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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Kay Johnson
Conducted by Kelly Crager
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Transcribed by Sarah Tapia**

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

Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an oral history interview with Ms. Kay Johnson. Today is 29 November 2018. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of Texas Tech University, and Ms. Johnson is joining me by telephone from Redwood Shores, California. Ms. Johnson, to begin the interview I'd like to find out a little bit about your background. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Kay Johnson: I was born in southern California in 1942. I'm an only child. My parents had come from the panhandle strip of Oklahoma a year or two before I was born. I would call them kind of dysfunctional. (Laughs) So I grew up as an only child. I had a horse at the age of nine. I spent all my time with my horse. I was always horse crazy from the very beginning.

KC: So, what did your folks do up there in the panhandle, or in southern California when they moved?

KJ: My mother was in a family of five children, four daughters and a son that finally came along. They were born in—living in Boise City, Oklahoma. Right on the tip of the panhandle in Cimarron county. It's kind of farming, dry farming, and a lot of ranches out there. My grandfather, though, was in the insurance agency. So, he was not a farmer. They were probably kind of the upper class of the town, for what that's worth.

1 My mother was sixteen when the first day [Black Sunday] of the Dust Bowl hit. Both of
2 my parents lived through the Dust Bowl.

3 KC: Oh, my goodness. Did they ever tell you about those experiences? It must
4 have been something.

5 KJ: They never talked about it when I was a kid. With Ken Burns's
6 [documentary] and stuff, I finally began to hear about it and began to question [my
7 mother] about it. Yeah, [she] remembered taping the windows and wearing [face] masks
8 and, "Did any of your friends die from dust pneumonia?" "Yeah, well, yeah, one or two."

9 KC: Hmm. Wow.

10 KJ: I don't know, they never wanted to talk about it. I guess it was just so awful
11 they didn't care to talk about it. I didn't even know about it as an adult until I was well
12 along in midlife. My mother was still around, and we showed her the Ken Burns
13 [documentary] and, "Oh, I know him!" Too bad he didn't interview her because she was
14 still lucid at that point. She died three years ago at the age of ninety-eight.

15 KC: What about your father? What did he do?

16 KJ: My father?

17 KC: Yeah.

18 KJ: He was also in a family of five, three boys and two girls. All of them, except
19 one who was very religious, was an alcoholic as an adult. He was a violent alcoholic
20 which made him very difficult to live with. I was the referee, which made the
21 dysfunctional part of my life. He worked for the railroad as a young man. When he came
22 to California, he ended up working for Santa Fe Railroad, also. He said he started at
23 Berkeley, but I don't know that that ever really happened. So, I think I was the first
24 person on his side of the family to ever go to college. Probably the second on my
25 mother's side.

26 KC: So, growing up in southern California, what was it like to grow up in
27 southern Cal in the '50s, early '60s?

28 KJ: Well, in San Bernardino—San Bernardino has mountains on three sides and
29 the opening part of the horseshoe is aimed toward LA. LA was having very bad smog at
30 that point. During high school, I'd wake up in the morning and look off to the west and I
31 would see kind of a brown—lower part of the sky was just all brown. By the time I got

1 home from school at [three] or [four] o'clock in the afternoon, that [brown horizon] had
2 moved into the San Bernardino Valley, into the horseshoe. You couldn't see more than
3 maybe a mile. It was just horrible, horrible smog. That cleared up, I guess, around ten,
4 twenty years later. It got better but there for a while it was just really, really smoggy.
5 Even after I moved up to northern California, which was in [1971], I remember going
6 back, flying from the LA area back to San Francisco, and there was smog all the way up
7 the coast that never quite parted between the two large areas. I guess with all the
8 automobile exhaust regulations and so forth, they've really cleared up most of that. So,
9 it's much better now than it was. This would have been in the '60s when I was in high
10 school—well, '50s, late '50s, when I was in high school. Then in the '60s it was still
11 pretty bad down there [in San Bernardino], but I wasn't living there at that time.

12 KC: What sort of things did you like to do as a kid growing up in southern Cal?

13 KJ: Well, I lived my life on my horse. My horse[, Midnight,] was my best friend
14 and my first love, I guess. So, after school I would usually hop on my horse and join my
15 friends. We'd go down to the dairy and flirt with the boys and eat ice cream that we got
16 for free. That was almost a [daily event]. For a while my horse was in the backyard until
17 development came too close and we had to move it. That was across the street. We
18 boarded my horse at Dr. Lansing's place. He had, oh, probably twenty, thirty acres of
19 pastureland and so forth. He had a daughter slightly younger than me [three years]. She
20 was a fast developer. I was a slow developer, so we hit it off. Did a lot of riding. I'll just
21 say that I was a good influence on her so they [the Lansings] just kind of adopted me into
22 their family and took me everywhere. Dr. Lansing was quite colorful. He was a tenor
23 during college and a carpenter as a young man and put himself through med school and
24 became a doctor. He decided he wanted to travel all of the John Muir Trail [through
25 California's High Sierra mountain range] by horseback. He had done traveling—
26 backpacking in the Tetons as a young man, so he was experienced with that. He spent
27 three summers doing the John Muir Trail. Doing 125 miles each summer. The first two
28 summers I went with them. The third summer I was getting ready for college, so I didn't
29 go. I was in paradise. My friend, Carla, his daughter, she read a book most of the time
30 while riding her horse. No big deal to her.

31 KC: That must have been an incredible experience.

1 KJ: Oh, it was. That was a great experience. We took our own horses out and of
2 course, bring the [six] pack mules [and two pack horses] and so forth [to carry equipment
3 and personal items]. The second summer, we almost had a tragedy going over Mount
4 Whitney on the switchbacks. They had the mules ahead of the horses, which you
5 shouldn't do. One of the mules knocked a big boulder down and it hit the horse in front
6 of me and knocked its back end off the trail. It scrambled and got back on. The drop off
7 was about 3,000 feet, there or I'd have been forever down onto a glacier. So, if we lost
8 that horse with a little nine-year-old girl on it, it would have been a real tragedy.

9 KC: Isn't that something?

10 KJ: Also, that same horse—I think it was that same horse. When he turned out to
11 pasture one night, Dr. Lansing's favorite little horse, a little black thoroughbred, just as
12 ornery as could be, and she ran up and bit that horse on the rear end and the horse kicked
13 her and knocked her down. Carla and I were turning the horses loose to the pasture and
14 we saw all of this. Anyway, all of our medication that we had with us went to the horse. I
15 walked it until like midnight to keep it on its feet. Dr. Lansing came out and said, "How's
16 she doing?" "Well, so, so." So, I guess he took her over and tied her up. Shortly after that
17 she died. All of the men who were there dug her grave out from under her, I guess,
18 because you can't move a horse very easily. So, by morning when the girls—there were
19 three or four of us, woke up and the horse was gone. That was [Dr. Lansing's] favorite
20 polo horse.

21 KC: Isn't that a shame?

22 KJ: Yep. Nobody else liked her because she was so ornery and she would bite
23 people. Quite a biter. Very off the track.

24 KC: That's all right, though. What about schooling? Where did you go to school?
25 What kind of student were you?

26 KJ: I was a very hardworking student. I'm not quite sure what—we started out
27 kind of in a ghetto school. Sixth grade we moved to the other end of town, and all of a
28 sudden I was going to school with smart kids and realized how far behind I was. Prior to
29 that, I was like the best student in the class. Maybe one or two of us were the best
30 students. All the rest were just kinda hanging in there. In the new school, I was way
31 behind. Went to junior high school—for some reason I was segregated and put with the

1 college prep group. Then I really felt lost because I was so far behind all the kids. I was a
2 very quiet kid to begin with. I was raised to be seen and not heard. No matter what you
3 said to my father, he would start an argument so [Mom and I] just pretty much kept quiet.
4 So, I seemed very, very shy and timid, and working very hard. By eighth grade I think I
5 finally was holding my own. By ninth grade I was doing okay. Then high school, I was
6 still in that college prep group. [Our teachers] worked us really hard. I was a good
7 student, I graduated with scholarships. I always said I wanted to major in a commercial
8 art. One of the field trips we took in high school was in the Pasadena Art School. I looked
9 at the students there, and I was going through a very religious phase and thought, “Which
10 of those students do I want to live with while I’m going to school here?” The answer was
11 none of them. They were a little too free spirited for me at that time. So, I went back and
12 talked to my music teacher—my choir teacher at my school and said, “Well, where can I
13 go for music and art?” He said, “You might try San Diego State.” It was a state college at
14 that time. It’s a university now. So I did, and I was accepted there. So, I went to college
15 in San Diego.

16 KC: Now, did you always know that you wanted to go to college? You mentioned
17 that you were put in these college prep classes. Was that something that was—

18 KJ: Yes, I did.

19 KC: Yeah?

20 KJ: I probably knew from about the age of nine. I was unhappy at home with my
21 parents. My mother would not leave my father because she didn’t want to be a divorced
22 woman. That was a very bad thing in those days. Even though she had gone to work
23 when I was four and a half, she didn’t think she was earning enough money to support the
24 two of us. My father made good money, but he rarely got home with it. Usually he would
25 get drunk on the way home and somebody would get all his money. Well, I decided about
26 the age of nine that I was gonna be financially independent. I didn’t want any man ever
27 telling me what to do and having the purse strings. So I had to have free room and board
28 because I couldn’t survive on my own. So, I definitely wanted to go to college. I
29 definitely wanted to get out off college and get a job and be totally independent and be
30 free to make my own decisions. That hasn’t worked out real well but—(both laugh)

1 KC: When did you graduate high school? This must have been, what, 1960, I
2 guess?

3 KJ: 1960. I graduated from college in 1964, took a teaching job because the only
4 jobs available [for women] back in those days—secretary, airline stewardess if you were
5 drop-dead gorgeous, nurse, or a teacher. If you had a college degree, nurse or teacher. If
6 you didn't have a college degree maybe secretary, or, if you're gorgeous, airline
7 stewardess. Those were about the only jobs that were really offered. Well, I knew about
8 majoring in music, I didn't know until the day after I (unintelligible) whether I was going
9 to declare a music major or an art major. But I found out I could major in music and be
10 an organ student and learn pipe organ, which, because I was in a religious phase, thought
11 that was pretty cool. Now, I didn't play the piano well enough that I would really make it
12 as a piano student. I wasn't really that gifted musically. So anyway, I went into music
13 education so when I get out of college, I can teach music. And I did that. I got a job out of
14 college in Claremont [California] about thirty miles out of LA. Taught two years there
15 and then received a full fellowship to go to graduate school there [Claremont]. So, I
16 took—in the meanwhile I got married and divorced, a two-year marriage [1964-1966].
17 We'll call it a disaster.

18 KC: Well, let me back up here a little bit, if you don't mind, Kay. You mentioned
19 that you graduated high school in 1960 before you moved on to San Diego State. As a
20 teenager, how aware were you of what was going on in the country? What was your
21 awareness of what's going on in the world? You know, we've got civil rights brewing.
22 We've got the Cold War going on. What sort of things do you remember as kind of the
23 background to your life as a teenager?

24 KJ: Very little. I was really on survival mode most of those early years. You
25 know, I was just struggling to survive and get ahead and outlive my parents. Things were
26 so bad at home that my junior year I came down with mononucleosis because I wasn't
27 getting any sleep. My dad would come home after the bars closed at two or three o'clock
28 in the morning. Then they'd have the big brawl and I'd have to get up and call the police
29 or, you know, play that game.

30 KC: Wow. That's difficult for a kid.

1 KJ: Yeah, I was the adult and they were the kids. And of course, my homework
2 was tough enough, because I was in the college prep classes, that I was sometimes up
3 until midnight just doing homework. Because I had to ride my horse, of course, during
4 the day. I also was taking piano lessons and had to practice. So, I was sick for six months.
5 Boy, it was the worst case my doctor said he'd ever seen of mononucleosis. That's a
6 stress-related disease. So, as far as my awareness of politics or anything, we didn't have
7 discussions at home. I never had [friends] over because I couldn't [because of my dad]. It
8 was very limited.

9 KC: Well, it sounds like—like you mentioned, that going away to school would
10 be kind of a relief from a lot of this.

11 KJ: It was paradise. I was in heaven in college. I loved it.

12 KC: Well, tell me about that, if you would. What was life like at San Diego State
13 in the early 1960s? Tell me about the environment. Tell me about your classes. Give me
14 that experience.

15 KJ: San Diego is known as a party school. It was relatively easy to get in to. We
16 had lots of fraternities on campus. Some of them were known to be—to start their
17 drinking maybe Friday morning and skip their classes on Friday, then party all weekend
18 and be too sick to go to school on Monday. Do it again the next week. Again, I worked
19 very hard. I had a best friend [Gail] who was a roommate for part of the time. She was an
20 organ major, as well. We'd get up very early in the morning to go to the music building
21 and practice organ. We had an electric one and a pipe organ we would go back and forth.
22 We'd be there early enough before all the other students were so we wouldn't have to
23 fight for practice time. So, I got mostly A's in my music classes, B's and C's in other
24 classes. I really enjoyed biology. Though my reading skills are not great or else I would
25 have done really well in something like English lit. I was too shy to be into drama. So,
26 music was the perfect place for me. It was a—we had about 250 music students. The
27 music department was just a regular, big family. All of us had to perform at least once a
28 semester. We watched all the students grow and it was a really pleasant place to be.
29 When I met my little friend Gail, she was [studying pipe] organ. She introduced me to her
30 teacher—she was a really good student. She introduced me to her teacher, he kind of
31 became a mentor—a substitute father. He really mentored the two of us. It was—actually,

1 it was because of him, actually, and because of his contacts that I got my first teaching
2 job . So, San Diego was very pleasant to me. I really enjoyed my time there.

3 KC: Yeah. You don't very often—

4 KJ: Oh, and President Kennedy came and spoke there. Flew in with three
5 helicopters and we [students] filled up the football field and he made a speech there. I
6 guess it was about a year later when he was assassinated. I had been down in the
7 microfiche basement all day long and campus was just strange. I walked to my classes
8 and just kind of looked around. People crying, it was just very, very strange. I finally
9 heard what had happened. So, that was the big event on the campus.

10 KC: What did you think about that Kennedy in general?

11 KJ: I thought he was great. He was heroic, as far as we were concerned. And of
12 course, because he came to San Diego, we all loved him. Politically I—did I have any
13 real (unintelligible) abilities? Not really because I didn't have a political background in
14 any way. My parents were not politically involved, other than they always voted. But
15 there were no conversations about who they were voting for or anything at home. But I
16 guess I wasn't home. I was gone as much as possible. On weekends I was on my horse
17 and gone. I had a secret hideout up in the mountains just, a couple (unintelligible) built
18 [for Midnight]. For many years I would ride up to Arrowhead Spring stables, it was about
19 ten miles by trail. I could make it in an hour on my little horse. I'd stay up there all day
20 on Saturday, ride home, and go back on Sunday. That kind of thing. So, I was not home
21 that much.

22 KC: Yeah. Well, again, it's a very difficult position for a teenage girl to be in. For
23 anyone to be in.

24 KJ: Yeah.

25 KC: You mentioned Kennedy's assassination. What kind of impact did that have
26 on you, and what kind of impact do you think it's had on the country ever since?

27 KJ: I'm not sure of the impact it had on me. I was coming out of a survival mode
28 situation. I had been through, you know, a warzone at home for years. Which, I hid really
29 well from the others, I would have to say. After [graduate school] I taught for two years
30 in San Diego. One of my roommates was then very politically involved. She had gone to
31 Washington, D.C., for a whole year and worked as a page or whatever they do there.

1 Bobby Kennedy was running for election and doing his campaigning in southern
2 California. I was with her when she got the news that he had been killed. She was just
3 hysterical because she was really politically engaged. Very strongly involved in all of
4 that. So, probably to her, it's probably the most influence—but I really—I was just so
5 really non-political. Just trying to get my own life together.

6 KC: Yeah. I guess you would have been—would have been teaching at this time?
7 When—

8 KJ: —Yeah, yeah.

9 KC: —Bobby Kennedy was killed? What did you think of teaching? You
10 graduated in 1964. What did you think of life as a teacher?

11 KJ: Teaching was not really something I wanted to do. I mean, I was an only
12 child. I had not really been around children. I was praised for my teaching ability, but I
13 found it difficult. My first teaching job [in 1964] was at the junior high level, and kind of
14 a mill for teachers. At the time [the school] had seven-period days. I had five general
15 music classes and one choir. The classes rotated so that you saw [each class] four times a
16 week. We were on a trimester system. My teaching load was 215 students. We had
17 midterm grades and we had the [trimester] grade cards. We were doing paperwork all the
18 time. [In this particular school system, there were two grading periods during each
19 trimester. I had 215 students. 215 students times 2 grading periods times 3 trimesters
20 equals 1,290 grades to process.] It was just really a difficult situation. And of course, I
21 was very shy, still. Within those two years, probably overcame most of my shyness. But I
22 can't say that I enjoyed most of my teaching because there was so many discipline
23 problems. I had—oh, at this intermediate school, there was also had kind of a
24 homogeneous grouping. There were five different groups. The top two were just
25 wonderful kids. The top group, I had Kate Diamond was in it. Her father was an
26 international politician, quite famous. [His portrait appeared on the cover of *Time*
27 magazine.] The Bottoms kid—Timothy Bottoms was in that class.

