending my time and I had a wife
28 and three daughters that didn't think that as a very good idea.

29 JS: Right, sure. Any other particularly memorable operations that you worked on
30 during this time?

1 JE: No, to your earlier question, Jason. I'd have to say the quality of the
2 intelligence in the Mekong Delta region generally wasn't very good. I made comments
3 earlier about the CIA running around down there in out boards. I'm sure they were trying
4 to collect intelligence. I remember, I told you also about the Navy SEALs creating some
5 operations and either because of their planning process or the lack of any very good
6 intelligence, they always seemed to be a day late on the operations. They never
7 encountered the cadre that they thought they were going to.

8 JS: Alright, let's see. I know you mentioned a little earlier, or actually the last
9 time we talked; the *Point Grace* being turned over to the Vietnamese. I know this was
10 during the time period that Vietnamization was really ramping up, did any part of your
11 duties have any other aspects related to that, as far as Vietnamization was concerned?

12 JE: Well, I had the officers and senior enlisted, some of them, not the whole crew
13 that were replacing—I told you earlier that my executive officer, actually my executive
14 officer had been replaced by the Vietnamese. He became my executive officer as part of
15 the transition. I had the occasion to work with the Vietnamese for a period of about, I
16 guess it would been a matter of three or four weeks. My memory is not remembering—I
17 said I came home when I came back from Singapore, but that's not correct because I
18 actually came back from Singapore in February, and I spent February and March with the
19 Vietnamese onboard. I remember I went to the division in April, but I clearly would've
20 had a couple of months with the Vietnamese because the Vietnamese were onboard when
21 we engaged in some of our fire fights. I told you about the incident with the Viet Cong on
22 the ground last time and my counterpart, the Vietnamese Lieutenant was onboard at that
23 point.

24 JS: Right. Alright, in the planning of operations, did you all work closely with the
25 Vietnamese there or was it a separate structure as far as that was concerned? And also,
26 were there concerns about sharing operational details with them for security reasons?
27 Was that an issue at all?

28 JE: Well, there wasn't too much opportunity to that. In all honesty, we operated
29 pretty much independently. The Navy and the Coast Guard worked totally
30 interchangeably. We were for all intents and purposes, a single service. The level of
31 integration there was a hundred percent as far as I'm concerned. Neither of us did much

1 with the Vietnamese other than the jump bases. The Vietnamese jump operations, the
2 jump force which was technically part of the Vietnamese Navy. The U.S. Navy had
3 advisors in each one of the jump bases and we would do patrols with them. We would
4 share information. They're the one who told me about that 57 recoilless site that I
5 mentioned when we had the friendly fire incident.

6 JS: Right. Well, is there anything else, during these last couple of months with
7 your time with the headquarters that we can mentioned? Anything else that we should
8 discuss that we haven't?

9 JE: I would have to say that morale really became a problem during the summer
10 of '70. More and more Coast Guard people were coming off the WPBs as they were
11 turned over and were being sent home for reason that I never understood and neither did
12 they. You have lots of young, enlisted personnel just laying round the barracks with
13 nothing to do. That was terribly detrimental for morale. It led to disciplinary problems. I
14 don't recall at any point in my time there that we had any kind of a drug problem, but I
15 heard stories later that some of these fellows started using drugs. I don't know whether
16 that's correct or not, but certainly there was no drug use when I was there that I knew
17 about. The officers' orders for those officers—the officer's club was where we spent
18 most of our time. It really was conducive to more alcohol consumption than was probably
19 good for all of us. But the comradery was pretty high. We—I remember the chaplain—
20 we had a little chapel—a member of the chaplain working, trying to create a (inaudible).
21 He brought in U.S. Oval type of operation. Some entertainment came over from the
22 Philippines and there was a little bit of an attempt to deal with this, but we all saw the
23 handwriting on the wall. We knew that we were shutting down operations and we'd
24 eventually be coming home and of course, no one wanted to be the last one left.

25 JS: Right. Yes, sir. Alright, let's see. Well, anything else regarding this time
26 period before mobbing on to coming home?

