

Interview of James Szczur
By Christopher Spaman
Sewell, NJ
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Christopher Spaman: This is the beginning of a Veterans History Project interview with Mr. James Szczur. I'm interviewing him, I'm Christopher Spaman, for the Veterans History Project and LaSalle University. Mr. Szczur can I go ahead and just start with your name?

James Szczur: James Michael Szczur --S-Z-C-Z-U-R.

CS: And your address?

JS: Is 522 Independence Place, Turnersville NJ.

CS: And your place of birth?

JS: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2409 North Hancock Street, Philadelphia, PA.

CS: Your present occupation?

JS: Retired.

CS: Your marital status?

JS: Married 40 years in -- November of this year

CS: Congratulations.

JS: Thank you.

CS: And number of children?

JS: Two

CS: Two children. So we're going to go back, you said that you were born in Philadelphia. Where in Philadelphia, were you born?

JS: 2409 North Hancock Street, which is located in the Kensington section of Philadelphia.

CS: And how long did you live there?

JS: From 1947, my birth, till about 1970, to when I returned back from the service in Vietnam.

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CS: Do you remember any other place that you may have moved to, you stayed just in Kensington?

JS: Kensington was it exclusively.

CS: I'm going to talk a little about your grandparents if you don't mind. Do you remember anything about your grandmother—we can split it up, we can go first on your father's side then on your mother's side. So if you want to do your father's side first, your grandmother on your father's side?

JS: My grandmother on my father's side was named Anna Szczur and Anna was born in Poland—probably in the—early 1900s, I would say 190-something, I'm not completely aware of what her age was. I know that she died just before I came home from Vietnam in 1970, so I was unable to attend her funeral. So, it would have been March of 1970 when she passed away.

CS: Do you know if your grandmother worked?

JS: Not that I know of, I believe that my grandmother was always a homemaker.

CS: How often did you get a chance to see your grandmother?

JS: As a young child, every day. She minded me, she lived right across the street from the home that I lived at. She was 2412 Hancock Street, I was 2409. So my grandmother, my grandmom Szczur actually provided babysitting for my mother and father, probably up till the point that I went into—kindergarten.

CS: I can change and talk about your grandfather. Do you remember what your grandfather did for a living?

JS: My paternal grandfather died before I was born. I believed he died in 1945. Okay, so I have no recollection obviously of my grandfather, at all.

CS: We can change and we can talk about your mother's side, if you don't mind. Your grandmother on your mother's side--do you remember?

JS: My grandmother on my mother's side was Rose Grogan McGuire, she was born in Ireland—again, late 1800s early 1900s. Those folks back in those days, in particular folks from Europe didn't really discuss their age too much. So what my grandparents age were while they were living and even after they died, I really have no recollection of that. The only thing I can do is guesstimate as to the age of the children that they had, but I would estimate my grandmother on mother's side Rose McGuire probably being born in the later part of the—1800s.

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CS: Do you remember if she worked or not?

JS: She was always a homemaker, all the time that I can ever remember, and I never remember her having any kind of real job.

CS: Did she live near you as well?

JS: My mother, my father, and I lived with my grandparents on the Irish side of the family.

CS: So, both sides of the grandparents, you were very close.

JS: Very, very close. We lived right across the street from each other.

CS: Your grandfather on your—so your mother's father?

JS: My mother's father was John McGuire—he died in 1966—'64. Could have perhaps been the most influential person of my young childhood that I can ever recall. He was always very much part of my life. I was his only grandson, so I lived with him, and he was again, just very, very influential and very much a part of my life as a young child.

CS: Do you remember what he did for a living?

JS: The only two jobs that I recall my grandfather had, and they would have been in his later years, would have been a bartender, as all people from all people from Ireland were [laughs] and a bank guard, they were the only two jobs. And I can vaguely remember him being a bank guard, I have no recollection of him being a bartender, although he told me that he was a bartender. I know while he was in Ireland, he was also a blacksmith. He was really a tough old guy, I mean really—just a tough man that I can recall.