28 KC: Oh, no kidding?

29 KJ: Yeah, he was in my music class. He became quite a well-known movie star.
30 [He starred in *The Paper Chase*.] He and his brother both, I guess. So, I had just some
31 wonderful kids and I realized that they already had a lot of musical training. Most of

1 them already knew about it. So, one day, I said, “What would you like to do in this
2 class?” They wanted to do a musical. So, I said, “Okay. Friday we’ll have auditions for
3 the musical.” Come and try to convince the class. We’ll vote, and whatever you vote on,
4 we’ll do. The two strongest ones were Kate Diamond, and she wanted to do *Taming of*
5 *the Shrew*. Robert—I forget his name at the moment, you never forget these kids. Robert
6 [Lile], oh God. Anyway, he wanted to do *Music Man* and he got in front of the class and
7 he did the train scene, “You Gotta Know the Territory.” Sang the song, jumped up and
8 down. Tried to do all the different parts (Laughs) It was just unreal. Kate Diamond did a
9 pretty good presentation, too. So, they voted—the kids voted on it and we did *Music*
10 *Man*. That’s why I knew it was gonna be phenomenal. Those kids, like I said, okay, the
11 band gave us outfits and I was in the band room and it had no windows. Put the dancers
12 out here, put the music folks over there and rehearse your parts. I could just send them in
13 all different directions put somebody in charge. They’d come back at the right time and it
14 would be done. There were no discipline—well, there were two discipline problems
15 there. But they were kind of funny ones. Lance Little was a discipline problem. He was a
16 little guy with a great big, deep, bass voice. Quite a comedian, as well. I had one other
17 one that just was kinda obstinate. He had the part of the train conductor. He was supposed
18 to walk through [the train], and he got scared backstage and we couldn’t get him to go
19 onstage. But anyway, he was very obstinate ‘til the very last couple of rehearsals. And
20 finally, he came around. It was very interesting. So, anyway, I had some good times, but
21 the [lowest achieving] kids, that was awful. One of them ran in one day, “Miss Johnson,
22 all the guys are chasing me! All the boys are chasing me out there! Can I stay in here
23 where it’s safer?” So, she came into class early and when the bell rang and the kids all
24 came in, they came in just throwing all kinds of smut at her. I did report it to the vice
25 principal and he said, “Well, you know, she’s kind of the kid in the school”. She was
26 living with her married sixteen-year-old sister. Had flea bites all over her. So, her house
27 must have been full of fleas. Was just treated terribly. But they said basically, “Well, she
28 kind of asked for it.” But that was the other extreme, and I found that very difficult to
29 deal with emotionally. What do you do with these kids? Then, of course, I went to a year
30 of grad school. When I started teaching again, I went to San Diego.

31 KC: Now, where did you go to grad school?

1 KJ: Oh, right there in Claremont.

2 KC: Okay—oh, right, right, you mentioned that. Yeah. What were you getting
3 your degree in there? Just an advanced degree in music?

4 KJ: Music history.

5 KC: Music history this time. Okay.

6 KJ: Couldn't play well enough to do music performing. So, music history was
7 kind of the other alternative. That was academic, so I was able to do that. Had to write a
8 thesis and so forth. But, again, my teacher from San Diego—he was working on his PhD
9 there, and had been—fact, he had been a teacher there. Married a student at Pomona
10 College. She had died like a year or two into the marriage. At that point he just kind of
11 quit teaching, went off and joined the service. Kinda fell apart, I guess. So, he was going
12 back there to get his PhD and introduced me—in fact, during [my undergraduate]
13 summers I would take lessons from him or his teacher. They had lots of interesting things
14 that went on during the summer at those campuses—the same campus where Pomona and
15 Scripps, Harvey Mudd was there now Claremont Men's College is there now at
16 Claremont McKenna. Sounds like you're familiar with them.

17 KC: Oh, just—not terribly familiar, but certainly know the names and things.
18 What was the environment like there? Because we're talking about the, you know, mid to
19 late 1960s. This is, you know, the Vietnam War is ramping up. Was there any sort of
20 protest? Any sort of gathering? Any sort of anything like that?

21 KJ: Did not see any. I was going full time about 1966 [-1967]. That one year.
22 That campus was very strange. I was coming from the party school in San Diego where,
23 you know, [the fun began] on Friday, and it didn't calm down again until Tuesday. For
24 some students, I wasn't one of those. I did not join a fraternity—well, I did join Sigma
25 Alpha Iota, which is a music fraternity for women. Claremont College campus was very,
26 very different. A lot of those students had tried to get into Stanford and didn't get in. That
27 was kind of the next step down. But it was all private schools, very expensive. A lot of—
28 mostly East Coast kids there. You know, the East Coast comes west. When they had
29 Easter or Christmas, or holidays, they were all gone. They all flew home. During the
30 week—it was a dry town. There was no alcohol sold within the city of Claremont. Those
31 kids studied. They were not social. So, I did not find a social life there at all. It was very

1 academic. I was on the graduate—what do they call it? Board. Representing the music
2 department. Even those students were very academic. Brilliant students, though. So, I
3 enjoyed that also because I saw the other side of a really academic college. They were
4 beautiful campuses, of course. However, I was going through my divorce during that
5 year. So, emotionally I was not having an easy time of it. But academically I was able to
6 survive that and move on with my life.

7 KC: Did you finish up in—I guess '67?

8 KJ: I finished that year, everything except my orals with my teachers. I went back
9 the next summer and finished that off and got my degree.

10 KC: Okay. So, what were you—

11 KJ: —I had been like the perfect kid. My parents always said, “Oh, you’re so
12 easy. We don’t have to worry about her because she does everything right.” Which I did.
13 One time I was angry at my parents and I decided to do something mean to them. I don’t
14 recall what it was. But after they found out that I had done this horrible thing they said,
15 “Oh, why did you do that?” It made me realize that they didn’t care. I had gone through
16 quite a few—pulling of hair, because I didn’t feel good about doing what I had done.
17 Whatever it was. The lesson I learned was don’t do something mean and ornery, it
18 doesn’t hurt anybody more than you. You’re the one that gets hurt. Nobody else really
19 feels it as much as you do. So, it didn’t pay off to be intentionally mean and ornery.
20 (Laughs) Well, how did I get off on that tangent?

21 KC: Oh, no. That’s quite all right. I think we’ve all been through that at least
22 once, if not multiple times. What did you hope to do with your degree? Your master’s
23 degree?

24 KJ: My master’s degree—so, I went home for the summer because I didn’t have
25 any money. I hadn’t been working for a year, other than church organist and choir
26 director. I went home for the summer and I had a job lined up back in San Diego.
27 Because I thought that was a—San Diego is a fun place for a young woman to be. So, I
28 thought that would be fun. [The school district] called me and said, “Would you like to
29 teach summer school?” I jumped at the chance, of course. So, I signed up for a class at
30 San Diego State so I could live in the dorms. Spent all my money on the dorms and the
31 class I was taking. The school didn’t pay me for the summer school job until the end of

1 summer school [in September]. So, I kind of had a free ride in the dorm. I had my room
2 and board handled. But just kind of stayed inside. It was pretty lean times. So anyway,
3 went back to teaching class for another two years. Then finally had a fourth-grade
4 assignment, and then had the music for the school. The choir was made up of fifth and
5 sixth graders. I did that for two years. The first year there, they split the fourth grade into
6 three parts. The two other teachers who were there took the good kids and the middle
7 kids, and I got the other ones. What I pretty much had was thirty-five special ed kids in
8 one room. It was a hellacious year. I just had, you know, ridiculous stuff going on all the
9 time. Too many special ed kids for one person to really—they weren't all special ed kids.
10 But tone bright student I had in there was hyperactive, or he had a spring in his rear end.
11 He just could not sit in a seat. He was just all over the place all the time. Then I had other
12 kids that just—all kinds of problems to deal with. So, that was not a very fun year. The
13 second year, it was a bit better. Of course, I had the choir going and the choir was doing
14 good things. We went to contests and various things, so the school was very happy about
15 that. I told them when I took the class, "I do not want to deal with any discipline
16 problems." So, I want another teacher in there and all I have to do is point at student who
17 is not behaving and he's gone. So, I had 120 little kids in this choir, and they were
18 perfectly behaved. I only had to take out one. Of course, my class was being covered by
19 another teacher during that time. So, that was a good experience, but I realized in the
20 second year that teaching isn't something I really want to do. I didn't really want to work
21 with kids. I wanted to work with adults. So, I took a mental health day and went back to
22 San Diego State to their employment office and went through all their records to see what
23 a liberal arts major could do with her life. The only really interesting thing that popped
24 out of that was Special Services with the US Army.

25 KC: Did you know anything about Special Services up to this time?

26 KJ: Not really. There was one gal that was a year or two older than I was that was
27 in the music department. I remembered that she was going to Vietnam and she was very
28 happy about that. She was gonna do something musical. So, that was probably—probably
29 was what that was. So, I thought, "Well, people are doing it." But anyway, so I thought,
30 "Well, what the heck? I'll just go ahead and do all the—do the application and fill it out,
31 and so forth." The government was very thorough. All of the people that I told, gave

1 names to give recommendations for me. They called every single one of them. They
2 contacted them and I thought that was interesting. I guess there's all kinds of security I
3 had to go through, but it took like about eight months or so of all that paperwork to be
4 done. It was reams and reams of paperwork. But in the meantime young women at that
5 time were having a great time at MCRD (Marine Corps Recruit Depot) in San Diego
6 because of all the men going through there. Oh, let's see—Wednesday night was Admiral
7 Kidd Club. Thursday night was MCRD. Friday night was the real MCRD where there
8 might be 500 people there. We were at the officers club. All these young men had college
9 degrees from the best colleges all over the States. Most of them were single and it was
10 good pickins. Fun times. Saturday night was date night. If you didn't have a date, you
11 were ready to jump off the bridge. You had failed the entire week. Sunday [afternoon]
12 was on the beach at the Downwinds on Coronado Island. That was just kind of a beer
13 brawl and then we'd all go to dinner afterward. [Caravan to the Mexican Village for a
14 meal.] Times were good. Easy, very easy to meet people. Here I did meet one gentleman
15 that I thought highly of. He was dating at least one other woman that I knew about. He
16 went overseas. That's why—What do you call them? Black Horse? Black Horses? [With
17 the Black Ponies.] Anyway, they were propeller planes and he had done a lot of flying
18 with some military family. I thought well, maybe if I was there [in Vietnam], and by this
19 time I guess I knew I had been selected. I had found out after he had gone over. So, I
20 thought, "Oh, maybe if I got over there, we could get together a few times. At least the
21 other woman would not be there and maybe we could get things resolved." So, that was
22 part of my reason for going. Plus, I'd always wanted to travel and that never could've
23 afforded it. My parents had never flown. I really was trying to explore the world. I'd
24 always had a lot of curiosity. People had written things about me that I was very
25 adventurous. Which I was. So anyway a month before I was to leave to go to Vietnam he
26 was killed. He was shot down in his airplane.

27 KC: How did you find out about that?

28 KJ: Through the grapevine. You know, I had a lot of contacts and spent a lot of
29 time with military going to all these different places in the evenings. One of his friends
30 said, "Oh, it was posted at Camp Pendleton," I guess. Someone had picked it up from

1 there. So, I heard about it almost immediately through the grapevine. I think one of his
2 friends called me and told me. That's not clear in my mind anymore.

3 KC: Yeah. What kind of effect does that have on a young woman? A gentleman
4 she's seeing somewhat seriously, I guess, to find out they've been killed in this war?

5 KJ: Pretty awful. (Pause) It's still painful. But as I thought about it I said, "Should
6 I not go? Or, what should I do?" I wanted travel and this was a free traveling experience.
7 The government would be paying for it. (Unintelligible) I thought, "Well, maybe I can go
8 to France or Germany or someplace really cool." But those were all three-year
9 commitments. There were no openings anywhere except for Vietnam. So, if I didn't—it
10 was Vietnam or nothing. But Vietnam was only a one-year commitment and I thought,
11 "Gee, I can do anything for a year. No big deal. So, I'll go to Vietnam." After Pete was
12 killed, I thought, "Well, you know, I still would like to go and have an experience and so
13 forth." So, I decided I would go. I even at one point did get out to where his camp was. It
14 was at a very small (Unintelligible). I took a celebrity out there. Oh, and one of his best
15 friends gave me a tour of his camp and told me what they were doing—he really kind of
16 glossed over everything. He told me how they were working with the orphans through an
17 area and all the good things they were doing for the [local] people. Never mentioned Pete
18 and tried to make me believe, at least from the way he talked, that he was having a
19 wonderful time and so forth. I came away from that kind of [feeling] very strange about
20 it. In that they were just sort of blanking—they probably had to in order to survive the
21 situation there. There is a book out now about the Flying—I'd have to look at the title.
22 The Flying Tigers or something or other. [The book is *The Flying Black Ponies*, by Kit
23 Lavell.] I found out more about what really happened in that book. It turns out that one
24 of my other friends who was Navy and who still lives in San Diego, who is a lawyer now.
25 Had this man that wrote the book as a client. He never paid for the time. So, I guess the
26 guy that wrote the book was still suffering a lot of stuff from what happened over there.

27 KC: I'll be darned.

28 KJ: There was quite a, whole chapter on what happened to Pete. They were
29 flying a two-person airplane and he picked up a shot. It flew in the side window which
30 was not [bullet proof] and was hit in the head. They were in a dive at the time. Diving
31 down to shoot some people on the ground. His copilot, [Ken], that I knew quite well, was

1 able to get the plane home, just barely. He almost crashed, as well, because they were so
2 low at the time the shot came through. So, they almost lost him. They said in the book
3 [Ken] spent a day just walking around by himself. I was not particularly fond of him
4 because he was dating someone in San Diego. It was his girlfriend's roommate that had
5 paired off with Pete. (Laughs) Which was very confusing to the two of them. They were
6 roommates. I would see her on Friday nights and so forth. She was really working hard to
7 keep that relationship going. She did go back east and she did go to the funeral. I thought,
8 "Well, I won't go to the funeral because there was nothing really solid between us." He
9 had said he couldn't make any solid future because he didn't really have one. He'd been
10 in combat flying before and he knew what it was all about. It was too risky to have any—
11 So I received several letters from him. I was so—actually, some of these are published in
12 a thing that I wrote for a writing class. I just didn't know if you would want them.

13 KC: Yeah, of course. While we have you here back at San Diego, obviously this
14 is a very difficult time. But you also mentioned that you're also preparing to go to
15 Vietnam with the Special Services. Now, at this point I want to ask you, how much did
16 you know about the Special Services? What they were doing? What your role would be?

17 KJ: I was told it was administrative and I would be finding places for people to go
18 and setting up their appointment base and so forth. I don't think I knew a whole lot about
19 it, really.

20 KC: What about—no, please. Go ahead.

21 KJ: I knew I would be travelling. I could go over for a year and whatever they
22 needed done I could do. What else did I know? Probably not very much. Because I
23 remember flying to the country and I was met by the fellow who I would report to
24 directly. I felt overwhelmed by the smell of things. Huge piles of garbage and refugees all
25 over the city. It was a real adventure.

26 KC: Yeah.

27 KJ: I think I looked at it more from that sense, point of view.

28 KC: Right.

29 KJ: I would be working with adults for the first time in my life. I was about
30 twenty-six years old, I guess, at this point. Had really yearned to have a job where I
31 would be working to do something that was constructive in the adult world, rather than

1 trying to get kids to survive and help them through all their problems. The schools never
2 had enough money to do anything. The work was just really hard. But I would take all
3 these things home with me at night time and I would really feel for these little kids. You
4 only spend a few hours with them every day. If they're coming from poor parenting or
5 whatever, you really can't fix that.

6 KC: Well, this is gonna be a very, very different thing—sort of thing for you.
7 Were you—was there any sort of training? Specialized training or courses or anything for
8 the Special Services prior to deployment?

9 KJ: Nothing.

10 KC: Nothing?

11 KJ: Nothing.

12 KC: So, you've been accepted. You know that you're going to go to Vietnam.
13 And then nothing. How do you prepare yourself? What goes on in your preparation to
14 take this very, very big step?

15 KJ: They do send you what you have to have to get there. A whole of bunch of—
16 in my case 264 dollars' worth of purchases to make before you reach—how you're going
17 to look when you get there. They included a uniform that was probably styled in the
18 1940s. This was 1969 now and miniskirts are at their peak. I mean really short and we're
19 all wearing them. Then we get this uniform requirement and you must wear the uniform
20 three inches below the knees. Purse goes over the left shoulder and the hat cocked a
21 certain way. We have white gloves and we have inch-and-a-half heels that have to be
22 navy blue. It went on, and on, and on. You'll also have something, say, "Ooh, well,
23 okay." I had to have a coat, which turned out to be a coat with a liner. It was a great coat,
24 actually. But it wasn't really fit for the tropics. But it did work well when I traveled
25 through Europe in the wintertime.