27 JE: Well, no I had a couple of things after—I got reassigned from—when I came
28 back from Vietnam, I was reassigned to Coast Guard headquarters in Washington. Even
29 before I got to Washington, I came down with some mysterious ailment. I wound up
30 finding myself in Bethesda Naval Hospital with a high fever and not being able to—I had
31 tremendous achiness in my joints. I was hospitalized twice. Actually, while I was still

1 home on leave before I even got to Washington, I was hospitalized the first time. Then I
2 was hospitalized again during the first couple of months I was in Washington D.C., but
3 we never did figure out what was wrong with me. It didn't reoccur, but clearly, I picked
4 up some sort of a bug while I was in Vietnam, and it hit me after I got home.

5 JS: Yes, sir.

6 JE: I do have to say that the homecoming was nothing like what you see today.
7 Nobody—people wanted to forget about Vietnam and the Vietnam War, and nobody was
8 interested in what your experiences had been like, at least for the most part. I think
9 society was almost ashamed of the fact that we were involved in that war. I know which
10 is what they say, very different from what you experience today as a person in uniform.

11 JS: Right. Yes, sir. At the time that you received your orders to come home, how
12 did you feel that the war was going at that point? Did you kind of know that it was going
13 to be eventually lost or was there still some hope at that point from your perspective?

14 JE: We clearly thought that there was still a lot of resistance in our primary patrol
15 area which was the Delta. That resistance was still there. The whole Mekong distribution
16 system provided an absolutely ideal distribution network to bring supplies from
17 Cambodia down into Vietnam without us being able to do much to stop it. We just were
18 totally underwhelmed with the Vietnamese Navy because there was not the same kind of
19 discipline. There was not the same kind of motivation. It was like yes, they were going to
20 operate the boats, but they weren't going to put these boats any place where they were
21 going to get shot at.

22 JS: Okay.

23 JE: To answer your question correctly, Jason, I think we all recognized that it was
24 a lost cause.

25 JS: Okay. Alright, you mentioned a few moments ago that when you got home, it
26 seemed as if everyone wanted to pretty much forget about the war and not talk about it.
27 Did you feel that way yourself or did you want to talk about it with certain people or did
28 you just want to move on and not think about it yourself?

29 JE: Well, I had no second thoughts or misgiving about—it was beyond me that we
30 were there and in later years, as we've understood more, I have joined in the criticism of
31 our being there in the first place. I'm just proud of my individual service and I was proud

1 of the service of my service, of the Coast Guard. Whether we should've been there or not,
2 people will want to say that's above my pay grade, but we got ordered there and we did
3 the very best job we possibly could, and I believe that was true for at least all of the
4 professionals in the military. The people that were not draftees, the people that had been
5 sent over originally and who were not dependent on the draft for personnel, I think all of
6 us wanted to do the very best job we could.

7 JS: Yes, sir. Well again, once you returned home, did you continue to follow the
8 developments of the war through the media?

9 JE: I did. I was pretty hawkish. I feel—I think back on it—I was in a carpool with
10 three other guys going in and out of Washington D.C. to the headquarters and we used to
11 follow—you know this was the Nixon era and we followed what was going on and I was
12 quite hawkish. I guess I was still drinking the Kool-Aid at that point. I was still much
13 more optimistic as I think about it at that point then I became later.

14 JS: Yes, sir. Could you talk a little bit about what led to the transformation of your
15 thoughts on the war, of your view on American participation? What led to that change?

16 JE: Well, it's a little ironic in some ways, Jason. I think I probably became the
17 most critical after my time at the Naval War College.

18 JS: Okay.

19 JE: I went to the Naval War College in '78. So, it would've been eight years after
20 I came back, but during that time, we had a lot of former POWs (Prisoners of War) that
21 were on the faculty. In fact, Jim Stockdale, who as we recall, watched Ross Perot's
22 running mate for the election. He was the President of the War College at that point.

23 JS: Okay.

24 JE: Admiral Stockdale had been a prisoner for many years in Vietnam. While all
25 of us took pride in our individual service, we saw the country had reconciled, had come
26 together. It had resolved its civil war and healed it. The government of the South was so
27 corrupt, it's hard in many ways, that piece kind of fits with Afghanistan, today I'm afraid.
28 You see the corruption, it's hard to support a government that you are as critical of as we
29 were of the South at that point. Once Ho Chi Minh had achieved his goal of reuniting the
30 country, actually I think he was dead at that point, but in any event, when the leadership
31 of the North reconciled the war, you saw that immediately that the amenities between

1 China and Vietnam, this was supposed to be a domino as the Communists were taking
2 over Southeast Asia. The only real true Communists were the Chinese at that point. The
3 Vietnamese kicked them out and actually had a short war with them, very quickly after
4 America, the U.S. got out of the South. The assumption that had been made relative to
5 our becoming involved proved to be unfounded.