CS: And you saw him on regular basis?

JS: Every day.

CS: I probably should have mentioned this before, on your father's side, how many children did your grandparents have? Do you remember? On your father's side?

JS: On my father's side of the family, there were 7 children.

CS: And on your mother's side?

JS: On my mother's side, 3 children.

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CS: And you said your grandfather on your mother's side probably had the strongest influence on you.

JS: Influence of any of the grandparents, because my mother and father, and I might be going ahead here, but you know we will catch up with that later on. My mother and father owned a store in Kensington, a luncheonette, which would have been predecessor to the fast food places that we have come to know and love today. But, a little sandwich shop in a shopping district, walking distance from our home on Hancock Street. They were on Front Street, which was where, you know where the "L" is in Philadelphia? It runs right up Front Street. So that is where my mother and father owned a store.

CS: Do you recall any other relatives, great uncles, great aunts that may have had a lot of influence on you.

JS: No great uncles or no great aunts, whatsoever.

CS: If you don't mind, I'm going to change gears to your parents. You were already mentioning a little about them so we can move to them. Your father, do you remember where and when he born?

JS: My father was born in Philadelphia, in 1919, December of 1919.

CS: And do you remember what type of work he did?

JS: My father had a variety of jobs. When my mother and father were first married, they were in out in Hawaii during World War II. And my father worked in the shipbuilding industry in Hawaii, so the ship repair industry for the navy. He worked out there from I think around 1945 to 19—46 maybe the early part of '47. I'm not exactly sure of those dates, but around that time period. But my mother and father were married in Hawaii and my mother was an office worker and she also moved to Hawaii to A, marry my father and B to work for the navy out there. And she was out there in '45 and '46.

CS: You also mentioned when they were in Philadelphia, they owned a restaurant?

JS: A luncheonette, yeah.

CS: Did they own that for quite some time?

JS: They rented it initially, my father worked—at *Sunship*, in Philadelphia, when I was a very young child and I vaguely remember that, although I remember him talking about that. Then he worked in a factory in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. Can't recall

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the name of the factory for a couple and he worked there for maybe a year or two. And then while they were doing that, my mother was working at the luncheonette and the opportunity came up for them to own the luncheonette. So I believe that around 1952 or '53 they purchased or they might have been renting the luncheonette, initially and then they purchased it shortly thereafter.

CS: Your mother, do you remember where and she was born?

JS: Yeah, my mother was born in Philadelphia in 1918.

CS: And did she, you mentioned she worked at the luncheonette and did she work anywhere else?

JS: She worked at---she told me about working bookkeeping jobs and general office work jobs. She was a stenographer and she graduated from West Catholic High School in Philadelphia, but she was a stenographer and an office worker. But that would have been prior to my knowledge and my experience with growing up and knowing that—as far as my growing up, always involved her being at the luncheonette for a certain amount of time during the day.

CS: How many children did your parents have?

JS: Me.

CS: Just one?

JS: Yeah.

CS: [I began this question, by thinking allowed to myself] I want to go back to something. You mentioned that your parents were in Pearl Harbor up to 1945?

JS: No, no up to about 1946. I believe that they were there subsequent to the attack on Pearl Harbor, they were not there during the attack, but, shortly thereafter. There was a very heavy need, obviously, to get out to Pearl Harbor, my father in the shipbuilding industry, from *Sunship* and Chester, he had—he went out there, partially to serve his country and to get involved in the repair of all the battleships that were blown up and some of them sunk, the Arizona went down, the Oklahoma went down, but there were some of them that were severely damaged...

CS: So he participated in the fixing of the ships out there?

JS: Yeah he participated in ship repair in Pearl Harbor.

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CS: When you were growing up, what sort of things did your parents instill in you as important or values or anything like that?

JS: Well—I just remember more than anything else, God, country, and respect. And pretty much that was it.

CS: Would you consider your parents strict when you were growing up?