26 KC: So, Special Services clearly had an ideal of what they wanted everyone to
27 look like. Pretty conservative dress for this kind of environment.

28 KJ: Yes, and it was established probably in the 1940s because that was the style
29 of the garment. It fit at the waist and flared like a little skirt. Had a tight skirt. It was
30 totally impractical for what I was going to be doing. But anyway, to get over there you
31 spent the \$264 getting all this stuff together, and took it with you when you went. I guess

1 I was wearing—I had to get two uniforms. Two sets of most things. I was wearing one of
2 them on the airplane. I was the only civilian woman on the airplane leaving from the
3 airport near here.

4 KC: Travis probably?

5 KJ: What was it?

6 KC: Was it Travis?

7 KJ: Travis, yes. It was from Travis. Getting to Travis was a whole ‘nother affair
8 with the family.

9 KC: Well, tell me about that. I’m curious to what your family—your family and
10 friends thought about your going to Vietnam.

11 KJ: Well, of course, my parents did not want their only child to go to Vietnam.
12 Why in the world would I want to do that? They knew they couldn’t stop me, so anyway
13 I went. By the time that came up, came along, my mother and father had finally
14 separated. My mother had remarried. The man she (unintelligible), the man she married
15 was also an alcoholic, but he was a pleasant one. He was just drinking to get smarter and
16 smarter and smarter. He knew everything. He had to have the last word on everything and
17 then he’d finally fall asleep. So, that was—I mean, he was very social. So, she got all
18 involved in the Elks Club. Elkettes, I called it. [The Elk women’s club.] She got to do her
19 social things. It was good for her. Really good for her. But when it came time for me to
20 go to Vietnam, he [my stepfather] was military-civilian, and he had a cousin that was in
21 the area here. So I stayed with them for a night or two. We went from there and up near
22 Travis because he had another cousin up there that we stayed with. They had a young
23 man that was about my age that was supposed to, I guess, take me to Travis, to Travis
24 when it was time to go. Well, we had spent some time in the evening before and we
25 didn’t hit it off too well. So, he disappeared that day and he was not around to take me
26 anywhere. It was unclear to me who was supposed to drive me to Travis. Well, it turns
27 out that my stepfather had to do it. Of course, by this time he was pretty drunk because
28 he’d been drinking all day. So, it was a real joyride. I really thought that I would probably
29 be in a traffic accident and get killed before I got to Vietnam. (Laughs) “Ugh, I’m gonna
30 be dead before I get there.” But he did get me there just in the nick of time. I barely made
31 it down to the airplane. I was the only civilian woman that was on the airplane.

1 KC: What was that plane ride like over there?

2 KJ: The first half was great. I had a young man sitting [next to me] that was very
3 interesting to talk with. When they stopped someplace, he got off—oh, I guess in the
4 Philippines. Yeah, we stopped over in the Philippines. Everybody got off for a break.
5 When I got back on, he didn't sit back down. Later he said that, well, he didn't wanna
6 take all of my time and give somebody else a chance. Well, the [second] man that sat
7 down [next to me] would not stop talking. They brought him food. He wasn't able to eat
8 the food because he had to talk. [Finally I announced], "I'm going to sleep now." (Makes
9 snoring sound) So, that was not so much fun. When we were in the Philippines, I had
10 gone to the restroom. When I bent over to flush the toilet, the glasses on my face fell into
11 the toilet. I will never forget that. I looked at that and I—"Should I go in after my glasses
12 or should I just flush them down the toilet?" (Laughs)

13 KC: What did you decide?

14 KJ: I went in after them. (Both laugh) So, anyway, the trip over was interesting.
15 Had lots of adventures. Most of the guys were realizing my situation and were kind about
16 it.

17 KC: So, where do you come into country?

18 KJ: I came into Saigon, Tan Son Nhut airport. I was picked up by Brad Arrington.
19 He was the man I would be working under and he was a total delight. But again, I had no
20 training. I just arrived in my uniform and they took me to a hotel there where I would be
21 billeted .

22 KC: Tell me about your first experiences in Saigon. This is a very different scene.
23 Very different environment from what you grew up with in California. What are—as a
24 twenty-six-year-old, what are your thoughts and memories of what went on—what was
25 going on in Saigon when you were there?

26 KJ: When I was picked up from the airport and drove through town—the smell.
27 Well, actually the smell started before we even hit the ground. I don't know that it
28 happened the first time, this happens all the other trips after this. Within, oh, probably
29 thirty minutes of hitting ground, my stomach just started flip-flopping. I had dysentery
30 the entire year I was there.

31 KC: Really?

1 KJ: Mm-hmm. Probably, I guess, a mild stage of it but a lot of that. Anyway, the
2 first time I was picked up, I just remember how hot it was. Hot and moist and water. I got
3 there during August and I think that's monsoon season. Every day from about two to four
4 it rained. The streets were always wet and there was huge, huge piles of garbage that
5 might have been twenty feet high. Twenty, thirty feet high. Of course, the stench was
6 overcoming. The plant growth was fascinating. I saw philodendrons that had leaves that
7 were, oh, probably twelve, eighteen inches from stem to tip. These are the little
8 houseplants that we grow at home that have little tiny leaves the size of, a couple inches
9 long. They were growing up huge buildings. They would be up maybe, climbing up the
10 building five, six, seven floors. Huge, huge leaves. Just fascinated by the vegetation and
11 the tropical plant life and so forth. It was just truly beautiful. The fences were green with
12 mold. Most of the fences were concrete or plaster. I thought, "Gosh, don't they ever paint
13 these things?" Well, after I was there a while, I realized why they didn't. Of course, the
14 refugees were everywhere. A lot of them were living in—my mind is going. The things
15 you tie between two trees.

16 KC: Oh, like sleeping in hammocks or something like that?

17 KJ: Hammocks, that's was I trying to say. Yeah, a lot of hammocks tied between
18 two trees or a post of some sort and a tree. People were just living there, living on the
19 street. Of course, it's a warm climate and when it rains, it's kind of a relief for the local
20 people. The rain is cooler than the air. The little kids go out in the street because the
21 streets fill up. You have almost eighteen inches of water running down the street and
22 they're out there playing in it. That goes on every day during the monsoons. Oh, let's see,
23 what else? What else happened? Of course, you get moved into your hotel room and so
24 forth. Everybody gets their food.

25 KC: Well, describe the hotel for me. What were your quarters like?

26 KJ: A regular hotel room. It was a civilian hotel that the military had taken over. I
27 think the only people billeted at that time in that hotel—probably people like myself.
28 People coming and going. The head of our department was also living on a different floor
29 than I was, but he had a larger room than my room. They all had air conditioning, which
30 was nice. That was a big (unintelligible) in those days. Then of course I got to go into the
31 office. That's where I got my education, I guess. "Here's what you do." "Here's today's

1 assignment.” “Take people to sites throughout the area, and so forth.” I don’t know, do
2 what I needed to do. Sometimes I was tasked with the USO. Whether it might be
3 interviewing different groups from the Philippines or from Australia and had to rate them.
4 How we rated them, how the judges rated them determined their salaries when they were
5 out in the field—the platoons and so forth out in the field would hire these groups to
6 come and to entertain them. I did quite a bit of that. Most of it was pretty boring.

7 KC: Well, I think now might be a good point for you, if you can, tell me what the
8 role, the mission of Special Services was in Vietnam. And what you specifically would
9 be responsible for.

10 KJ: The goal was to entertain the troops, to give them some relief from their
11 [routine]. My friend Ann Kelsey did library. She took books to the different groups. Kept
12 their literary, so they had some entertainment. I’d take celebrities into various [military]
13 groups. Sometimes shows depending on—if they knew who it was and what it was.
14 [These were mostly small show groups.] If they had a big show that required a celebrity
15 and maybe a bunch of people. Typically, they had to have billeting someplace with air
16 conditioning. They had to have air conditioning behind the stage. They had to have a lot
17 of security. So, they could only go to a few places like Long Binh. Kontum has a theater.
18 Da Nang, of course, had a theater. They could only be taken to those kinds of places.
19 While they were there, the fella I was working for, [Brad Arrington] eventually gave his
20 slot to me. He was a GS-11. Said, “You could be doing what I’m doing here because I
21 want to start a military command touring show.” That became a very popular program.
22 He was taking teams of men out in the field and bringing them [to our Saigon office] on
23 temporary duty, encouraging them as a group and then sending them out to the troops to
24 entertain the troops. Because they were military, they could go out in jeeps, they could go
25 out and they’d defend them because we didn’t have to have them flown in airplanes and
26 so forth. They didn’t have to have a security detachment that the celebrities required.

27 KC: Sure.

28 KJ: Sometimes they just had handshake groups, what we called handshake
29 groups. Ron Ely was one of the early Tarzans, was one of my favorites ones of all that
30 ever came. I would ask questions. Took them on helicopters, fly them to three or four
31 different places during the day. They would walk around and talk with the troops. Those

1 were very popular. Especially with Tarzan. He was much loved by the troops. I took him
2 Tay Ninh, which was where they did a lot of airplane and whatnot repairing. So they had
3 a very sophisticated group of engineers, I guess you would call them. When I got him—
4 got Ron Ely off the helicopter, they came running onto the tarmac [yelling his name]
5 “Tarzan!” “Tarzan!” During their spare time the [engineers] did a lot of weightlifting, so
6 they were all bodybuilders. So, they had a lot of bodybuilding conversations. Ron Ely
7 was probably in his—oh, maybe late thirties or so, I don’t know. He told stories about
8 when he was Tarzan. He quit that job because he’d gotten hurt so many times. But I
9 distinctly remember the commercials of Tarzan diving off this cliff into water and doing a
10 swan dive. It was a really high dive. He talked about that or maybe it came up in a
11 conversation in the questions and answers that occurred during our tours. He said, “Yeah,
12 it knocked me out when I hit the water. Then when I was climbing back up the ladder to
13 go to the top, how far did I go anyway? How high was this place?” Turns out it was 125
14 feet.

15 KC: Holy smokes.

16 KJ: Yeah. I jumped off a roof one time into a swimming pool. A dive. When I hit
17 the water, the force of the water, really, my arms out in front of me didn’t really shelter
18 me very much. I can’t imagine what hitting the water at 125 feet. I guess, well, it knocked
19 him out, so I guess we know. That’s like hitting concrete, probably.

20 KC: Yeah. I bet it is, yeah.

21 KJ: (Chuckles) But he was just a real outgoing guy with a good sense of humor.
22 One of the questions—we had a small group on the Vietnam border, Vietnam-Cambodia
23 border that all sat down under a little (unintelligible). One of the questions was from one
24 of the men, “I understand when there’s a tall man or a short—well, when the love
25 interests are two different heights that are not that compatible, that sometimes they put
26 people on boxes. Is that really true?” He said, “Well, Kay, come up here.” [Ron
27 confirmed the answer by having me stand next to him on a box.] When I took these
28 people out I usually kind of stayed in the background so I didn’t steal the show. The other
29 men were not accustomed to seeing a lot of American women, so it was pretty easy to
30 steal the show. So I was always pretty careful about that. He says, “Kay, come on up
31 here.” He got this little box and he made me stand on it. [Ron confirmed the answer with

1 an illustration. Ron Ely was 6'4"; I am now 5'1", but I've lost several inches since my
2 prime. If I stood in front of Mr. Ely and looked straight ahead, I would be focused on his
3 belly button.] But that's just the kind of guy he was. He was really very down to earth.
4 Very pragmatic about what he talked about and the guys just loved him. I had James
5 Franciscus out there at one point. Oh, I never can remember this guy's name. He played
6 Banacek on television, the blind guy with the [seeing eye] dog.

7 KC: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. I know who you're talking about.

8 KJ: Peppard, something Peppard. Anyway, I had him out. I guess he was going
9 through a divorce and he heard I was going to be escorting him. "I don't want any women
10 going out with me." "That's fine, sir, but she's the director." So, I knew he was a little
11 bit, he didn't really want me to be escorting him.

12 KC: George Peppard, right?

13 KC: George—yeah, George Peppard. Turned out he was kind of an intellectual
14 type. I took him to Nui Ba Dinh one day, which was a volcanic, like, mountain in the
15 middle of flat Vietnam—Southern Vietnam. They used it for a fire support base. There
16 probably was a couple—I don't know, maybe it was 100 to 200 men up there, although
17 probably a smaller group. Anyway, he went one direction, so I went a different direction.
18 I usually in situations like that I would have my own audience. I didn't want to be
19 anywhere near where he was because I knew he didn't really want me to be. We'd flown
20 out by helicopter. On the way back in from that, there was a little gully that went down.
21 Of course, in the monsoon it was very slick with that red mud that sticks to your shoes
22 and goes up until you're walking on stilts. He slipped. Fell on his behind. I made some
23 outrageous comment. I can't remember what it was. He turned around and just glared at
24 me. Oh, he got in the helicopter before I did and of course I was busy talking with other
25 people. When I got up there, a hand came out, reached out to help me on the first step
26 which was about four feet off the ground. When I grabbed the hand, it suddenly released
27 me. I looked up and it was George. He was grinning from ear to ear like, "Oh, I could
28 have let you fall in the mud." I'm so grateful he didn't. But then after that, by the time we
29 got back we were good friends he told me if I ever got into Hollywood to look him up.
30 He would love—(Laughs) I got the feeling—and I think later it became known that he
31 was gay. I got the feeling during that what a lot of these celebrities go through is women

1 like to put notches on their bedposts. And he's, "Oh, another one of these." [Feeling this
2 way, I couldn't blame him for being wary.] I didn't go there to date men. I had to tell a
3 lot of men that, "I'm not here to date men. I'm here to entertain the troops, to get some
4 personal experience. I'm here because I'm paid reasonably well. More than I would make
5 as a teacher. And something [new] to do. It has nothing to do with my date life. Or
6 putting notches on my bed." (Chuckle)

7 KC: Yeah, that's really a difficult position to be in, though.

8 KJ: That's not the message they wanted to hear.

9 KC: Yeah, that's a difficult position to be in. You are, in the parlance of the times,
10 you're a "round-eye woman" who is there spending her entire tour around troops who
11 don't see very many American women. Biology being what it is, did you face any
12 difficulties in this way?

13 KJ: Constantly, yeah.

14 KC: Yeah? Do you care to talk about that?

15 KJ: Sure. The enlisted men were never a problem. Well, I haven't told you about
16 the Charlie Brown thing. I did tell you that Brad Arrington wanted to do the Command
17 Military Touring shows. He was a drama person. One of the military touring shows was
18 *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and they couldn't find any women to do the parts
19 [of Lucy and Pattie], so they recruited me. I traveled all over Vietnam with nine enlisted
20 men doing nineteen performances of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. So, I saw a
21 good deal of a lot of different camps and areas and so forth. The guys I traveled with
22 were great. They were like brothers, all of them were. Anytime we went into a camp it
23 was, "Okay, who gets the girl?" "Well, none of us gets the girl." "Oh, come on! You can
24 tell me." Every single place we went it was like that. I guess the big deal—err, the high
25 point of this was we went to Happy Valley which was near Tay Ninh, or near Nha Trang,
26 I guess. Happy Valley, it was a transportation group. They were taking convoys out to the
27 troops on a daily basis, or whatever. There were about maybe 250 men there, I don't
28 know, ten officers. Let's see. We land at this, we flew from Pleiku that day. [We had an
29 evening performance scheduled in Happy Valley.] The weather was kind of bad. It was
30 rainy and stormy. We waited for hours for a helicopter to deliver us to Happy Valley and
31 the helicopter never came. I guess it was busy doing other stuff. They finally put us on a

1 bus and sent us across land, unsecured land. The guys all had guns, of course, and I
2 didn't. I thought, you know, "I came over here in my uniform. No one's ever shown me
3 how to shoot one of these guns." My father had taught me to shoot and I was fairly
4 accurate and decent at it. So, there's no reason why I couldn't have learned to shoot a
5 gun. If our bus was overtaken it would have been nice to defend myself. All the guys
6 assured me they would make sure I was safe. But outside of that, I was always told that
7 when they get attacked the men protect themselves. They'll forget all about you so, don't
8 depend on them for anything. But who knows whether that's, what's true on that case.
9 Probably depends on the people. But I had no training at all in any kind of military
10 acumen. So anyway, we got into Happy Valley and I was immediately taken off the bus
11 and led to a trailer with, where were two service club girls lived, err, women were. That
12 was air conditioned. The men were taken off someplace else. I always met with them to
13 make sure that everything was working okay for them. So, I saw them at dinner time. The
14 enlisted men were on one side, the officers on the other [of the mess hall]. I saw all the
15 guys on the enlisted side, so I went through this smiling, said, "Well, how are things
16 going? How have you been eating," and so forth. Typically, there would be blankets or
17 pillows, or whatever or some place to secure their costumes. At one place all the
18 costumes were stolen because they wouldn't secure them for us. So anyway, I was stuck
19 with them. Well, finally someone came in and told me—they told me that I was not
20 supposed to be there. Because I was an officer equivalent. So, I was taken over to eat
21 with the military, with the officers. There were ten of them, I believe. We sat down at a
22 beautiful table with a table cloth, gorgeous china, beautiful silverware, candles. A
23 minister gave grace and we had a very sophisticated meal. Afterwards I was invited to
24 stay and drink with them. I said, "Well, no. I have to get ready for this performance. And,
25 let's see, somewhere a lieutenant was put in charge of the guys. He said, "Well, you
26 know, we're gonna have a get together after the performance and kind of unwind. Can
27 that be provided for us?" "Well, yeah, we have some soft drinks for the men." I said,
28 "Look, these men do not want soft drinks. They're fighting the war over here. They
29 would really like some beer." He went, "Oh, well, I'll try really hard." So anyway, after
30 the performance we were led to a Quonset hut and we had our beer and kind of unwound.
31 At one point during that time, one of their two service club ladies came in. She said, "I

1 just wanted to make sure [that all is okay.] “Well, why don’t you stay and have some
2 beer with us?” “Oh, no. Oh, no.” Then she left. Well, I guess I was probably there until
3 10:45 or so when I was walked back to the trailer. As soon as I got into the trailer one of
4 the gals went and phoned somebody. Then she said, “Oh, the colonel would like to speak
5 with you.” I looked at my watch and it was 11:00 at night. The colonel wanted to speak
6 with me. What’s this all about? So anyway, the two of them—the three of us were
7 escorted over to the colonel’s office and he was sitting there with his palm trees and his
8 wooden panels. You know, with picture of Nixon. He sat at one end and they sat across
9 on one side. I thought, “Well, there’s two of them over there, I’ll sit over here.” He
10 proceeded to lecture me on fraternizing with the enlisted men for about forty-five
11 minutes. I was just boiling. I was smoking.