6 JS: Okay. Alright, again on the point of the media, could you talk a little bit about
7 your thoughts on the media's coverage?

8 JE: Yes.

9 JS: Did you think they reported accurately? Did you have some problems with it?

10 JE: Well, I think that you know the coverage was continuous and I think that's
11 one of the reasons why people got sick of it. I also think that it always focuses news'
12 want to do is bad news. I think in many ways, America's media magnified the problems
13 in Vietnam to a degree that they actually became the reality. I think the portrayed our
14 position in such a bad light that that impacted the political pressure that the
15 administration was under, particularly Johnson and I think we made some bad decisions.
16 I'm not a big fan of politicians directing military operations. There's a saying about you
17 should know, I think it was Peter Crocker said, "Know what your expertise is and stick to
18 it." And I think part of the problem was Vietnam was that it was too political of a war. It
19 was never fought with the all-out clarity that perhaps we had in Iraq.

20 JS: Alright, what was your reaction to the way the war concluded, with the
21 Communists and the fall of Saigon?

22 JE: Regret. You can't invest as much of your psyche in an effort for a very intense
23 period of time, you believed your country and you prepared to put not only your own
24 future at risk, but your family's and knowing there was always a possibility that you
25 wouldn't come home and then to think that well first, it proved to be the first war in
26 America's history that we flat out lost and later to come to the conclusion that perhaps if
27 we hadn't been misled, at least, there had been great ineptitude on the part of our political
28 leadership at the time.

29 JS: Alright.

30 JE: I think the Halberstam book, *Best and Brightest* was probably the best thing I
31 ever read about how we got ourselves into the mess that we did there.

1 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, let's see. Could you talk a little bit about your career after
2 Vietnam? Some of the assignments that you had and how much longer you remained in?

3 JE: Well, that's interesting, Jason. The calculation that I had made while I was
4 still an enlisted person that being involved in this war would be good for my career was
5 absolutely true.

6 JS: Okay.

7 JE: I was sent to Washington D.C. to get my Coast Guard tour in—my
8 headquarters tour in. I was awarded a couple of medals by the Commandant for my
9 experiences in Vietnam. I reestablished contact with several people who had been over
10 there, both senior to me. Commander Yost was there, oddly enough running a bridge
11 inspection program which seemed pretty inglorious to having headed up fight in the third
12 coastal zone which frankly became, I think much more critical. Da Nang of course was
13 right on the front lines so to speak, but there was not much activity offshore in Da Nang
14 by the late 60's, early 70's as opposed to the Mekong Delta which had really become a
15 major supply line for the North into the South.

16 JS: Right.

17 JE: Anyway, I had occasion to head up an office, a newly created office of
18 training in the new office of Boating Safety which had been created under a
19 Congressional mandate. I was selected to become the Admiral's aide which was sort of
20 an honorific endeavor, but because I did a good job for him, I later was deep selected for
21 promotion to Lieutenant Commander. Over the course, I was selected to go to the War
22 College which was not necessarily a particularly great honor to those in the Navy. To
23 those in the Coast Guard, it is. They only send three or four people a year. If so, it's
24 almost a guaranteed way of signaling to someone that they're being looked at for bigger
25 and brighter prospects. I was offered to the Admiral's aide for the Vice Commander who
26 was in charge of the Atlantic area at Governors Island, but because of family issues, I
27 couldn't accept, but I was on what I thought was an upward trajectory in part of because
28 of the Vietnam experience.