JS: Well [laughs] neither of them put up with any bullshit—parenting back in the ‘40s and the ‘50s was quite different than it is today. And you just didn’t act out in front of your parents, you would get a pretty quick backhander, although you would be scolded first. But you know as far as corporal punishment, yeah I’ve gotten a number—I got my ass paddled a couple times and a couple backhanders, primarily from my mother, my mother was the disciplinarian, much more than so than my father was. My grandparents when both of those folks watched me, all they did was tell mom and dad that I was acting out and then I would catch hell or depending on how severe the problem was, if I was doing something that was considered to be really bad or really dangerous, then I’d pay for that.

CS: How about aunts and uncles, you mentioned you didn’t have any great aunts or great uncles, but any aunts or uncles?

JS: No great aunts or great uncles, whatsoever.

CS: So aunts or uncles though?

JS: Positively, very, very much a part of my life, almost every one of them.

CS: Did the majority of them live near you?

JS: Let me think about this--live by me in the respect that Philadelphia, the answer is yes. Some of them from the Kensington section of Philadelphia, South Philadelphia, Mayfair, Northeast Philadelphia, they were kind of spread all of the place. And most of them, I’m going to say, all of them, members of the working class.

CS: Did you have a favorite aunt or uncle?

JS: Oh yeah, my father’s side of the family still has two siblings left. My aunt Mary, who’s over 90 is in the nursing home right now. She was one of the—she would have been a minor aunt compared to the rest of them. On the other hand, my father’s younger sister, Stella, is still till this day, my favorite aunt and always ways. That’s on my dad side of the family.

CS: How about cousins? Did you have any close cousins or cousins that you’re in touch with?

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JS: I just got back from Florida last week and was visiting with a cousin of mine, Larry Szczur, who is my Aunt Helen's son who was my father's youngest sister. She died of cancer back in '92 I believe. That's her son and there was never a father figure in his life. Now, you know, this is more of aside than anything else. He wound up to be an Air Force pilot and spent 25 years, he was an F-18 pilot, spent 25 years in the Air Force and came out probably—I'm going to say, 5-6 years ago, as a full colonel. So he was very, very successful, he's married and lives in Florida with his wife. The two of them are retired now. He does have a job as a contractor with the federal government, does very, very well, but also does well with his pension as a colonel.

CS: Did you usually have family gatherings, like family reunions, or picnic like that? Could you describe maybe, would you have a yearly one or one that sticks out in your mind?

JS: They were periodically. It seemed like every Sunday, as a young child, when I was growing up we would visit either an aunt or an uncle, or a couple aunts and uncles and maybe have dinner with them, so this was every Sunday, practically during my young childhood, let's say up to about the sixth or seventh grade.

CS: I'd like to talk a little about your childhood. When you were growing up did your parents own the house that you grew up in it?

JS: No my grandparents actually owned the house.

CS: And did they pass it on to your parents?

JS: They passed it on to my parents, I think that was very, very common practice back in those days. My maternal grandfather died in 1964, my maternal grandmother died in 1966, and my paternal grandfather, or grandmother died in 1970. So all three of them passed within 6 years. So the grandparents' side of the Szczur and McGuire side of the family were wiped out in a period of 6 years.

CS: Does any part of the family still own the house or was it sold...

JS: No, Kensington probably from about 1967-68 was rapidly deteriorating because of the change in the cultural background. It went from a primarily white area, I guess all my parents life to Hispanic and black and as that happened, urban decay also began to set in and the neighborhood began to change for worse.

CS: So in the '60s they sold the house, 70s they sold the house?

JS: They sold the house, I believe in 1971 or 1970. Probably the store went in 1969 or 1970. So I like I said the entire neighborhood was not the same. It was changing and it wasn't upgrading it was downgrading.

CS: Do you go back to Kensington every now and then?