12 KC: That’s your job, right?

13 KJ: It’s unsecured territory with the nine men on a bus. To get off the bus and be
14 told I’m fraternizing with the enlisted men. I mean, really. These guys cared more about
15 me than he did, obviously. So, I was just smoking. He finally said, “Well, do you have
16 any questions or is there anything you want to say?” I said, “Are we finished? Can I go
17 back and get some rest now?” Then he just turned red in the face. That was not what he
18 wanted to hear. Anyway, we went back to the trailer and I was really upset about this and
19 didn’t sleep very much that night. The next morning, we had breakfast and we were off to
20 the next wherever we were going. I happened to say, “How was your night?” “Well,
21 mmmm.” I probably shouldn’t have said anything to them, at least until we were out of
22 there, but I told them what had happened. They were livid. A couple of them went into
23 the restroom and they were talking about it in the restroom, I guess an officer came in and
24 overheard them, went running back to the—whatever he was, the main guy—the colonel
25 and told him. He started calling Saigon telling the Saigon Special Services how horrible I
26 had been, and so forth. So anyway, that was kind of the worst of it. I later found out more
27 and more information. The service club girls, one of them belonged to the colonel. The
28 other one, I’m not sure whose property she was or if she was at all. I had no idea what her
29 situation was. But then I began to realize she—that they really had to (unintelligible) on
30 her. She had been and—I think a fun place. To Rio maybe, or someplace else she was in
31 the Special Services and she had a bad report. So, she was being given a second chance in

1 Vietnam and if this went badly her career was over. So, they really had a lot of pressure
2 on her. She really probably couldn't say a whole lot. I reported this to the Special
3 Services, the woman in charge and she was in Long Binh. I said, "I really—Debbie, you
4 might have a problem here. I know she's working under duress because she can't get
5 another poor review. I was told in the rumor mill that she's the colonel's lady." Anyway,
6 she was pulled out of there, probably because of what I'd said. I ran into her in the airport
7 waiting room at one point [at Tan Son Nhut] and she wouldn't even speak to me.

8 KC: I'll be darned.

9 KJ: I thought she was (unintelligible). When I got back at Saigon [after
10 completing the Charlie Brown tour], of course they were reading me the riot act. I
11 explained what was going on there. They all had—you know, I was supposed to spend
12 the night with somebody there, who knows who. This is more of military power over the
13 women who were there. Which I really resented. I guess this was long after I started—
14 had done my civilian (unintelligible) on my uniform.

15 KC: Right. Which we want to get to for sure.

16 KJ: Oh. I didn't tell you how that started. I'd probably been in-country for a
17 month or two when a fellow [the entertainment director came into Saigon] from Can Tho.
18 He's sitting there across and telling me all these things and I finally looked at him and I
19 said, "How come you're not wearing your uniform?" I had realized that none of the men
20 were wearing uniforms and I had to wear this stupid uniform. [In 1969-70, there were 12
21 Army Special Services – Entertainment civilians working in Vietnam – 8 men and 4
22 women.] The first time I jumped off a helicopter all the guys got off first and I thought,
23 "Oh, they're gonna help me off? What is this?" No, they were gonna gawk at me if got
24 off because the only way I could possibly get off that helicopter [in my uniform] was to
25 shoot a beaver shot. They were all waiting for it. So, I thought, "Okay, this is the last time
26 I wear this straight skirt into the mud and the monsoons," and I wear high heels where
27 I'm slipping down slippery red mud monsoon puddles. Of course, you wouldn't consider
28 white gloves. Who needs the hat? Who needs this purse? It was just completely
29 impractical to wear out in the field.

30 KC: Well, let me stop you there, Kay, because I want to spend a lot more time on
31 this. We probably don't have enough time today, so let's stop our session for today.

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4 **Interview with Kay Johnson**
5 **Session [2] of [3]**
6 **Date: 3 December 2018**

7 KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with Kay Johnson.
8 Today is 3 December 2018. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Ms. Johnson is joining me by
9 telephone again from Redwood Shores, California. Okay, Kay, we left off last time you
10 mentioned something about the uniforms that you were required to wear. I know that this
11 is something that became a very serious issue for you and your efforts to deal with this
12 issue. As you so lovingly called it, “Project Ugly.” Tell me about this. Where does
13 Project Ugly originate? What brought this about? Take me through the narrative of what
14 this was all about, please.

15 KJ: When I first decided I was done with all the papers to apply for this position, I
16 think I filled out papers for a good eight months. It was a lot of paper filling out. Before I
17 could actually get on the airplane to go, I had to wear a uniform. Looking through my
18 paperwork today just to review my memory, I actually had to buy four of them. I can’t
19 believe. I don’t recall more than two but maybe I threw a couple away. This was all about
20 AR 670-10, the uniforms for civilian female employees—men were “not allowed” and
21 that’s the way it is written in the regulation. “Not allowed” to wear the [Special Services]
22 uniform. I found out about this when one of our Special Services officers from IV Corps
23 was in our office one day in Saigon. I asked him where his uniform was, and he about fell
24 off his chair laughing. He would not be caught dead in a uniform, was his response. So, I
25 began looking into it more and—I’m reading through some of my notes here.

26 KC: Okay.

27 KJ: Let’s see. Anyway, I started the process. First, I just asked politely if I could
28 be excused from wearing my uniform [because it was impractical in the field.] They were
29 to be worn, straight skirts were to be worn below the knees. Of course, this was 1969
30 when we were all wearing miniskirts that were as short as you could possibly bear. The
31 first thing I did before I went over actually, was I hemmed it above the knee—just

1 slightly above my knee, which I thought was better than below the knee. Intolerable,
2 although not as short as we were accustomed to wearing things. I noticed pretty much
3 everybody over there had done the same thing. Nobodyf was wearing them below the
4 knees. The first time I took a celebrity out on a helicopter, which was our main mode of
5 transportation, when I got off the helicopter all the men who were on the helicopter
6 jumped off first. I thought maybe they were going to help me off. But no, they were
7 waiting for the beaver shot that I was going to make if I exited the helicopter. That was
8 the last time I ever wore this uniform out on the field. It was totally impractical. I had
9 tailor-made camouflage pants and a top that matched, and pink tennis shoes that I wore
10 instead of my high-heels that were required to get into the country. So anyway, that's
11 how it kind of started was it was impractical. The men were not wearing it [the uniform].
12 I was told that the four women who were hired that summer were the first four to be sent
13 into combat, or into a combat area. I don't know if that's true. I've heard from others that
14 was not true. But maybe it was the first four Special Services women that were in a
15 combat area, I don't know. Anyhow, it was an impractical outfit to have to wear in the
16 field. It cost me [\$269.50] to get all of this stuff together and cart it over to Vietnam. But
17 that was an expense that men did not have to bear. We were given a uniform—\$125
18 dollars each year. I think I received it for the first year and if I continued on this career
19 position, I would receive \$125 a year to compensate for new uniforms. But since the first
20 set cost me a lot more than that the allowance didn't compensate for the expense. [The
21 month I began my campaign was October.] I arrived in country in August of 1969. My
22 some of my earliest writing [was dated 16 October '69.] Just requesting [permission not
23 to wear the uniform.] I went to [Major General Kenneth G. Wickham,] the Adjutant
24 General to ask permission not to wear it. I was told that I was to wear it long as it was
25 part of regulation. And another letter in here to Major Avery through Mr. Meyers, who
26 was my contact] of April of 1970. More letters. Here's April 27th, a letter from John C.
27 Avery to me in reply to my letter, "Paragraph 4-1, Chapter 4, Section 1, AR 670-10
28 requires wearing of uniforms by Special Services female personnel. Until such time as
29 this regulation is rescinded or modified, you are required to wear the prescribed
30 uniform." A couple more paragraphs there, but that was basically it. [In May 1970] I
31 filed a civilian grievance about this. It went up through the chain of command and this

1 was going on until I left. [On 9 June 1970, I filed a Complaint of Discrimination
2 “requesting that AR 670-328 be changed or abolished” and for \$144.50 additional
3 reimbursement.] My one-year commitment was over in August. I did extend a few days
4 because I was busy conducting a choir [Saigon Choral Society] for two more
5 performances. Then I travelled for three months before I got home. A couple of months
6 after I got home, I did receive a letter from the military saying that my case had been
7 dropped since I was no longer involved. But then about—oh, within the next year, I heard
8 that women going over were not wearing uniforms any longer. So, apparently it did do
9 some good. But of course, I was not given credit for it, which is pretty typical.

10 KC: Were there women who were having issues with this?

11 KJ: Oh, all of us were.

12 KC: Yeah?

13 KJ: Well, there were four women [in Entertainment who went to Vietnam when I
14 did.] Nan Nall was another one. She had a PhD in [opera] from Indiana. She was an opera
15 singer. There was a woman in class, can’t think of her name at the moment and another
16 one in drama. [And Jan Brantley in Entertainment, drama.] So, those were the four of us.
17 Nan was sent to Nha Trang to be the Special Services director there. The Director of II
18 Corps. He had her fixing his coffee and delivering his lunch. After a week of that she
19 moved out to the beach and lived with some fellow out there for a while and then she
20 returned to Saigon. (Unintelligible), “I need you to find me a real job. When you do, give
21 me a call. Meanwhile, I’ll be available. Here’s how you reach me.” Then she
22 disappeared. She remained in Saigon and began to do recitals, and also put on the first
23 opera ever presented in Saigon, which was *Hansel and Gretel* using Vietnamese children.
24 They never sent her home for not showing up for work, which I was kind of surprised.
25 She took a tour to—I think it was India and did a whole opera tour there. Came back to
26 Saigon. So, she was living happily ever after in Saigon until her commitment was done.
27 She was never did, they never assigned her again to anything. She was just free and being
28 paid. So, that was her situation. Jan Brantley stayed in Saigon. She was helping Brad
29 Arrington with the Command Military Touring shows. She mostly did office work [in an
30 air conditioned building.] She did wear her uniform mostly. So, it didn’t bother her as
31 much as it did me, but she was not out in the field doing escorts. She did travel with a

1 couple of touring shows. Of course, I traveled with the *You're a Good Man, Charlie*
2 *Brown*. Didn't take the uniforms with me on that trip.

3 KC: So, I assume you went to your higher—I'm sorry go ahead.

4 KJ: I was just gonna say, did that answer some of your questions?

5 KC: Yeah, yeah. I assumed that you took your concerns—you know, that these
6 uniforms are just impractical. And certainly, the way you're looking at it, certainly not
7 fair that the men are not having to wear uniforms, but you are. They're unwieldy and
8 uncomfortable, all these sorts of things. Do you take this to your higher up? To the next
9 person in the chain of command? Does it go that way, or did you go straight to the
10 adjutant general? How did that work?

11 KJ: I took it to the person in charge first. I reported to Brad Arrington and have a
12 handwritten note about that and his reply. Basically, he didn't want me to ruffle
13 anybody's—he basically told me to beg off and tolerate it rather than stir up any soup.
14 So, then I took it to the person he reported to who was in our office. Got the same thing.
15 Then, [on the advice of MAJ, AGC, Director, John C. Avery in his letter of response
16 dated 27 Apr 70,] I made my civilian grievance with the civilian department through a
17 fellow named Mr. Fred Waltmade, was involved in that. He told me it was the first
18 civilian grievance in Vietnam. So, he kind of handled it from there on. But there were
19 letters flying around everywhere. Basically, the same answer: "These are the rules.
20 Follow them."

21 KC: Yeah. Did you get any pushback from someone saying, "Hey, you know, this
22 going to affect your career. Shut up and play ball or there's gonna trouble." Anything like
23 that?

24 KJ: Oh, yes. [The civilian in-country head of Special Services – Entertainment,]
25 Mr. Meyers, towards the end of the year called me [into his office for my first review of
26 the consequences of refusing to wear a uniform. He told me that after the third reminder,
27 I would be reported to Washington, D. C.]—oh, I guess by this time I was talking to the
28 fellow in charge—forgotten his name. Anyway, he was stationed at Long Binh and he
29 was the person that Mr. Meyers reported to and had gotten to him. I had written him,
30 asking him to wave this requirement. He didn't answer my letter. Civilians had a ten-day
31 response. We were supposed to be responded to within ten days. Three weeks went by

1 and I hadn't heard from him. So, I went into Mr. Meyers's office and said, "I'd like to be
2 on the mail run to Long Binh because I need to talk with the general," whoever he was.
3 "Oh, no. Oh, no. Don't go. I'll be here tomorrow. I'll go. I'll go for you and I'll talk with
4 him about it." "Well, okay." So, I came into the office the next day and, "Where's Mr.
5 Meyers? I thought he was going on the mail run?" "Oh, his wife had a problem and he
6 flew off to Bangkok." "Oh, that's nice. He didn't tell me." Of course, there was no way to
7 tell me. Communication was a challenge for III Corps. So, I got on the mail car—the mail
8 truck, and I spoke with this fellow. He [wanted to know], "Why are you here?" "Well,
9 I'm here because I wrote to you about uniforms." "Did anyone answer your letter?" "No,
10 sir, no one answered my letter and it was directed to you." There's more to this story
11 because Long Binh post had been trying to move me out of Saigon to Long Binh, for who
12 knows why. Because my job was working with celebrities who were billeted in Saigon.
13 Picking them up at the airport. Getting them into their billeting, making sure they were
14 comfortable and taken care of. Picking them up, putting them on helicopters, and taking
15 them where they needed to go, etc. I don't know how I could have done that in Long
16 Binh, which took an hour to get to from Saigon even though it was maybe twenty-five,
17 thirty miles. The traffic was really bad. So, I could not have functioned in that position
18 out of Long Binh. Yet they were desperately trying to get me to Long Binh so I could live
19 in the billet there. Of course, I knew how bad it was in Long Binh because when we did
20 the Charlie Brown show we spent a couple of weeks in Long Binh where the women
21 were billeted. It was a two-story wooden building that didn't have windows. It just had
22 screen wire. No curtains, of course. The community showers were down in the middle of
23 the bottom level. At five o'clock every Friday, a bus would come and park outside of the
24 women's building there. All of the guys would come off and they would raid they
25 showers. They would raid the entire building. Because I was an officer equivalent, I got a
26 fan and sheets and blankets. Well, sheets anyway, and a pillow that not everybody got.
27 But that's how bad it was there.

28 KC: You said these guys would come in and raid the place. What do you mean by
29 that?

30 KJ: Oh, they would actually go into the showers. You could hear the women
31 would be screaming and they'd be running out with a towel around themselves.

1 KC: Wow.

2 KJ: The men thought this was really funny. It happened—I mean, the bus dropped
3 them there and it happened every Friday. It was a usual thing.

4 KC: Who were these folks? Were they new in-country? Were they headed to
5 R&R (rest and recuperation) somewhere? Who were these guys?