29 JS: Okay.

30 JE: I clearly got a career boost from it.

1 JS: Right. Yes, sir. Alright, well what other assignments particularly after the War
2 College?

3 JE: Well after the War College, I commanded a training unit on the West Coast
4 Pacific area training team. That wasn't where Coast Guard headquarters wanted to put
5 me. They wanted to give me command of a buoy tender after I—first they offered me to
6 be the aide of the Three Star in New York and when I turned that down, they offered me
7 command of the buoy tender, and again it was on the East Coast, ironically, it's one that
8 later sunk, by the person who went aboard instead of me. I often wondered whether that
9 would've been my fate if I had been there. Because of my family's just real insistence
10 that we return to California, I wound up commanding this training team. We spent about
11 thirty-five weeks a year deployed so I visited every port on the West Coast of the United
12 States. I have been to virtually every port in Alaska and I've been as far west as Guam,
13 freeing Coast Guard units. It was a wonderful experience. I got to see the light boat side
14 of our business up close, and I got to put several of our larger ships through their paces,
15 so it also gave me an opportunity, strangely enough to finally get a degree. I had gone
16 into the Coast Guard straight out of high school and had never finished a bachelor's
17 degree. After the War College experience, I was really ready to see if I could get a degree
18 finally. So, I was able to get admission on the strength of the War College experience into
19 a Master's of Public Administration Program which I have to tell you, I did a lot of
20 creative scheduling and a lot of flying at the government's expense so I could maintain
21 my class schedule, but I succeeded in finishing my MPA while I was in that job.

22 JS: Okay.

23 JE: I went from there to being the training officer of the Coast Guard training
24 center in Alameda which is the same boot camp that I had gone through when I was
25 eighteen and now, I was running the boot camp. This was the time of Ronald Reagan and
26 when he came in and started cutting, one of the things the Coast Guard decided to cut was
27 the second recruit training center, so it consolidated all of the recruit training at Cape
28 May, New Jersey and my job was to close the training center in Alameda. We were able
29 to keep it going at the same time we were closing it out because we were going through
30 in the pipeline so to speak that we had continued to train, but we did that at the same time
31 that we were closing it down. We received unit accommodation from the fact that we did

1 that so well. Then after that I went as executive officer on one of the Coast Guard high
2 endurance cutters, the cutter *Rush*, which was right there homeported in Alameda, so I
3 had three jobs in a row at the same home port. I was based in Alameda when we had the
4 training team then I was a part of the base when I was running the training operation and
5 then the ship, I was on was homeported there.

6 JS: Okay.

7 JE: Primarily, it was doing Alaska fisheries patrols. We spent a lot of time with
8 the Alaskan Marine Fishery service in the Bering Sea. We also spent a little time with the
9 Navy. We engaged in some Navy exercises in that region with them as well.

10 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, was that your final assignment?

11 JE: It turned out it was. I actually was offered a set of orders to command a ship's
12 new construction, the *Northland* was under construction in Tacoma, and I was to be the
13 CO (Commanding Officer) of *Northland*, and I was having problems at home, my wife
14 and I and the kids, they were all teenagers, and my wife was having some issues so as it
15 turned out, I elected to retire coming off of *Rush*.

16 JS: Okay.

17 JE: In some ways I have to say, Jason, you know we talk about the casualties of
18 the Vietnam War, my marriage wound up being a casualty of the Vietnam War. Anyway,
19 a month after I retired, my wife and I separated and eventually divorced. So, when you
20 trace the seeds of that divorce back to their origins, it goes back to that period when I was
21 in Vietnam.

22 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

23 JE: It was many years later I really had felt that our marriage was a casualty of
24 that war.

25 JS: Right. Yes, sir. So, what year would this have been that you retired?

26 JE: I retired in 1983.

27 JS: '83 okay. What was your rank at retirement?

28 JE: I was commander. O5.

29 JS: Okay. Would you mind talking a little bit about your post-Coast Guard career?
30 What you did after?

1 JE: No, not at all. Well, I immediately, the week after retirement, walked into a
2 new job, thanks to relationships that I had made. I think I—I'm not sure if I mentioned
3 that I ran the Coast Guard Auxiliary down in Long Beach. Let's see, that was just before
4 I went to the War College.