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JS: Never, never—I took my daughter one time [laughs] on a cultural visit back there just because I was going near the neighborhood, through the neighborhood, I guess my daughter might have been about 8 or 9 years old and she [laughs] went buzurk on me [laughs] ‘where are you taking me?’ I said ‘I just wanted to show you where I was born.’ Now the house that I was born I moved—from my last address while I was in the army was 2409 North Hancock Street, that would have been ‘68-‘70. In 1971, my house was gone. So the urban decay was so dramatic, that from the corner property all the way up to my property and beyond was just gone. It was knocked down. I mean, that’s how bad the neighborhood got. When my mother and father sold, they never rented it because they wanted to the heck out of there and just not look back and that was pretty much the end of Kensington, the place that I had grown up to love and everything else was gone.

CS: When you were growing up, did your parents make any improvements to the house? Was your father kind of a or your parents--no they kind of left the house the way it was?

JS: No—I believe they put new windows in it just because the windows wouldn’t work anymore, put them up or take them down. You know painting and maintenance to keep the house in the condition that it was they maintained the house in a pretty nice condition. The house was pretty much maintenance free with the exception of, like I said the windows and some of the doors and you know stuff like that. My grandmother from Ireland was very, very old fashioned. So until the day she died, they never had a washing machine or a dryer in the house, they actually used to use a washboard! [laughs] I remember my mother using a washboard and complaining about it. I can also remember my mother and father when television started coming out in the later 1940s, my parents didn’t have a television in the house until probably 1952 or ‘53. I used to listen to the radio with my grandpop. So, you talk about somebody who’s my age, I’m 62 right now, and I can actually span that era where I remember listening to the radio and not having a television in the house.

CS: When you were growing up, how did the family manage chores? Did you have certain chores you had to do when you were grew up or did mom did a lot of housekeeping?

JS: Mom did basically all the housekeeping as far as chores when—back in those days, the neighborhoods all had—local grocery stores, butcher shops—hardware stores, things of that nature.

[Phone rang that this point in the interview. The recorder was paused and once the situation was taken care of, we began recording again.]

CS: We were managing chores...

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JS: Yeah, managing chores—yeah so, my chores at that point were limited to—let me think about this. Limited to maybe running errands, it was safe back in those days for a five or six year old kid to go down to *Eddie's Meat Market* down the corner, with a note from grandmom and some money to get a pound of beef or two pounds of beef or something like that. That wasn't an issue, so going up the street, down the street, never having to cross the street, you would do that back in those days, not a problem. But that's pretty much the chores, straighten up the messes that you create if you're playing with toys in the house or something like that. Straighten them up, don't—but that was kind of the limitation.

CS: Did your parents have a garden growing up?

JS No, they were row homes in Philadelphia.

CS: Did you have a lot of friends in the neighborhood that you played with on a regular basis? And were you part of any organizations, maybe the team sport or club sports or any other organizations?

JS: Absolutely yeah—yeah---there was an organization called “Lighthouse” that still exists in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. And there was a boys club and a girls club, a men's club, a woman's club. But they would have organized sports. I believe, probably about 8 or 9 years old, I played baseball. Yeah, I did play organized baseball and football we used to have choose up teams. The neighborhood had a multitude of kids, so you never have a hard time getting a couple teams up of 5 or 6 or sometimes 9 players per team and we would go down to Norris Square, which was 3 blocks south of where I lived. And actually have a baseball game or a football game or something like that, you'd choose up sides and you know, have a game.

CS: When you growing up was religion a big part of your life?

JS: Very, very much so. My mother's older brother, my mother was the youngest of 3. My mother's older brother was a Catholic priest. So, Jimmy McGuire—and another tremendous influence in my life. He was a Roman Catholic priest. He died—probably '90—no—'03 or '04. And he was like 87 years old, so he lived a pretty full life and lived in their infirmary. He was an order priest for the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, the same organization that teaches at North Catholic and Father Judge in Philadelphia.

CS: Were both sides of both parents Catholic?

JS: Oh yeah.

CS: Were you ever seriously ill as a child that you can remember?

JS: No.

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CS: No?

JS: No.

CS: Any parents, or aunts, or uncles, that you remember were seriously ill when you growing up?