6 KJ: Well, Long Binh post had 40,000 men on it at that time. It was, I think the
7 largest post certainly in I Corps. Probably anywhere. Probably mostly officers, I would
8 guess, but I don't know. Because women were not—well, okay, let's go back to the
9 military status. Officers pretty much felt they owned any American woman who was
10 there. If you were an officer equivalent, which I was, I was not allowed to fraternize—
11 they called it fraternizing with the enlisted men. I'm sure that was probably true of all
12 women whether they were officer equivalents or not. American women were not
13 supposed to fraternize, which means talk to or be friendly, unless you're in a service club
14 or someplace and giving them a ping pong paddle. You were not supposed to have any
15 friendships with them. The officers were not accustomed to hearing "no" because no one
16 ever told them "no." Nor were they accustomed to having questions asked because they
17 were military people and they were pretty arrogant. Well, since I was a civilian, I did not
18 have to report to anyone in the military which was very frustrating to them because they
19 really didn't have any power over me. They could take my vehicles away, which they
20 did. Long Binh post took the Long Binh post vehicles away from the Special Service
21 office there because I refused to live there, be billeted there. There could be those kinds
22 of things, but they really couldn't get me fired, for example, because I refused to agree to
23 cooperate by going out to dinner on Friday evening or whatever. Even within our office I
24 had problems. I couldn't get transportation because the sergeant wouldn't see that I had
25 any transportation unless I would go out with him, which I refused to do. So, I didn't
26 have transportation, which they moved the office from the center of Saigon to the outer
27 edges where there were no restaurants or anything. I couldn't get any lunch unless I
28 packed it or took a taxi or cyclo or something [into town] where I could eat. So, toward
29 the end of my tour I actually didn't put in full days in during office days because I would
30 get hungry. By two o'clock I would just go home and then stay home rather than try to
31 get back because it was such a hassle. I was also given an office without air conditioning

1 at that point. In Saigon, when we were in the center, we had an air-conditioned building.
2 We were all together. I think I'm probably getting off the point here.

3 KC: No, that's okay. I mean you're talking about getting some blow back from
4 this effort that you're making it sounds like.

5 KJ: Oh, yeah. There was no cooperation. The last thing anyone in the military
6 wanted to hear was advice from a woman. They were playing their war games and I did
7 develop kind of an attitude, I suppose.

8 KC: Did the other women in Special Services support you? Either openly or
9 behind the scenes?

10 KJ: Oh, they all had their problems, I think. Nan was pretty liberal. She had an
11 affair with Colonel Myrick, a black man who was quite exceptional. Quite an exceptional
12 man, really. She also kind of went both ways. She had women friends, too. The other
13 woman up in Cam Ranh Bay, she was dating a black man. I think he was an officer, but
14 that's okay. As long as they're officers it's okay. She also smoked cigars. So, you know,
15 we had different kinds of women over there. I'm sure they all had their problems. Of
16 course, there were women who would come into Saigon and they would put themselves
17 out for hire. They had lines lined up. They were getting sixty dollars a thrill in those days.

18 KC: This was widely known?

19 KJ: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

20 KC: Although, I assume strictly forbidden still in addition to being illegal. Still
21 going on.

22 KJ: Oh, yeah. Well, it was different—everything was going crazy there. You were
23 supposed to get all of your currency at the bank and the exchange rate was pathetic. So,
24 no one did it. We all exchanged our currency somewhere in the black market. I didn't
25 smoke but I still had cigarette rations. So, what did I do with them? Well, I had fellows
26 who would come to me and say, "Can I sell your cigarette rations for you?" I said, "Sure,
27 why not." So, those got sold in the black market, as well. There was wheeling and dealing
28 going on at all levels. We had trouble getting our trucks because they'd come over on
29 ships and disappear as soon as they hit the docks. Thought to be Vietnamese taking them,
30 but who knows. I was aware that there were shipments of machineguns and that an
31 American civilian—American, yeah, he was a civilian—was selling or doing something

1 with them. I didn't want to know too much about it for fear that maybe I would get
2 involved and my life might be threatened. But there was just wheeling and dealing going
3 on all the time. When there were big parties, they would have steak and lobster. Well,
4 that was done through wheeling and dealing. Trading off things, you know, like if I want
5 transportation to lunch, I would have to go out with this guy. It was just that kind of stuff
6 that is just the way it was because we really didn't have currency that we could exchange
7 easily. There was a black market on getting American dollars in. People would go to
8 Hong Kong, bring back American dollars which were, oh, twenty times more valuable
9 than anything else, the MPC (military payment certificates) we dealt with was pretty
10 stupid. There was an effort to make people do things a certain way but no real incentive
11 to do it. Rarely did you ever get caught for it. Of course, as a civilian it would be even
12 more rare. One of the guys working for me got picked up for selling the cigarette rations.
13 I felt really badly about that. I think he was selling some of mine, as well. He was a
14 nineteen-year-old. I had three men working for me—one was Tom Salisbury who was
15 very talented. The most talented musician I've worked with. After Vietnam, he traveled
16 for three years with the Pointer Sisters. Has had quite a musical career. Actually, opened
17 a concert for Elton John one time [in San Francisco]. Then another, Burton Hem, he did a
18 lot of the administrative work for me. We hired David, the young guy, because he was a
19 great drummer. Tom was putting on all kinds of various shows and needed musicians at
20 hand. So, these three guys, very talented young men working for me. All enlisted. All
21 draft. All draftees.

22 KC: You have these kinds of things going on. The first question that comes to my
23 mind is where was the leadership when all this was going on?

24 KJ: Oh, they were busy. They were doing it, too. Everybody was doing it.
25 Everybody did. There was an attitude among the enlisted and among people really
26 involved in their dirty work. There was an attitude that the government really doesn't
27 care anything about us. It's a political war. It was obvious once I got there. The reasons I
28 went, I wanted to find out—well, we all went to stop the spread of communism, in
29 theory, but I also wanted to learn about how my country worked and all the good things it
30 did. Also, women's traditional roles were not choices I wanted to make. Also, I spent the
31 two years before going over in San Diego I was seeing a lot of the men because all of the

1 young women spent their Friday nights at the MCRD, the officers club, meeting all these
2 men who were either coming or going—most of them going to Vietnam. This was my
3 peer group. Those were the men my age and they were all running off to Vietnam so, you
4 know, why shouldn't I go to Vietnam? All my friends were there. Travel and adventure.
5 But once you get there you realize it's a political war. It was rumored that Pat Nixon
6 owned the water plant in Saigon. I was never able to—I heard that from a lot of different
7 sources, but was never able to prove it. But everybody was over there wheeling and
8 dealing, making their fortune. The government didn't care about them so, therefore, you
9 did whatever you could to make life good and to make as much money and to benefit in
10 whatever way you could. That was just kind of the attitude. People I knew who had been
11 there for two and three years were, by this time, experts at wheeling and dealing. They
12 could come up with anything you wanted. It was a challenge and it was more fun than
13 war.

14 KC: Well, what did you think about this kind of attitude after you lived within it
15 for a period of time. You kind of see this thing forming. What was your opinion of that?

16 KJ: I didn't think it was healthy. It was a survival technique. I would not have
17 gone more than one year because I think after a while you start getting into this. Towards
18 the end of my time I was selling my cigarette rations and doing a few stupid things. But if
19 I had been there longer, I would have gotten better at it and would have had more
20 contacts. I could have done a lot more. People, as they are—not that I'm inclined that
21 way, I'm not. But it's a survival technique when nothing else is working. Telephones
22 didn't work. Communication didn't work. Being forced to wear uniforms against my
23 better judgement. Trying to do work that got very little accolades for. Everything was so
24 disjointed so, I didn't. I guess it was trying to control it. Plus, I had a job that was
25 [challenging and full of adventure.] I also had a free reign on a lot of things. I ended up
26 doing posters. There was so much that needed to be done there that you never had a free
27 moment. You could fill your time so easily because there wasn't enough personnel to
28 really do some of the nitty-gritty stuff that needed to be done, like posters and getting
29 advertisements out for the shows we did, and so forth. Tom wanted to compete in the
30 Parade of American Music [world-wide contest] and he did four concerts for that. They
31 were all done in Saigon. He would get these groups of people. Would get the guys from

1 out from the field, put them on TDY, rehearse them and they put on these programs. We
2 won a huge award for that. Tom also did two different big concerts for the Vietnamese
3 people. He must have brought in 3,000—mostly just local Vietnamese to see a rock show
4 with videos on the walls. It was a big happening in Saigon. Some of those things were
5 really worthwhile. Of course, Nan's *Hansel and Gretel* opera that she did. There was a lot
6 to be done there. But none of it was legally done according to our job descriptions. The
7 Saigon concerts were very worthwhile. They were greatly enjoyed and they were reaping
8 lots of goodwill from the Vietnamese people.

9 KC: What about some of the things that you saw as positives that were going on
10 with the Special Services? Or, in Vietnam in general in addition to these concerts that you
11 just mentioned. That kind of makes me think of—okay, we've talked about some of the
12 more negative aspects of what's going on but what about the positive aspects? Did you
13 see any? If so, what were they?

14 KJ: It was a beautiful country. There were quite a few French people still there.
15 The *ao dais* (dresses) were beautiful that the women wore. I had several of them made
16 that I wore. When I went over, I had a choice of living wherever the government would
17 put me and eating in the cafeterias. Well, that didn't go so well because when I'd go to
18 eat dinner, I would be the only woman in the whole room. It was hard to eat because I
19 had a lot of interference. So, I decided I really would rather take the stipend and live on
20 the economy. Which I did. I had a marvelous landlord. I suppose anyone who's a
21 landowner there is probably well off compared to the other people. Of course, the city
22 was full of refugees. People who lived on cots on the curbs. But there were some
23 beautiful homes there made probably by the French, in French colonial style. Victor was
24 my landlord. His parents lived on the first and second floor and I rented the third floor
25 from them. They had two children. They had a daughter and a son. Victor was the son
26 and he had US citizenship and Vietnamese, of course. His sister had French [and
27 Vietnamese citizenships]. Victor had a bank account in LA and that's how I paid him in
28 US dollars by transferring money from my US bank to his US bank once a month. In that
29 way, he got the full \$265 that I was allowed for living on the economy. If I had to pay
30 him in piastres, which was what the government wanted me to do, I probably would have
31 paid him \$150, so I would have paid him less, about 1/6, it would have been maybe fifty

1 bucks or something, but I spent \$265. Lovely people. Lots of lovely people. I had a little
2 Madam Bui did housekeeping for me. She was totally lovely. Worked hard, always
3 showed up, and gave me a beautiful gift of a Vietnamese hat that she had signed when I
4 left. So, there were good people there. Nan was very involved with the French
5 community because she did some French concerts. She had the French people help her
6 with her pronunciation. So, she was more in tune with them. They had a Sportif that was
7 very nice. You could even go horseback riding there. The swimming pool looked like it
8 was filled with mud. That wasn't very—the water was black. (Laughs) But that was kind
9 of a social club.

10 KC: Right. Yeah, the Circle Sportif? How often would you visit this place? It's a
11 pretty famous place.

12 KJ: I was only there a couple of times. It's hard to get into so you had to get a
13 membership. Getting membership took most of the year so, by the time I got in I really
14 didn't have much time to enjoy it. I did go horseback riding one day. The horses were
15 very small but there was one horse there that was gorgeous. I'm sure [it belonged to the]
16 owners of the place, or whatever. Only the privileged could ride it. It had been brought in
17 from somewhere and it was very well trained.

18 KC: I figured you would have found your way—

19 KJ: —they had a racetrack there, too. Sometimes you'd see people out walking or
20 exercising the racehorses. They were the size of American ponies. They weren't very big
21 at all. Horses did not do well—they don't do well in the tropics. They don't do well on
22 rice and they can't grow wheat there. Then again, I think I'm probably diverting.

23 KC: No, no, no. That's obviously okay. You were in charge of shepherding some
24 of the celebrities around. You mentioned Ron Ely. Certainly George—George Peppard
25 last time. What other celebrities did you come in contact with?

26 KJ: George Jessel, all too many times. Let's see, Miss America troupes twice.
27 Christy Minstrel Singers were there twice. Gary Merrill and Susan Oliver came, they
28 were on a handshake tour. I enjoyed both of them. Gary Merrill was very interesting. The
29 Miss America troupes and the Christy Minstrel Singers, they lasted all of about three or
30 four days. Spent the rest of the time in the hospital.

31 KC: (Laughs) Explain that to me. What do you mean by that?

1 KJ: Well, it happened to almost everyone who came into country. It took about
2 three or four days or within the week they all had dysentery and heat rash, blisters and
3 infections of various sorts. They just kind of zonked out. Dehydration, whatever. It was
4 hot there. It was very hot. Very hot and humid.

5 KC: What would go into putting on one of these shows? How much work would
6 you have to do to get one of these ready?

7 KJ: Most of the ones I did were smaller shows. It was a matter of getting them
8 scheduled. Knowing what they had with them. If they were musicians, would they have
9 equipment to haul? With the Charlie Brown show took three helicopters, I think, to haul
10 us and all our gear wherever we went. So, I was in charge of getting all that together and
11 coordinating with whoever was going to meet us at the other end. Usually there would be
12 an officer in charge that would take the people around and show them what we were
13 doing. I had William Lundigan with me one time and took him out to Cu Chi. What
14 happened quite often was that they would be taken by the officers who would tell them
15 what they were doing and about skirmishes and where everything was. I got to, of course,
16 witness all of this. So I probably knew a lot about what was going on militarily within III
17 Corps, at least, because they'd say, "We have troops over here. We had a skirmish there
18 last night," and they'd be pointing to places on a large map. It was interesting that I was
19 taking people to a fire support base. Those were right on the border of Vietnam and
20 Cambodia. So, I knew that we were in Cambodia and finally the, what was it? The *Stars*
21 *and Stripes* newspaper like six months after the fact said, "Oh, the Americans—it's just
22 been announced the Americans have gone into Cambodia." We had been in Cambodia at
23 least six months before anything was told. I think I've diverted again. (Both laugh)

24 KC: Well, I was asking you what goes into putting on one of these shows. I mean,
25 I assume that they tell you who's coming. What they're going to be there for. The people
26 that are with them. You're trying to find locations for them and making all the
27 arrangements. Things like that. Does that sound about right?

28 KJ: Yeah, yeah. And making sure they were taken care of. Now, George Jessel
29 was a total pain.

30 KC: Why do you say that?

1 KJ: He had fallen off the stage somewhere and somebody gave him a cane. I've
2 forgotten who it was now. He had this famous cane and he had to tell who gave it to him
3 to be very famous. He'd wear this jacket with all kinds of medals. Totally covered in
4 medals and he wore a toupee. He always brought some cute little girl with him. He would
5 go out and, I guess, tell jokes. Usually the girls would sing, whatever, and he'd put on a
6 show for the men. He was there two or three times during my stint. He was very sexist.
7 Made sexist jokes. I remember I went to the USO place in Saigon one day, and he was in
8 there and saw me. "Oh! Hi!" He yelled from across the room, "Hi, Kay! How's my wife
9 doing?" Just stuff like that. Very insensitive comments. He had Melba Joy Moore with
10 him on one of these trips. "Oh, Melba, my shoulder hurts," and she would massage his
11 shoulder. Took them out to a fire support base and she got off the helicopter and her
12 three-inch-high heel, spike heel broke. So, she has one foot in high heels and the other
13 barefooted stomping around. Took her out to a base that had a lot of black men. She
14 disappeared for about an hour and a half. I don't know where she went while George
15 Jessel went to take his nap. He had to take frequent naps because he would tire very
16 quickly. One of these helicopter rides—very hot when you're on land and as you go up in
17 a helicopter, the air gets thin and it gets cold up there. We went up in the helicopter and
18 he'd been perspiring. The perspiration was running down his forehead and into this
19 makeup that he was wearing. Also, the cheesecloth underneath his toupee was showing. I
20 just remember looking at him and thinking, "Oh, my." He was very demanding. His
21 favorite drink was Drambuie, and every time he landed at a base the first thing he would
22 request was his Drambuie. Even out on the Cambodian border the guys were out looking
23 for Drambuie. They usually came up with some, amazingly enough. Oh, let's see.
24 William Lundigan, he arrived drunk. They had to pull him out of some bar when
25 somebody was fetching him up. Wasn't me. On the way from the airport he stopped at a
26 bar and they had to pull him out of the bar. I took him down to Can Tho, and down there
27 the first thing he wanted to know was, "Where's the bar?" Took him out to a fire support
28 base and all the guys asked, "Who is that guy over there who's drunk?" "Who is that
29 guy?" He'd taken his shirt off was sitting there bare breasted signing autographs. Nobody
30 knew who he was. He had been a Captain somebody in the early '50s, I think. He was
31 kind of past his prime. Oh, let's see. On the bigger shows like the Bob Hope, we did not

1 handle those, they came straight out of Bangkok. They usually came with sixty people or
2 more. They had to be billeted where there was running water, flushing toilets, and air
3 conditioning. Because of security, they were usually flown in the day of their
4 performance and flown out the same day. They did come into Long Binh post for one of
5 those. I think that the day I knew he was coming, they don't tell anybody he's coming
6 but I figured, I could kind of tell from what guys are saying: "No, we can't take that
7 celebrity on such and such a day. We're going to be busy that day." I know they wouldn't
8 be busy for anything other than something very special. So, I kind of knew the day when
9 he was performing and I headed for the beach.