5 JS: Okay.

6 JE: There was a couple of assignments that we skipped over. When I left
7 Washington, I went to XO of the *Laurel*, which is a buoy tender out of Morgan City,
8 which is the same port that I had been on *Chilula*. Then when I came off of Laurel, I went
9 to Long Beach to be the director of the Coast Guard Auxiliary which that's the civilian-
10 volunteer side of the Coast Guard. I had about three thousand members spread across
11 southern California and anyway, one of the people in the division commander of the
12 Coast Guard Auxiliary was an investment banker who had acquired or actually created a
13 firm in San Francisco and so when I retired, he hired me to become his Vice President of
14 administration. So, I got introduced to the world of stocks and securities and risky deals
15 and found that I didn't like that too much at all. First off, it was either feast or famine and
16 the people I was responsible for supervising were selling risky deals and entirely
17 motivated by money and taking cocaine in order to make more phone calls to raise more
18 money than the other guys and while I got the necessary security licenses, the serious
19 seven security licenses you need to be a broker, I found that to be an interesting process,
20 but after having spent twenty-one years in public service, I found that it wasn't a good fit
21 for me to be in the investment banking business. So, I left there just short of the year and
22 was looking for so other opportunities, In fact I was really looking—I'd always had an
23 interest, every place I'd lived, I always bought and sold houses and did a lot of
24 renovations on old houses. I had a realtor's license, and I was asked by the Redwood City
25 of California Board of Realtors to come be the executive director there and I really
26 looked hard at it, but I lived a great distance away. I was living, at the time in a
27 community called Lafayette which I just over the hills from Berkeley and Oakland. I
28 didn't want to make the commute and the pay was just not quite expected or needed.
29 Interestingly, the Oceanic Society, I was a finalist to be an executive director of the
30 Oceanic society which was headquartered there and because of my military career, they
31 decided that I would not be a good prospect for overseeing their largely female staff so

1 that was my first and only experience being discriminated against because of my military
2 background. After—it only took me a little over a year to decide that I really was more
3 interested in going back into training and development which was what I had done when
4 I was at Coast Guard headquarters, and I had alternated running a training center and a
5 training team so the institution where I had earned both my Master's in Public
6 Administration and my Master's in Business Administration had an opening for an
7 Associate Dean. I continued to teach a class at night there in organizational development,
8 so I took the Associate Dean position and also did some consulting work. I was able to
9 combine consulting. There was a lot of people looking on me, wanting me to help them
10 wrote business plans which had been a part of what I had evaluated when I was in
11 investment banking. I had been reading a lot of other people's business plans so I kind of
12 knew what a good business planned looked and what a bad one looked like. So, it was a
13 good fit. I consulted and worked within the university setting and a year later, the Dean at
14 the School of Management left on short notice and the President asked me to take over
15 for him, so I became Dean at the School of Management at this little university in the
16 East Bay of San Francisco and stayed there until I guess, about '89 if my memory serves
17 me right. '88 or '89, I'm not sure which. Anyway, I then left and went full-time in the
18 real-estate business. I was buying, renovating, and selling houses. I was divorced at this
19 point and after about two years of this, I decided I really—a lot of my self-identity was
20 tied up in being affiliated with an organization so a position became available at the
21 University of California at Berkeley for someone to chair the Department of Continuing
22 Education in Business and Management. I competed for that position and was elected
23 primarily on the grounds of my having been Dean at this Business Management Program
24 at JFK and I stayed at Berkeley as Chairman of the Department and later as an assistant
25 Dean until 1997. Then I became Associate Provost of Colorado State.

26 JS: Okay.

27 JE: I stayed there three year and then I was elected to be Dean of Metropolitan
28 College at Boston University and after reorganizing at the request of the Provost I carried
29 two titles. I was both an Associate Provost and Dean of Extended Education and it was
30 while I was there that I really plucked the institution into the online learning business.
31 That's an area that I got introduced to when I was at Berkeley, and I had further

1 experience with it at Colorado State. So, we built a fairly good sized program at Boston
2 University, but after both the President and the Provost left in late 2005, I started looking
3 around. I was selected by the way to be a Senior Fellow at the Kennedy School at
4 Harvard and I spent six months there as a Senior Fellow doing research on innovation on
5 higher education. At the end of that, rather than return to Boston University, I accepted
6 the position which I have now which is the President of Excelsior College.

7 JS: Okay. Yes, sir. Alright, so how long have you been there now?

8 JE: I'm in my sixth year.

9 JS: Six years, okay. Alright.

10 JE: And I just finished my Doctorate, finally.

11 JS: Okay.

12 JE: It's taken me a long time.

13 JS: Right. Alright, before wrapping up the interview, I've got a few other
14 questions regarding Vietnam if you don't mind.