JS: My aunt Stella's husband, my favorite aunt's husband, Bob Gader, died in 1954 of a perforated colon or something like that, probably colon cancer—I don't know if they could identify it was anything other than a perforated colon at that point. But he died and that was an extremely traumatic experience to me as a young child. Because I was only like 6 or 7 years old and I had an uncle very fond of that was a Philadelphia fireman died.

CS: When you were a child at the dinner table or when family came over, was there a lot of talk of politics?

JS: No.

CS: How about unions or labor unions in any way?

JS: Not really.

CS: Not really?

JS: Not really. I don't believe that anybody, with the exception of my uncle who was a cop and that's, you know, that's the Fraternal Order of Police, I don't know of anybody was ever a union member.

CS: You already talked about the neighborhood, was there any neighbors that stood out to you that you remember?

JS: We had a lot of great neighbors, yeah, we had a gentlemen across the street who was a Korean war veteran who just died last year. One of my favorite neighbors, Benny Vaun, who was also a graduate and a professor at LaSalle. He was a night school graduate after he came back from the Korean War and then—he kind of rose up, because he was kind of special being a college graduate back in those days during the '50s. And he was actually a vice-president and investment manager of a pretty large insurance company. So, he was always an extremely—high level influence in my life, yeah.

CS: Did your parents have the same or different group of friends then you maybe? For instance, you may have been friends next door neighbor's the younger kid and parents maybe, did your parents hang out with the same groups of people that you did?

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JS: The neighbors on Hancock Street were a pretty closely knit group. And among those neighbors on Hancock Street there were a lot of children. Some of the families were absolutely huge. We had the Kirby's had 9 kids, we had the Dealy's that had 13 kids, so I mean just those two families alone you could field a baseball team. And then, you had other 3 and 5 and 6 and, I'm telling you—I would say—a buddy of mine, named Buddy Cobb and I, sat down maybe 15 to 20 years ago and tried to recount the number of kids there were on our bloc, and I believe we came close to a 100. Now I mean, you're talking all different age groups, but of that 100, you're talking about a pretty substantial number that were in our approximate age [] like if I was 8 at the time, you might have had some 9's and 10's and 11's and you might have had some 7's and 6's, but by and large you could always have a large group of buddies that you would play with all the time on the street.

CS: That's got to be great for kids growing up to have...

JS: It was fantastic, like I said no regrets about my childhood whatsoever, it was the finest time in my life [bangs on the table].

CS: What social class would you describe your parents, growing up, your family?

JS: Working class, definitely working class.

CS: And the neighborhood was pretty much the same?

JS: Very, very much so—yeah Benny Vaun would have been an anomaly. But even though he was in that anomaly class, he was still a regular guy. He would do the regular things that everybody else—he was friendly with all the neighbors, so that didn't separate him or put him in a separate class.

CS: Your schooling, do you remember where you went to elementary school?

JS: Yes, I went to kindergarten at *St. Laurentia School*, which was a Polish school. That was completely Polish speaking in those days. My mother for some reason didn't care for me going to that school and after kindergarten yanked out of there and I went to *Visitation School*, which was another Catholic Parochial school in Philadelphia. And I went there from first to eighth grade.

CS: High school?

JS: High school, *Northeast Catholic High School*, which is a Diocesan Philadelphia High School—1960 to '65, I graduated.

CS: You went for four years you said?

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JS: Yes.

CS: How did you get to school? Was there a bus or did you walk?

JS: To grammar school—in kindergarten I was driven by my parents, because it wasn't very, very close to us, it would have been, pretty much of a horrendous walk. Visitation School was probably been about ¼ of a mile walk. Usually there was a group of kids that would gather in the morning and walk to school. I lived at—Hancock and York, Visitation School was at B and Leigh. 4 blocks up and maybe about 6 blocks over. So maybe a ¼ to possibly a ½ mile was the walk.

CS: High school was there a...

JS: High school I used to take the Septa system, the L. From the York and Dauphin L stop up to Erie and Torresdale and then you'd walk from Erie and Torresdale to North Catholic.

CS: So about how far was that from your house you think—time wise?

JS: 4 or 5 miles.

CS: So 15 minutes or maybe away?