10 KC: I was going to ask you if you wanted to see it or if you wanted to get away
11 from it.

12 KJ: Yeah, I just wanted to avoid all the noise and competition.

13 KC: Of course. Yeah.

14 KJ: There were some things that were unique to Special Services. We had four
15 branches—I don't know how familiar you are with all these, but we had Service Clubs,
16 Crafts, Library, and Entertainment. I think all these positions required women to have
17 college degrees. Most of the entertainment branch had graduate degrees. Therefore, we
18 had—I was a NAF-9. I think Brad was an 11, and Meyers was a 12—oh, GS is what they
19 called it. GS-9, 11, and 12. So, Mr. Meyers, who was the top of our Saigon branch, and
20 he would have been in charge of all the Special Services, Entertainment people
21 throughout Vietnam. He reported to the head guy [in Long Binh]. He had a GS-12.
22 Service Club primarily were GS-7 people, some of them might have even been 5's. I'm
23 not quite sure where the college degree paid in. I think anyone with a college degree
24 probably had a GS-7.

25 KC: You were—I may be wrong here, but weren't the entertainment director for
26 all of III Corps at one time?

27 KJ: Yes, and I kind of inherited that job. Brad had been the III Corps director, and
28 he wanted to do his Command Military Touring shows. So, he turned the III Corps
29 directorship over to me so he could do his other. But he was closely supervising me, of
30 course. Brad was a wonderful, wonderful person. He was a thorough delight to work for.
31 I think he'd been over there for years. I don't know how many years. He was definitely a

1 career entertainment director. He'd been in other places, as well. So, I signed up—the
2 only place I could go was Vietnam. All the European places which I might have liked to
3 have gone to were all three-year commitments. Vietnam was a one-year commitment,
4 which was kind of unusual. Most of these commitments were career people for three
5 years. The idea was that we would go over and supervise the entertainment division of
6 the Army. They had a turnover every six months. They would get new people in. We
7 were supposed to kind of oversee that and keep the continuity of their programs going.

8 KC: So, once you take over as entertainment director, how—if it does, does your
9 role change? Your schedule, the things that you're responsible for.

10 KJ: Mainly, for me, it was that I got men to work for me and do some of the basic
11 work like—I had Bert doing most of my assignments and he would say, "So and so will
12 be here these four days." He would figure out what to do with them during those four
13 days. You kind of get contacts out in the field and—oh, sometimes you call your favorite
14 contacts or, depending on who was coming and what kind of a show they have whether
15 it's George Peppard came over. He was the only one. He was a handshake tour. Ron Ely,
16 the same thing. So, you have one person to escort. I escorted a lot of them. I guess
17 probably most of them unless for some reason I couldn't. I enjoyed doing that, so I did a
18 lot of that. So, Bert working for me. I had Tom working for me. Tom was such a talent.
19 Tom was an extraordinary talent. It kept him busy with shows. The deal was, "Tom, I
20 know you want to do this. So, when someone comes to me and says, 'Where's Tom
21 today?' I have to have an answer for them, so keep me totally posted as to your activities
22 at all times." I was always [able to report Tom's activities.] "I don't see Tom here.
23 Where's Tom?" I would tell them, "Well, he's working with such and such. He's over at
24 the Vietnamese American Society doing whatever he was doing." He typically had some
25 TDY men with him. So, he was putting things together and keeping a lot of people
26 happy. So, really my job would have been more like what the men were doing initially.
27 When I first came in, I was distributing these people. Finding places to send them.
28 Sometimes Brad would go with them. He was tired of doing it, so he got to where he was
29 sending me most of the time. When he turned it over to me, I was just doing all of his
30 work so he could do something different.

31 KC: Did you like serving in this capacity?

1 KJ: Oh, yeah. I had a—what was really neat about this job, there was so many
2 things that needed to be done and as long as you got the things you had to do done, no
3 one cared what else you did with your other time. So, I was doing all kinds of things. Of
4 course, as women we had fun getting our *ao dais* made. Jan had fun going to night clubs
5 and places where she would often sing, maybe sing “Summertime” or something like
6 that. Another woman we spent time with, her husband was over there with Ford Motor
7 Company. Who knows what he was doing. She was just having a great time being a wife.
8 Wearing gorgeous clothes all the time that she had handmade. They were the only places
9 to buy clothes other than the commissary. All the small sizes—I’m fairly small, but all
10 the small sizes were rarely seen because the Vietnamese would get in there and buy all
11 that stuff because they were small. So, small shoes, small pants, trousers, shirts, all that
12 stuff was gone. My mother was very beneficial. I ordered a lot from the Sears catalogue.

13 KC: Oh, is that right?

14 KJ: Oh, yeah.

15 KC: So, did you correspond with your mother pretty regularly?

16 KJ: Probably so. I furnished my little apartment pretty much out of Sears
17 catalogue. I tinted my hair at the time and my mother would send me all the hair tint that
18 I needed and anything else that I felt like I had to have.

19 KC: Such as what?

20 KJ: Oh, books, I guess. Let’s see. On a typical day, breakfast—this is an office
21 day. I’d get up in the morning and have breakfast at a local restaurant that was about a
22 half a block or couple buildings from where my place was. Usually had coffee with mud
23 in the bottom, fresh papaya, and French bread with weevils. When I first arrived and got
24 the French bread and saw the weevils I kind of set it aside. Within a week I was eating
25 the bread and picking off the weevils. I never got quite so nonchalant as many Americans
26 who were just eating the weevils and all of it. I usually managed to pick those out. I could
27 walk to the office from where I lived when the office was downtown. I’d schedule
28 celebrities and the entertainment in the field via helicopters. Let’s see, I had Ina Balin
29 there at one point. She came in by herself. She was going to have to be a handshake tour.
30 The guys decided that she needed to be more than that and they tried to teach her to sing
31 and I guess they were somewhat successful. Oh, another thing I did, I adjudicated a lot of

1 shows. We had groups from the Philippines and groups from Australia that would come
2 in and be shows. These could be hired by various support commands out in the field.
3 They were adjudicated to get their hiring price. I frequently did that and did that locally
4 in Saigon. I participated in military touring shows. Sometimes we had entertainment
5 contests and we would have them in all the different corps. It was a way to find talented
6 men who were there as soldiers. Brad was doing this quite a bit so he could find soldiers
7 with talent and send them out as Command Military Touring shows. When we had these,
8 they would have to have judges and I frequently got called in to be a judge for those. I
9 know I did one in Cam Ranh Bay that I remember. That was quite interesting. Cam Ranh
10 Bay had a lot of black men and there was a lot of problems up there—racial problems in
11 that area. Let's see, when I was up there adjudicating we had groups of usually four men,
12 a lot of them black, that would do the dancing that was really popular in those days.
13 Singing, dancing, in sync with one another. A lot of talent came out of these shows. We
14 picked up a lot of good people. One that I remember was the young man who sang and
15 played a guitar. He sang "Call the Wind Mariah," that was one of the favorite ones, and
16 "I'm Leaving on a Freight Train"—I've forgotten how that goes. That was another one
17 that was very popular, and sung everywhere, I guess. Dylan's, "Goin' Back Home"—
18 "Going Off," whatever. We sent him out—and those were great shows. We could send
19 them out in jeeps or just about anything. We didn't have to send them on airplanes like
20 we did with the big celebrities and large shows. They didn't have to get helicopters for
21 them, either because we were sending them to local bases. They were very popular
22 because they were entertaining men just like themselves.

23 KC: What was the—I know this would vary greatly, but what was the attendance
24 like for these shows? Whether it's a larger show or smaller show, or just one guy going
25 out. I mean, who would be attending?

26 KJ: As many troops as could get to them. They were very well attended. With
27 George Jessel—I had a group one time of three men and a woman. They were from the
28 Denver area, I believe. They just kind of sang folksongs. The woman was gorgeous. She
29 was like the girl next door. Every man available at whatever camp we were on would be
30 there. I had George Jessel one time and it poured rain and the men sat there in the rain
31 and watched. They got a cover to put George Jessel under since he had a mic. They didn't

1 want the mic in the rain. But the men sat there for an entire hour or more in the rain. They
2 had so little entertainment that it was a wonderful time for them to be able to do. With the
3 group that I had from Colorado, they had records that they signed and sold. People
4 bought those—men bought those. I would say they were very well attended. Probably
5 ninety to ninety-five percent attended.

6 KC: That's impressive.

7 KJ: Yeah, just depends on how busy they were.

8 KC: Right, sure, sure. Depending on what the enemy has going on as well as what
9 they have going on, obviously.

10 KJ: Yeah, there were times when, "Would you like to come down to the dugout
11 they had that was covered with sandbags because we've got some incoming?" I think
12 they would call it "possible incoming." But the men would be firing their—it's been so
13 long that I've forgotten the names of all this equipment. They had the small little cannon
14 thing. Some of the places had the great big howitzers. Howitzer shells were piled up in
15 huge, huge piles. The Vietnamese turned them into everything. That would be one of the
16 positive things. I have several of those [brass] souvenirs. One is a large, brass vase made
17 from a howitzer shell. I have a couple of ashtrays made from howitzer shells. Some large
18 candle holders that stand about three feet high and come in about three or four pieces.
19 Those are all made out of brass howitzer shells. I have a bell that's maybe six inches high
20 that I picked up that's made out of a howitzer shell. They were making all kinds of stuff
21 with them. Quite a people. I have elephants that are pottery. They did very nice pottery
22 work, as well.

23 KC: You mentioned possible incoming. Were you ever at a base or any place that
24 was under attack while you were there?

25 KJ: Probably. They didn't broadcast that to the civilians. But they would say,
26 "Oh, we're just practice shooting." I don't know why they would have to practice. They
27 were shooting at something, I'm sure. So, I did get to watch the men firing—I can't recall
28 what they called them. It took three men to do it. One guy fired it, one stuffed the shell
29 into the barrel. They had it down to where they were totally in sync, which was important
30 because you didn't want it going off while someone was putting it in there.

1 KC: (Laughs) Right. I assume you're probably talking about a mortar, or
2 something like that, I'd guess.

3 KJ: Yes, mortars, that's what it was. They were firing mortars, yeah.

4 KC: You were talking about a song a little bit ago and dealing with all these
5 entertainment types. What kind of music do you think of when you think of Vietnam?
6 What sort of music do you hear today that triggers memories of Vietnam?

7 KJ: "Lolling on the Liver." Vietnamese can't say R's. "Rolling on the River" was
8 a very popular song then. When you went to a Vietnamese night club you always heard it
9 and it was sung by a Vietnamese who called it "Lolling on the Liver," which I used to get
10 a kick out of. That was one of them. What else? "I'm Leaving on a Freight Train," I
11 already mentioned that one. My background is not in popular music. Never even
12 followed it as a kid. I was always into classical music.

13 KC: Which is kind of where your education went, obviously. We talked about last
14 time.

15 KJ: Yeah, obviously, yeah.

16 KC: Did you ever get a chance to leave Vietnam to go somewhere else on a little
17 break? An R&R?

18 KJ: Oh, yeah. Two or three times to Hong Kong on weekends.

19 KC: Is that right?

20 KJ: Yeah, it like about a two-hour flight. It wasn't a big deal.

21 KC: What did you think of Hong Kong?

22 KJ: Oh, that's a kick. (Chuckle) I would shop myself crazy. They had a big PX
23 (post exchange) there where I bought—where everybody bought the giant speakers. I'm
24 still using them.

25 KC: Is that right?

26 KJ: Yeah, they were six-way speakers. There were six speakers in this great big
27 thing. It's hooked to my television set which isn't working right now. I bought a sewing
28 machine there. It was last year's model, but it was a great sewing machine. Singer
29 sewing machine for, I don't know, half of what you'd pay in the States for it. The
30 speakers and jewelry galore. Oh, jewelry was so cheap. Ivory, which wasn't illegal at that
31 point. Of course, nobody thought about it much. I certainly wasn't aware that they were

1 killing off all the elephants to get the ivory. But I bought ivory bridges and ivory trinkets,
2 bracelets and necklaces, earrings, whatever. All of that—even a beautiful pair of pearl
3 earrings for twenty bucks. A friend of mine bought for me a pearl necklace with 100
4 pearls on it, all perfectly matched. I imagine he might have paid 20, maybe 50, maybe
5 even 100 dollars for it. Who knows? It's been estimated at 3,000 [dollars] here. I bought
6 a string of green jade that I paid twenty bucks for a long necklace. I bought lamps that I
7 had shipped back to the States. The lamps were, I think \$4.50 apiece. They're ginger jar
8 lamps and I bought them the last time I was there. On this last afternoon I only had hours
9 [remaining]. I was afraid I was going to miss my plane back to Saigon. I said, "Just ship
10 it to America." I thought, "Well, I'll never see those again." I'll be darned if they didn't
11 show up about three or four months later after I got home. They did show up and they
12 were in perfect condition.

13 KC: I'll be darned.

14 KJ: Honest Chinese. I mean, those people work so hard to make a living and they
15 were so conscientious.

16 KC: Did you get to go anywhere besides Hong Kong?

17 KJ: Yes, I went to Taipei, Taiwan. Before I left, I was living with Diana and
18 [Louise]. I've forgotten her name at the moment. She was a Navy nurse [in San Diego].
19 She deployed right after I did and went to Taiwan to be a Navy nurse for eighteen
20 months. So, I went to visit her. That was fun because I had an escort. She had a house
21 with roommates and housekeepers, and so forth, and a car. We did the Mongolian
22 barbeque one night. And the night market there was a dentist and everything. The way
23 you pick a good dentist there is you pick the one with the most teeth in his fishbowl.
24 He'd been there working on people standing on dirt and barefooted. We got to watch the
25 snakes get peeled because they eat snakes there. Taiwan had a lot of them. Tons of snakes
26 and a lot of them were poisonous. I also went to Australia. In Australia, I wanted to do
27 some horseback riding. So, I found, there's a list in the USO, I think it was the USO place
28 there, found of places you could go. People who would take in people, soldiers and
29 whatnot. One of them actually requested a woman. So, I called them up and it was about
30 350 miles northwest of Sydney. Maybe northeast, I can't remember. Anyway, I went to a
31 sheep farm and spent a few days on the sheep farm. They did have a horse, so I got to

1 horseback ride. They had a sheepdog and I got to watch the sheepdog work. The husband
2 took me out and showed me how the sheepdog worked. Yeah, I had fun. It was a nice
3 diversion.

4 KC: Yeah. How long would these trips last typically?

5 KJ: I'm not sure about it anymore, but I think Taiwan might have been five days.
6 But Australia, because it was farther, I think we got a full week there. Let's see, the guys
7 working for me mostly went to Bangkok. Tom loved women so he went to Bangkok and
8 he rented a gal for a week. One with big breasts because he liked big breasts. (Chuckle)
9 They corresponded for quite a long time. I think for the rest of his trip. Of course, he was
10 married and had a child back in the States. The draft was something horrible there.
11 Nearly all the men over there, at least the enlisted men who were out in the field were all
12 drafted. Of the Charlie Brown group, the fellow who played Snoopy had a master's in
13 drama and had a law degree. He was twenty-nine and he was drafted. Bert, who I kept in
14 my office after the Charlie Brown deal, had a master's degree I think in drama. He was
15 sent to the Cambodian border and he saw a little ad someplace that said, "Chaplain needs
16 help." So, he followed that up and turned out to be the chaplain's assistant to get himself
17 off the front line. He got to move the palm trees in and out of the church on Sundays. He
18 thought that was a pretty good deal. Then we found him and pulled him into Saigon and
19 liked him and were able to actually pull him off that tour of duty and put him in Saigon in
20 our office. Of course, being in Saigon I had my choice of any talent I wanted in Vietnam
21 if they could get there. If they could get there and get reassigned to Saigon they were in
22 heaven.

23 KC: Oh, no doubt.

24 KJ: Of course, here's a guy drafted and has a master's degree out on the
25 Cambodian border. He didn't want to be there. I guess the sad part was that the units on
26 the border were very, very young, the ones on the front lines. The ones who were older
27 could usually fenagle a way not to be there. What was left was all these young, young
28 men. One of them—I took a celebrity out to a, probably a handshake tour and he went off
29 to do his handshakes and I talked to some of the men. One of them I talked to was really,
30 really upset. It turns out on his first mission into the Cambodian jungle, he had fired on
31 someone because they were attacked. The person they fired on, the helmet flew off and

1 long hair fell out. He realized that he'd killed a woman and he was still blathering about it
2 three weeks later. I imagine he was maybe eighteen. You kind of picture these eighteen-
3 year-old men from the Midwest, probably went to Sunday school all their lives and all of
4 a sudden they're in a war zone shooting and they're shooting women. It's no wonder it
5 blew their minds.

6 KC: Yeah. What was your relationship like with the soldiers you encountered?

7 KJ: I would say very good, in general. Of course, I traveled with the Charlie
8 Brown group for—we did nineteen performances. So, we were probably out on the road
9 for, I don't know, three weeks probably. They were like brothers. They were very
10 protective of me, which I appreciated. I really enjoyed being with them. They were—all
11 had a great sense of humor. Actually, when we got back, I invited them all to my little
12 apartment that I had in the hotel where I was still living before I got into my villa. I had—
13 how many? Four, six men in my little tiny room. I had two beds in there, so I guess I was
14 on one of them and somebody else was on the other and all the rest were on the floor. I
15 said, "Well, at least I have air conditioning." "Oh! Air conditioning! We're all going!"
16 We were all buddies.