15 JE: Sure. Absolutely.

16 JS: Alright, well first of all, what is your opinion of U.S. policy towards Vietnam
17 today with trade and veterans going back to Vietnam, tourism, and all of those types of
18 issues?

19 JE: I'm glad to see it. I think it shows a certain level or maturity on part of our
20 political leadership. I know that both John Carrey and—I think it was Bob Carrey maybe.
21 It was Bob Carrey and John McCain that actually, both distinguished veterans supported
22 that at the time and frankly, I'd like to be one of those veterans that goes back. It's a
23 beautiful country with wonderful people and I'd love to go back there at some point.

24 JS: Yes, sir. Alright, that was actually my next question, but you just answered it
25 so let's see. Would you say—did the war—you participation in the Vietnam War, did it
26 have much of an impact on your life and if so, could you talk a little about that?

27 JE: Absolutely, Jason. It had tremendous impact on my life and the irony is that I
28 view it as positive impact.

29 JS: Okay.

30 JE: I was, I think twenty-three, twenty-four years old. I was given life or death
31 responsibility. I made decisions that resulted in the death of some people. I made

1 decisions that kept my own crew safe. I became, I think a very good navigator seaman, I
2 was at the peak of my professional experience. I had confidence and I think by the end of
3 that period, I had confidence at a seafarer which my career was about. I also learned a lot
4 about myself. I learned a lot about motivation and leadership. I learned a lot about
5 morality. I learned a lot about the psychology of the war and when I went through the
6 Naval War College, it reconfirmed my belief that the military country and some public
7 opinions are not warmongers. In fact, there's nobody and you heard this from people like
8 Colin Powell, our job is to try and keep the peace. We don't want to go to war. We had
9 failed as a country and as a foreign policy provider when we go to war. That was what
10 was so tragic in my view about our involvement in Iraq. Two people that had spent the
11 Vietnam period avoiding the draft, making decisions about sending people into a war and
12 culture that they had no understanding of. There're my political concerns.

13 JS: Right. Well, anything else, you'd like to mention? Anything else that we have
14 not covered at this point?

15 JE: Well, I wanted to thank you, Jason, for the follow up and the good
16 questioning. I have to tell you that as a result of this experience, it's given my cause to
17 reflect on a time in my life that I, frankly, had not spent much time reflecting on over the
18 last ten or twenty years. So, it's brought back a flood of memories and I want you to
19 caveat relative to my recollection after it's been about forty years so I'm sure my
20 memory's not quite as sharp as I think it should be so some of the details well, they're
21 accurate to the best of my recollection and they may not be in the right sequence. I'm
22 sure some details of what I said probably are not exactly as I'm telling it to you.

23 JS: Alright, well I certainly appreciate you taking the time out to do this, to tell
24 your story. It's significant, extremely important that other veterans follow you and do the
25 same to tell their stories, as well.

26 JE: I wonder. Do you know, Jason, about—I just learned of this myself, there's an
27 organization called The Coast Guard Combat Veterans Organization. I don't know if
28 you've ever heard of it, but it's almost entirely Vietnam people. There're a few people
29 that maybe go back as far as the Korean War, I think most of the World War II people are
30 gone, and there's a few newcomers coming in because the Coast Guard has been
31 involved in small ways in both Iraq and the first and second Iraq incursions, but basically,

1 it's mostly people like myself who were in Vietnam. There's about eighteen-hundred of
2 these. I understand they've got a conference coming up in a few weeks in the suburban
3 Washington area out in Virginia, someplace.

4 JS: Oh okay.

5 JE: I don't know whether if that's of any interest to you or not, but I do know they
6 have a website. It's cg—Coast Guard Combat Vets—I'm sure if you Google it, you could
7 see what they're about. I went on the site and there's a lot of storytelling about Vietnam.

8 JS: Okay. Wow, I certainly appreciate you telling this. One of the things that we
9 do, in addition to the oral history aspect of our project, in addition to actually conducting
10 the oral histories, we attend things like veteran reunions to encourage veterans to tell their
11 stories, so I'll definitely look into that. It may be too short of a time frame to go to at this
12 time, but—

13 JE: If you go on their website, they maintain a log, sort of an online magazine and
14 there's stories there as well so I think you might find it of some use to you.

15 JS: Yes, sir. Absolutely.