JS: With the L it was probably about a half hour or less commute because the L back in those days, extremely dependable. You could set clock by it and it was just a very, very dependable mode of travel.

CS: How did you academically in school?

JS: Academically in grammar school I was probably close to a straight A student, but I had discipline problems, I was a pain in the ass and giving the nuns a lot of crap all the time and I used to get bounced around by them. In high school academically I was in the high level classes, but I never performed to my ability. I was certainly capable of A's and B's and I would get them when I liked the subject, if I liked the subject, not problem pulling an A. If I didn't like the subject, I was happy with a C and it really pissed my mother and father off—big time. I guess you would say a moderately underachiever. Although I was never one of these guys that just kept their nose above water, I would probably—I graduated—maybe in the 2nd or 3rd quintile of my graduating class.

CS: Did you have a favorite subject?

JS: Well math and probably math and science were my favorite subjects.

CS: Do you recall any sort of violence at school on a regular basis?

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JS: Never, never, never.

CS: Fights or anything?

JS: Every once in a while you'd get into a fist fight with somebody with one person, but it was always a one on one situation and it was resolved quickly. But no gangs or anything, no such thing.

CS: Any teachers that stick out in your mind that you remember?

JS: Oh there were some great teachers and there were some teachers that sucked. I mean—I shouldn't be [laughs]—it's like anything else, you're currently attending school and it's the same situation. You get some guys that are just excellent at the subject material, with their teaching and other guys can't—they're in the wrong field.

CS: Did you notice if there were any kids that were from various social backgrounds or ethnic backgrounds that were treated differently in school?

JS: No [laughs], *North Catholic* located at Erie and Tarresdale Avenue in Philadelphia in the '60s was 99.7% white. There might have been a small handful of Hispanic folks and a smaller handful of black folks in there, so ethnically the only difference were you Polish vs. Irish, were you Irish vs. Italian, were you Italian vs. German, and stuff like that. So mildly you joke at somebody for being a Pollack or a Dago or something like that and it was just a mild shot—more of a joke than anything else. Nobody really got offended by it that I can ever recall. A different day, a different age, yeah.

CS: What is the highest level of schooling that you've completed?

JS: 16 years, I'm a college graduate.

CS: I forgot to mention that—we can begin—we'll do that now. You said when you came back from the service you attended LaSalle University?

JS: That's correct, yeah. When I came back from the service, I was working for my cousin's husband as a ceramic tile setter--this stuff [bangs on kitchen table which is partially made up of ceramic tiles]. Doing bathrooms, remodeling bathrooms and stuff like that. And I was injured in the service with my back and it was getting to my back because you're constantly stooping over and leaning over in tubs, pulling your knees on floors on wet floors and stuff like this. After about 9 months of that, brutal backbreaking work, I said this is not for me. So, I got an opportunity, I can have my schooling paid for, completely by going to night school and let me take the entrance test, and I went to LaSalle. And like I said, stuck with it for 7 years, never bailed out on it and got a degree in accounting.

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CS: Any particular reason you chose LaSalle? Was it just close or was there any particular reason?

JS: When my wife, I'm backtracking a little bit. My wife and I—this is almost coincidental, it is coincidental, my wife and I were also married in Hawaii. When I was on R&R from Vietnam my wife flew out to Hawaii and I made arrangements with a Catholic chaplain and we got married, when we met in Hawaii there. And then she came back to Philadelphia, she also lived in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. Her father helped her to set up an apartment, up in the Logan section of Philadelphia, which is right by LaSalle. There's a church, a Catholic church on Broad Street called *Holy Child*. We were right in the shadow of that church. We were right off of Broad Street, on 13 Street, we had an apartment and we lived there for a couple years, a year and a half, I think it was.

CS: So convenience? It was close?

JS: It was convenient and close at that point in time, plus I was working for a savings and loan, which at that time was the largest savings and loan in Philadelphia, *Public Federal*. After I had quit with my cousin, working as a tile setter, I got a job, I got a real job as an auditor for—*Public Federal Savings and Loan*. So that was in Philadelphia, my home was in Philadelphia, LaSalle was just nearby and I qualified to get into LaSalle, and that was it. So that's why I chose LaSalle.