17 KC: What about the troops in the field that you would encounter? What kind of
18 relationship did you have with them? Was there much engagement? Was there much
19 contact with them?

20 KJ: Not a lot. Usually there was an escorting officer who was usually a lieutenant
21 or something and I would, frequently they would be with me during the entire time.
22 Showing me where—leading us around so we would know where things were and
23 introducing us to people and whatnot. Some of those would come into Saigon and one or
24 two of them I actually met for dinner and did things with. As far as the men were
25 concerned, they were an audience. It was pretty hard to really spend much time with
26 them. They were also enlisted and of course I was not allowed to fraternize with the
27 enlisted men. So, it was not encouraged.

28 KC: I know that other ladies who worked for the Special Services—the Club
29 Division had a lot more contact than you would have had in the Entertainment Division. I
30 was just curious to see if you happened to have much contact with them like this.

1 KJ: Well, they would have had a whole lot because they were with them in the
2 Special Services—whatever it was passing out ping pong paddles and so forth. Some of
3 them probably had good relationships. And of course, they saw the same men every day
4 so they would get to know them. Happy Valley was kind of the only two service club gals
5 I spent much time with. Of course, I created so much trouble there that they probably
6 hated me for it. I think I told you about that one. I'm sure that—in fact, I think they told
7 me they were allowed to have polite conversation, but they were not supposed to have
8 any conversations in depth with the men there. It probably differed at other places, I
9 would imagine.

10 KC: Yeah, and every situation, every individual's going to be different. It's really
11 all about the context of the situation.

12 KJ: There were quite a few women who got involved with the enlisted men. Of
13 course, that was a big deal—you heard about that because that wasn't supposed to
14 happen. But it was like, "Ha, ha, ha." The officers didn't have a great reputation with the
15 women. (Chuckle) Sometimes the enlisted men were more human. They were just
16 people. We were all just people.

17 KC: What did think about the war? As you're traveling around entertaining the
18 troops, you're seeing a lot of the countryside. You're meeting a lot of people from the
19 States. A lot of people who are obviously deeply involved in the war in a variety of
20 different aspects. What kind of thoughts were you forming on the war?

21 KJ: It didn't take me too long to realize it was a political war. Of course, now we
22 know that Nixon put a stop to the peace talks that were going on in April of 1969. I was
23 there in August of 1969. So, Nixon had just taken over as president. He sent a whole
24 bunch of more troops in there. So, let's see, the war could have ended in 1969, but Nixon
25 interfered with the peace talks. Troop levels peaked on April the 30th, 1969 to 543,400
26 men. Between 1969 and 1975, there were 21,202 [additional] casualties. The war could
27 have ended, and we could have not had those casualties. So, it was a very political war. I
28 never even understood before I got there why if the French couldn't do anything with it,
29 that the Americans thought they could. But we were over there making money. You
30 know, people were—the officers, a lot of them towards the end of the war that I was
31 there, Vietnamization was going on. The troops were being taken out. Oh, what else was

1 I going to say? There was little honor among the leaders there. A lot of the officers were
2 just hanging around. They would reenlist or whatever or go on another tour of duty so
3 they could stay there a little bit longer because they were going to retire when they went
4 back to the States. The longer they stayed, the more they would make in their retirement.
5 A lot of that was going on. Some of these guys really were—they didn't want to do
6 anything. Including get rid of the uniforms. Then also, I was aware that the soldiers who
7 were wounded went back to the States had it pretty tough. Now days you look back on
8 how the VA (Department of Veteran's Affairs), how the veterans are treated. They were
9 sent back to their families. The families were supposed to take the financial burden of it,
10 of taking care of their sons. It's a huge cost to war. With the war that's going on
11 currently, which is very similar, I think to Vietnam, and probably a political war as well.
12 It still goes on. At least they're not drafted and made to go there. Now there are more
13 wounded rather than dead. In Vietnam they were not typically just wounded, they were
14 killed. But now there's just a lot of wounding that's going on. And a huge cost. Of
15 course, I was aware that this was my generation. This was my generation of young men.
16 They were my age. We wiped out fifty—what was it?—543,000 of them. No, we wiped
17 out 58,000 of them. Young men my age. Marriageable young men, many of them. Due to
18 our leadership here. When I went over, I was really very, I wanted to find out what our
19 country did. I was very proud of being an American. I thought we were a lot of do-
20 gooders. I was very disappointed to find that there were so many casualties and so much
21 wheeling and dealing and people who really were selfish and arrogant and there for
22 personal gain. That was really an eye-opener, I guess. So, I thought the war was to
23 prevent communism from spreading. I don't think it was. They must have known from
24 the very beginning it was an unwinnable war. But they still sent all those men over there.
25 Of course, when you think about it, what is an officer when there's no war? He's
26 unemployed. So, they love war games. I recall several sessions where I was watching two
27 or three of the high-ranking officers telling a celebrity what they were doing in the war. It
28 was a game to them. They weren't out there. Their children were not out there. They
29 were just in some relatively secure place doing all this strategizing.

30 KC: Seems that you came away from Vietnam with a less than perfect attitude
31 toward American military officers, based on your experience.

1 KJ: Yes. Yes, I would say that's true. (Laughs) Personally, I had a wonderful time
2 over there. Helicopters were fun. I enjoyed the men that I met there. Professionally, it
3 was the first time I'd ever worked with adults. I found that I was good at it. I was very
4 successful and had many accolades and awards that were won there. Especially the
5 Parade of American Music. I have certificates and stuff from that. I enjoyed the people I
6 worked with. I worked with some terrific people. I got to travel a lot. Vietnam itself was a
7 beautiful country before we tore it up with war. I've been back since. I went back, I think
8 in 2000 or 2001. It's a modern city now. But it's still a beautiful city and all the trees that
9 had died—nearly all the trees by the Vietnamese palace were dead when I left. They're
10 all back and thriving. They're huge trees. The part I used to fly over getting out to the
11 Cambodian border was nothing but like a desert full of pit holes with strange colored
12 water filled up when the bombs hit. That's all gone. That's all jungle again. I used to
13 wonder why they talked about all the underground tunnels in the jungle. There was no
14 jungle there. Well, there is now. It was the Agent Orange that took it all away. Agent
15 Orange is a whole other thing. Again, people making money. Dow Chemical making
16 chemicals. It was perfectly safe for humans. They only killed trees. Perfectly safe for
17 humans, but we know they lied about that. The US government lied about when we went
18 to Cambodia. They lied about Agent Orange. They lied about how much Agent Orange
19 they sprayed. Saigon was one of the—Saigon, or I guess west of Saigon was one of the
20 most heavily sprayed areas. You can go there now, to Vietnam, and still see a lot of birth
21 problems in children. Some of my friends—Ann Kelsey, you might have interviewed her.
22 She built a library.

23 KC: Mm-hmm. Yes, we do have her interview.

24 KJ: She had, she got married to a soldier that she met there and had at least one
25 miscarriage, maybe two. But she decided she should not have children, has not tried
26 since. I've never had a pregnancy, so I don't know if it bothered, if I was harmed in that
27 way.

28 KC: Did you have exposure to Agent Orange?

29 KJ: Pardon?

30 KC: Did you have exposure to Agent Orange?

1 KJ: Oh, yes. We all did. I was in Saigon most of the time. That was one of the
2 heaviest areas of exposure.

3 KC: Any troubles? Any health effects from it?

4 KJ: Hard to prove. I have had breast cancer, but breast cancer is not one of the
5 twenty-two cancers listed on the list. But we know why. There were no women over
6 there, or very few. So, the numbers were not great. So far I haven't had diabetes but
7 many of friends—I know certainly Mo (unintelligible) has it [three of my Vietnam
8 cohorts have it]. I think Ann might also, I'm not sure. She has other problems. I've some
9 kind of—probably nerve problems where my skin burns. That's been going on for
10 decades. It's been tested and no one can figure out what it is. Of course, even if you do
11 find out what it is, it's very difficult to prove that Agent Orange caused it. It's almost
12 impossible. Most of the doctors will not claim that for certain it was caused by Agent
13 Orange. Agent Orange does stay, stays stored in fat, fat cells. It does stay with you for, I
14 guess, ever. As far as I know, Nan Nall is in poor health. I don't know why. Jan Brantley,
15 I'm not so sure of. She's thriving in Ashland, Oregon. Of course, as civilian women we
16 have no VA benefits. So, that probably needs to be fixed. We did serve in the war. We
17 could have been hurt. There was definitely risk involved in being there. One of our
18 theater groups, a hand grenade was thrown on the stage and later our, that was our
19 Snoopy who got medevac'ed. That was the twenty-nine-year-old with the law degree.
20 Got medevac' ed for a knee injury received while being in a play. There were risks all
21 around me. A bomb came in one night and hit the Chinese embassy about two blocks
22 from where I lived. There were lots of Vietnamese soldiers standing guard on corners late
23 at night. I did get—what's the stuff they spray? It burns your eyes like crazy.

24 KC: Oh, mace or pepper spray of something like that.

25 KJ: Yes. Mace or whatever. They sprayed that quite frequently where there were
26 problems going on. Usually it would be some little Vietnamese guard who would say,
27 “You can't go down this street.” So, you would go around it but you could still smell it
28 and you knew what was going on. Usually it was hand grenades being tossed at
29 somebody. There was a bombing in a theater at one point. I didn't happen to be there that
30 time. With the Charlie Brown group, as we were flying over Da Nang, we get some fire.
31 All the lights in the airplane were turned out. Flying was kind of a kick 'cause I usually

1 got invited up to be with the pilots. Going to Da Nang I had been with the pilots during
2 part of that trip. However, the planes did not have any seats in them. They were totally
3 empty because they usually carried cargo. When there's passengers in there, sometimes
4 they'd have benches and sometimes they didn't. I do remember being on there with a lot
5 Vietnamese and they'd have their kids, their goats, their chickens, and their pigs, and so
6 forth, with them in the airplane. They were being taken someplace. They had no
7 restrooms. They had a piss tube for the guys but that wasn't too helpful for the women.

8 KC: (Laughs) No, it would leave you wanting, I would think.

9 KJ: Actually, that was one of the big events when I was escorting people. The
10 first question I would ask when I got off the helicopter was, "Where is the nearest
11 restroom? How long does it take to get to it?" Ann B. Davis, who was very popular, I
12 never actually met her because she was there in earlier times. The war was much more
13 popular earlier. By the time I got there we were kind of getting the second-class stars. But
14 Ann B. Davis was well loved by all the troops. She used the piss tube wherever she went.
15 The men thought that was absolutely wonderful. But I wasn't quite that adventurous. She
16 was famous for it and I guess probably still talked about.

17 KC: Well, let's say it's August of 1970. You know that your tour is coming to an
18 end here pretty quick. One question I have for you is once you realize that the end of your
19 tour is coming up, what do you think about your previous year? How do you feel about
20 yourself? How do you feel about your work? All of it. You've alluded to it in different
21 places so far. But as you look back on it, seeing the end of your tour coming up, how did
22 you rate it? What did you think of your experience at that point?

23 KJ: I had loved my experience over there. I loved the country. I thought it was
24 charming and even when you got out to the French plantations and things that were
25 beautiful. The Vietnamese people themselves were very family oriented, sweet people.
26 Of course, they thought of us as being giants. When I went back in 2001, they were all
27 normal-sized people again. The whole population looked so much healthier. However,
28 there were not too many older men. From what I understand they were tortured and many
29 of them killed. I did meet one who was anxious to take his shirt off and show me the
30 scars from his of his "retraining," re-education. Personal gains, I think, were huge. When
31 I finished there, I felt like I could do anything. Give me a challenge, I would love it.

1 Which didn't go too well in the States. One of the things I really missed when I got back
2 to the States was that I didn't want to go back to teaching. I had escaped to Vietnam for a
3 year rather than teach. When I came back, I wanted to do anything but teach.

4 KC: I was gonna ask you just what your plans were. What did you hope to do
5 knowing that this was gonna be the end?

6 KJ: I wanted to do anything but teach. That slipper just did not fit. I felt like it was
7 babysitting. I guess I'm too goal-oriented to deal with babysitting on a daily basis.
8 Anyway, so I thought, "Well, okay. I've heard about sexual discrimination in jobs. I've
9 no experience with that because my first job was a teaching job, other than my pipe organ
10 job as church organist." Which I continued for twenty-three years all together. So, I
11 applied to almost anything. But of course, Vietnam was ending. Troops were coming
12 home. Unemployment was really high. Unemployment. There just weren't any jobs here.
13 They had all these people looking for jobs. I auditioned at lots of them. They wouldn't
14 hire me because I was "overqualified" to do anything. That's what they all said: "Oh,
15 you're overqualified." Then I tried to get an apartment and I couldn't get an apartment
16 because they didn't—as soon as they'd heard I was unemployed and had just come back
17 from the war, they wanted nothing to do with me. Even though I promised to pay them
18 six months in advance, they still wouldn't talk business. I had to have a job. So, okay. I
19 finally got a teaching job in a private school from kindergarten through second grade or
20 something or other. They hired me and I had split shift from nine to eleven and one to
21 four. It was horrible.

22 KC: Was this back in California?

23 KJ: Yes. The private school and it was at a church. I guess they started as a
24 nursery school teaching the kids and they didn't want to lose the income, so they just kept
25 keeping the kids there. Now, as they were opening up second grade, they were like in
26 their third year. I was supposed to teach music to some of the kids and so forth, but it was
27 very poorly run. The kids were coming from homes where the mother dropped them off
28 at six o'clock in the morning and picked them up at four in the afternoon. Some of them
29 were real discipline problems even though they were tiny little kids. Anyway, I got an
30 apartment because I had a job. As soon as I had moved into my apartment, I quit the job.
31 Went back to the unemployment services, "This is just not working for me. I'm

1 overqualified. Give me something else to do.” Well, I had saved up a lot of money
2 because when you’re in Vietnam, you’re making decent money and there’s really no
3 place to spend it other than R&R in Hong Kong. So, I spent myself crazy in Hong Kong.

4 KC: That’s one I question I haven’t asked you is what was the salary? How much
5 money were you making there in-country?

6 KJ: I think it was right around 1,000 dollars a month. It was equivalent to what I
7 was making teaching. It was slightly more. But then I worked time-and-half for overtime
8 and I worked overtime all the time because there was nothing else to do. So, I made a lot
9 of money that way. I probably made about 150 percent of what I would have made
10 teaching.

11 KC: Okay.

12 KJ: Something like that. Maybe 140 percent. You know, the economy is so
13 different today it’s hard to even imagine. Teaching, what was I making in those days?
14 Maybe 10,000 a year. I started out at 4,000—no, I started out at 400 dollars a month in
15 1964, my first teaching job. Of course, by this time I had a master’s degree and four years
16 of teaching experience, so I was making more than the average beginning teacher. I think
17 when I stopped teaching in 1975, I was making about 17,000 a year. Something like that.
18 I was still underpaid.

19 KC: So, what’s next for you, Kay, after you quite the teaching job?

20 KJ: Oh, well I considered all kinds of jobs. One guy almost hired me in a printing
21 factory to do forms for him, which I knew I could do because I’m artistic. He said, you
22 know, “Really, sincerely, if I hire you, I would love to hire you, but I don’t think you
23 would stay here. Can you sincerely tell me that you would stay here?” I said, “You know,
24 for the salary I probably would move on.” So, what eventually happened was when
25 September [1971] came around—I left Vietnam in August [1970] and I travelled until
26 almost December. I got home, I think, in time for Christmas and then I moved from
27 southern California to go visit my aunt and uncle in Sunnyvale, California—northern
28 California. I asked them, “Would you mind company for a couple weeks?” “Oh, sure.
29 We’d love to have you.” Six weeks later I thought, “I’ve gotta get out of here.” That’s
30 when I took that teaching job so I could get into an apartment. The rest of the year I took
31 classes at the [community] center and enjoyed myself. Looked for a job. Really didn’t

1 find any so I did apply at two different—well, two different teaching places hired me.
2 One in San Bruno, which was local. The job I had turned down to go to Vietnam was in a
3 suburb of San Diego. It was a really good job. They said they would hire me again. In
4 fact, they offered me a contract. I still hadn't heard from San Bruno and I finally called
5 them and I said, "You know, I really would rather [be in San Bruno, but]—I've gotten a
6 contract and only have ten days to sign it. I'm going to sign it unless you have an interest.
7 I'd really rather be in San Bruno." They said, "Oh, we sent you a contract." I said,
8 "Where did you send it?" They had sent it to Kay K. Peterson, which was my married
9 name. Therefore, it came to the apartment house where I was living, but "No one by that
10 name lives here," and they sent it back. I hadn't heard. So, anyway they sent me another
11 contract and I went back to teaching [for another four years] in San Bruno. Had to take a
12 second grade to get in and then I went to fourth grade. I taught there for four years. Four
13 years later I thought, "I've really got to get out of teaching." I was, I thank God I was a
14 very good teacher because I was creative. That's what the people said. Since I was
15 musical, I usually had the choir—I had the choir in San Bruno, too, where we did
16 programs. In my fourth-grade classrooms, I always passed out recorders to the kids and
17 we played recorders a lot. I always insisted on having a piano in my classroom. So, we
18 did—we would do the Pledge of Allegiance and sing a patriotic song every day. If the
19 kids didn't want to sing, they could play their recorder. I had one really, really good year.
20 I had only twenty-three kids in my classroom and they were wonderful. But the rest of
21 the time, I had like thirty-five kids and more and more hyperactive kids as time went on.
22 You never had enough supplies. Things just were never very smooth. You rarely had
23 good support from your principals. They were too busy doing other things. Anyway, I
24 finally decided to take a leave of absence. I took a leave of absence and thought, "Well,
25 I'm trained to be a musician. Why don't I just open a piano studio?" Which is what I did.
26 It kind of went okay until—for a whole year, but I wasn't making really enough to
27 continue this on. So, I said, "Okay, I'm coming back." The only thing they had to offer
28 me was a third/fourth combination and it was an, I've forgotten what they call it now,
29 [early childhood development class] we had lots of paperwork to do. I thought, "Oh,
30 that's gonna be awful." My stomach started flip-flopping every day and I was really
31 feeling ill. I thought, "My body is trying to tell me that it doesn't want to go back." So, I

1 finally resigned. So I thought, “This is not gonna work.” As soon as I resigned, all the
2 other music teachers in town gave me their overload and filled up my studio. I was
3 happily teaching piano for like five years. I loved it. Probably one of the neatest things I
4 ever did. I had about thirty students. The last year I taught [full time], I had seven adult
5 students and I really enjoyed them. But I had several kids—well, the first student I had
6 was six years old when I took him in. I had him all the way through high school. He’s
7 now in the Foreign Legion and has been very successful. In fact, most of—well, I lived
8 near Hillsborough, which is a very affluent area. About a third of my kids came from
9 there and they were families that really wanted their kids—supported them having music.
10 They were awesome and wonderful, wonderful kids. They didn’t have—even as
11 teenagers, they didn’t have obvious clashes with their parents. They were just so well
12 raised. Anyway, yeah, I wasn’t making—I was paying the bills, but I wasn’t saving a
13 cent. So, I finally decided before I get much older, I need to get into a career. Again, I
14 looked and looked. The employment situation wasn’t quite so poor. I finally got a job in
15 the training department of Pacific Plan. I was there maybe a year and ended up doing
16 well, but they finally sold Pacific Plan. The new owners said they wouldn’t buy it unless
17 they had manuals on how to do everything there. Well, since I was about the only person
18 who could write in the company, I ended being the technical writer. I think I produced
19 seventeen manuals. The company closed and my boss, who was very successful, moved
20 upstairs into the limited partnership area. He was able to get me up there, as well. Then I
21 was there a while supporting some of the really macho male directors. They moved me
22 downstairs into the general and private placement center. They were putting shopping
23 centers and apartment houses into bundles and then selling them, like for \$500 a share.
24 They were called a limited partnership. Limited to the owners who bought the shares
25 while the general owners were the people there on the business and made a lot of money.
26 They brought some wholesalers in and we brought in six wholesalers to train, and only
27 five of them were there at first. Three women were hired to support them, and I was
28 assisting the CEO. When I ended up training one of the wholesalers and they promised
29 that they would have, and there were various districts all of the US. The CEO had
30 promised that he would send someone out to help them with their talks and so forth. It
31 ended up that I got to travel with most of them. So, I was traveling all over the United

1 States. They were making like \$60- or \$70,000 and I was making like \$35,000 a year. So,
2 I thought, “Well, you can’t go from here to there. It just doesn’t happen.” One of the
3 things I really loved about Vietnam was I was really free to do lots of things. I did posters
4 and artwork, directed a choir. I did my job there. There were really no limits to what you
5 could do. Whatever needed to be done, you just jumped in and did it. I got back to the
6 States, everything was regulated. You had a job, if you got outside the limits of that job,
7 people pulled you in immediately because you were stepping on other people’s area. I
8 found that very frustrating at first. Then to move from one level to the next level, you
9 couldn’t hop from here to there. You had to go through little steps at a time. Very
10 political. So, I left the job I had as a special assistant to the CEO at this partnership place
11 [Robert A. McNeil R.E. Partnerships]. But by the time I had done that I had gotten my
12 insurance license and got that in the first training job I had. When I went downstairs, I
13 had to have a [SEC, Securities and Exchange Commission] Series 22 [license]. This is a
14 NASDAQ series 22 to sell limited partnerships and mutual funds. So I took a job with
15 Waddel & Reed in financial planning and pursued my [SEC] Series 7 stockbroker’s
16 license. Eventually I had enough clients that I had one out of state and I got a Series 6, I
17 think it was. Maybe a 63. Anyway, I had all these securities licenses and I did financial
18 planning for about five years. But again, some of my work was on commission. Some it
19 was on fee. It was very hard for a single person to have a smooth financial life. One of
20 my friends came along whom I had met in Toast Masters and said, “Our company just
21 went public. We need someone to handle our stock programs. Since you have a securities
22 background, why don’t you consider it?” So, I ended up working for EMCON which had
23 just gone public and I handled its stock programs, employee stock purchase plans, stock
24 option plans and insider reporting. That’s what I did the last fifteen years of my working
25 career. I loved it. It was perfect for me. The last eight years I think I was consulting and I
26 was going around doing it. This was all in Silicon Valley here. I worked in like twenty-
27 one of the different companies. Some were very short term. “Somebody couldn’t make it
28 today, can you cover?” Sometimes it was a long-term one. “Taking a leave of absence
29 and going to Europe with my parents, can you cover for three months?” Or, “We need to
30 train some people.” I was at several places for six months or longer. It was something
31 different in a lot of the different places. Sometimes I was taking over the entire job,

1 sometimes it was doing technical writing for some particular project. Hewlett-Packard
2 was one of those. Hewlett-Packard was one of the first companies to go into stock plan
3 administration heavily. Since they had programmers there they did their own [employee
4 stock] programs. They had them all over the world, of course. In England, for example, if
5 you give someone a stock option, they have to pay taxes on it immediately at whatever
6 the current stock price is. Well, if the price of the company or the price of the stock of the
7 company goes down, they had paid taxes on what it used to be worth. They had already
8 paid the taxes and they don't get the refund. So, they didn't want stock options. They had
9 to come up with something else for incentives. So, there were all kinds of different
10 programs or characters—animals, I called them. HP hired me to write all of this out so
11 that they could hand a book to someone so they could understand how to work with all of
12 these different things. I had all kinds of different assignments and it was very interesting.
13 And then, I retired.

14 KC: Well, certainly a very varied career in the types of things that you were
15 doing. And finally getting away from teaching it seems like was the right thing for you to
16 do.

17 KJ: Yes, it was.

18 KC: You seemed to excel after that. Well, take me back to 1970 here briefly if we
19 can, Kay. What was it like—number one, what was it like to come home from the war?
20 You'd seen it firsthand. You know that the protests and the—everything that is the
21 Vietnam War by this time, going on in the States. What was it like to be back?

22 KJ: Awkward. I'm an only child. Of course, my parents didn't want me to go.
23 They were glad that I was home safe. My mother, though, had remarried. I guess two—
24 no, she was married—oh gosh, '66? No, about 1964. So, she had been remarried for a
25 while. I wasn't fond of her new husband. He was a nice person and all, but he, I don't
26 know, was very involved in Elks club and all these different clubs. One night I was home
27 and I really just wanted to sit down and watch television. Didn't want to go anyplace. He
28 wanted me to put on false eyelashes and get all primped up and go with him to one of
29 these meetings. Of course, wherever I went, "Oh, this is my daughter!" They would start,
30 you know, going off on all these things about how wonderful I was. I found it just very
31 hard to take. The war was—I just couldn't talk about it because nobody understood.

1 There was just no way to really make them understand what was going on over there. It
2 wasn't pretty to talk about and they were having the gay life back here in the States. Their
3 minds were on how wealthy they were, how many vacations they took, how much
4 jewelry they wore, how many fun things they did. It was pretty impossible to really take
5 them where I had been.

6 KC: Well, what about the war itself? Did you pay attention to what was going on?

7 KJ: Not so much because I was struggling. Struggling to get back into civilian life
8 again. I think first the few months when I was trying to get a job, every day I was
9 working on that sometimes four and five hours a day just to find a place. Of course, I had
10 some recreation to do. Nothing too much had changed. I was working, teaching in San
11 Bruno in 1975 when the war ended. Of course, we were all aware of that.

12 KC: What do you remember from that time?

13 KJ: I was working with fourth graders. The news was filled with what was going
14 on at the embassy in Saigon and all the history. The guy who was there who didn't want
15 to leave. Therefore, no one was really prepared to go. The poor Vietnamese people trying
16 to get out of there. The people who had connections in Vietnam, like my landlord, they
17 had France and they had the United States they could go to. Whether they got their
18 parents out or not, I have no way of knowing. But most of the people with any influence
19 had passports to other countries. They probably got out. Of course, United States got out
20 some key people. But it was pretty awful. I mean, I was glad that the war was over
21 finally. Of course, the end was probably inevitable from the very beginning. As I said, I
22 went back in 2001, the people looked healthy and happy.

23 KC: Why did you go back?

24 KJ: There was a whole group of us. We had a reunion—the Charlie Brown group
25 had a reunion in 2000 in New York City. We all met and got together and at that point
26 decided—many of us wanted to go back and see the gorgeous country that we had left.

27 KC: I'll be darned. What was it like to go back?

28 KJ: Different. I did go back to where I had lived, and I did knock on the door
29 where my landlord had lived in the bottom unit. Someone answered the door, not anyone
30 I recognized. I did not have permission from the Vietnamese or the communist
31 government to visit these people. At that point in time you needed to have permission—

1 written permission to visit any of the civilians there. They didn't really want us talking to
2 civilians, I guess. The lady opened the door for me, but she did not want to talk to me and
3 was not about to show me my unit where I had lived, which I would have loved to have
4 gone up and seen again. What was the question again?

5 KC: I was just wondering about this trip that you took back. What it was like to
6 go back and see this.

7 KJ: The city was totally changed and is modernized, which was nice. We stayed
8 in the Myercord—well, I had lived in the Myercord when I first got there. We stayed in
9 one of the big hotels that's completely modernized. We stayed in an old section which
10 was interesting. Had some wonderful food. One day I walked by the museum and three of
11 our helicopters with the teeth—the mean looking ones that the Viet Cong hated so much
12 because they were loaded with a rotating machinegun type of things on each wing. There
13 were three of them sitting in front of the museum with the same shark teeth still on them
14 as I had seen all over Vietnam. The pilots loved them. I guess they weren't helicopters,
15 they were small planes. Very fast planes. All three of them had the communist insignia
16 on it. There was no mark of any US anything, but those were US planes sitting there. Of
17 course, we left a lot of equipment over there. That bothered me. Of course, communist
18 flags were everywhere, which was different. The people looked healthy and happy,
19 though. Have to give 'em that. Of course, it was a whole new generation because it had
20 been forty years since I had left—no thirty years. Thirty years since I had left, so a whole
21 new generation was there. They looked healthy. They were still riding bicycles and still a
22 lot of cyclos and motorcycles around. We had some wonderful meals. The people were
23 friendly at the restaurants, anyway. Well, also, that trip was done by Rick Holen. Rick
24 has a whole lot of film that he's trying to put together and has tried to sell about the
25 Vietnam Command Military Touring shows. When we went over there, we had a film
26 crew with us. They were taking more film about our trip over there. He has this
27 [documentary] all ready to go now. Several people have tried to buy it, but they want to
28 buy it with total rights and he won't give up the rights to it. He has refinanced his house
29 twice to finance this whole thing. So far, it's not on the market. Too bad that it isn't. You
30 might want to talk to him about that. I can get contact information if you'd be interested
31 because he does have a whole film on this.

1 KC: Yeah, perhaps we can do that, talk that over once we're finished for today.
2 Let me ask you—no, please. Go ahead.

3 KJ: Anyway, if you would like to get in contact with him, after the war, he and his
4 wife ran the drama department at Indiana University, I think, as a PhD. He was one of
5 the, he was in *The Fantastics*, which was one of our military plays. He was over there as
6 a draftee. Anyway, I can give you a way to contact him. It would be nice if his film could
7 actually be seen someplace.

8 KC: Sure, sure. Of course.

9 KJ: I don't think he's gotten much action out of it.

10 KC: Well, let me take this back to our Vietnam topic just for kind of wrapping up
11 purposes if we can, Kay. Just a couple more questions for you. You've alluded to some of
12 this before as well but let me just ask you directly. You look back on this time, closing in
13 on fifty years ago, your one-year tour there in Vietnam. What did you take away from it?
14 What did your time there—how did it most affect your life?

15 KJ: How did it affect my life? I think it proved to me that I could be very
16 successful working among adults, which was an important step. What else? It gave me
17 other views on the US government. It gave me definite views on war. I was interviewed
18 by someone a long time ago and her questions [about Vietnam] were getting very silly. I
19 finally just said, "War is not fun. War is slaughter. It's one group slaughtering the other."
20 You don't see too much with history or the history of Vietnam. I took a creative writing
21 class and have written a whole bunch of stuff on Vietnam and my experiences there. I
22 had to explain what Vietnam was all about because the students didn't know anything
23 about it. I mean, really did not know anything about it. They had heard "Vietnam War"
24 but they had no sense of—probably some of them didn't even know where Vietnam was.
25 Now we're in the Middle Eastern war that we've been in for seventeen years, I guess. As
26 long as we were in the Vietnam War. So, history just repeats itself and it seems like it
27 repeats itself about every generation. You think about when World War I was and World
28 War II, Korean War, Vietnam War. They're all like a generation apart. It doesn't seem
29 like we learn much—

30 KC: What about the—

31 KJ: —as a people, we don't—

1 KC: I'm sorry?

2 KJ: As a people we don't seem to learn much. We don't seem to pass the
3 information on from generation to generation. Maybe it's like my parents who never
4 talked about the Dust Bowl. Maybe all the troops in Vietnam, when they had their
5 children, didn't talk about Vietnam. I don't know.

6 KC: Well, that was kind of the—what you're saying at least, leads me to my final
7 question for you. That is, what do we take away from the war? What is the legacy of the
8 Vietnam War? What does this thing mean in your eyes?

9 KJ: It means that our leaders are not always responsive to the people they govern.
10 It means that people get into wars and conflicts often for selfish reasons. Maybe more
11 women in politics would help. I don't know. War games are not fun for anyone except
12 the people running the war games. I think we can take away that we need to educate our
13 young people more on history, especially US history and world history. I don't think too
14 much of that's being done. Of course, nowadays they're cutting—I thought it was bad in
15 1975 that we didn't have the money we needed to run the school. It's much, much worse
16 now. We're not educating our young people. I don't think there's much chance of
17 anything being learned from history if we don't educate our young people, but that
18 doesn't seem to be high priority.

19 KC: No, it certainly doesn't.

20 KJ: Another heightened off high priority is taking care of—if you have a war,
21 take care of the people who come back from it. If they had a war today, I don't think
22 anyone—hardly anybody would sign up for it voluntarily because we know that we're
23 not treated well. In my case, and with a lot of my friends who've had some health issues,
24 even if I proved that Agent Orange caused them, there would be no recourse for me. And
25 whatever happened to Dow Chemical for selling those chemicals and harming a lot of
26 Vietnamese people? There are a lot of deformed children over there due to Agent Orange.
27 There's probably some deformed children here due to it, too. And sterile men who didn't
28 have children. Women who probably shouldn't have had children. No one's really owned
29 up to any of that, as far as I know. We see our industries who pollute, pollute the air.
30 Anything to make a buck.

1 KC: Well, Kay, is there anything else you'd like to add to the interview before we
2 bring it to a close?

3 KJ: Oh, let's see. I can't think of anything. I've got a few little notes here. Let me
4 see if I can find anything I haven't gone over. I don't know if I mentioned the
5 transportation.

6 KC: In what sense?

7 KJ: This would come under sexism. Once our office moved to the outskirts of
8 Saigon, I had no way to eat lunch easily. I couldn't get a ride. Every day a vehicle would
9 load up with all the enlisted men and take them to a mess hall someplace and they would
10 eat. That did not happen for me. Usually there wasn't room. But also, the mess halls were
11 all enlisted men mess halls and I was not supposed to eat there. I was supposed to go to
12 the officer mess hall. So, I ended up not really having lunch. I'd have a big breakfast, go
13 in, and stay until about two o'clock when I got really hungry. I would usually leave and
14 just leave for the day. I lost a lot of weight during that period. I got down to 100 pounds, I
15 think. By the time I left Vietnam, I had lost about oh, twelve—I had probably weighed
16 113 or 115 or something before I went over and when I left, I weighed around 100
17 pounds because I couldn't get to any lunch. That was because the sergeant wouldn't give
18 me a car. He said, "I can't give you a car, you don't have driver's license." So, I got my
19 driver's licenses. I had to have a military one and I had to have a Vietnamese one. When I
20 first got them both I asked for a car and, "I'm sorry, I don't have any vehicles available."
21 So, that's kind of the way the game. I think I covered just about everything else.

22 KC: Well, all right then. We'll go ahead and bring the interview to a close.