CS: I'm going to a little bit into your military experience. What branch of the military did you serve in?

JS: The army.

CS: What was your rank?

JS: Rank at discharge was sergeant E5.

CS: And where did you serve when you were in the military?

JS: I had basic training in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Advanced infantry training in Fort Polk, Louisiana. I was in Vietnam for 12 months, just shy of 12 months and then I had a short stint in Fort Carson, Colorado, 2 weeks, and then I can get into what happened there. And then I was in Fort George Meade in Maryland, which is about 30 miles north of Washington DC on I-95. And then I was discharged after 2 full years of active duty.

CS: So from the time you joined the military till the time you left, the number of years passed were how many?

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JS: Two, two years exactly, right to the day. Drafted in October 24th 1968 and discharged or separated from military service on—the 23rd of October, 1970.

CS: Now how did the draft work? How did you find out that you were being asked for military service?

JS: It's kind of unusual. Do you remember I said that there was a very, very heavy influence in my life was my uncle Jim, the priest?

CS: Correct.

JS: After I graduated from high school, I kind of hung around for a year and I didn't really do much of anything. So this is between 18 and 19 years old. What happened was—in the summer of year after I graduated from high school, let's say, probably Junish of 1966, I decided that I wanted to go into the seminary. And I had worked as a part time job a sacristan down at *Saint Boniface Church*, which was my wife's parish in Philadelphia about 4 blocks south of me on Hancock Street. The Redemptress priests were down there and they had pretty much of an influence on me choosing to go into the Redemptress order, even though my uncle Jim was an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales, I chose the Redemptress order. Benny Vaun had three brothers-in-law that lived across the street from him—from us, directly across the street from us. All three of them were Redemptress priests. So I had very, very, strong Redemptress background. Went into the seminary in St. Mary's I'm going to say June or July which was in Northeast Pennsylvania, up near Erie Pennsylvania and spent—from July till about December. December, my father took a massive heart attack, he survived it and I had to come out of the seminary to come home, you know help my mother with the situation and the store and everything else because they still had that store in Kensington. So I left the seminary, while I left the seminary I hooked up with my wife Kathleen McCormick and never returned to the seminary. So I stayed out of the seminary—1966, '67 passed by, '68 I was drafted. I was drafted pretty late in life. Where most guys were being drafted at 18 years old, I had passed my 21st birthday when I was drafted.

CS: And did they send it to you in the mail, your draft notice?

JS: Oh yeah, you just got a draft notice that you're here my ordered to report to such and such a location in Philadelphia, I think it was 401 North Broad Street, is where I was drafted from, which was Broad and Vine. And you just simply show up there that day with just the clothes on your back, they process you and you go into the service.

CS: Did you have any thoughts of not wanting to go into the service?

JS: I didn't want to go, but the values of God and country and everything else, where so strong that—and plus a lot of my buds had already been in. As a matter of fact, two of them were killed already in Vietnam. So, there was—I guess, maybe a little bit of

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repressed vengeance, you know 'I'll get even.' One of those deals. I guess that was the feelings back then, so I made no bones about it, I simply went into the service.

CS: You want to talk a little more about your basic training? You said...

JS: Yeah basic training, I was drafted in October of 1968 and reported to Fort Bragg, North Carolina which is on the I-95 corridor, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down into North Carolina. So, about 50 miles north of the South Carolina border. Basic training was 8 weeks long. You learned how to act as a soldier, you learned how to take orders and that's a tough transition, that's an extremely tough transition. Because to that point, I was working factory type jobs and stuff like that and you know you're shown a certain level of respect. Well when you go into the military, particularly into the Army or the Marine Corps you-- all that respect is stripped. The only thing that you go through is being hollered at and taking orders from somebody. So there's never any 'all do that later' or 'give me a chance to get that done' it's like everything is here and now [bangs his hand on the table twice] and there is very little respect shown. It's screamed at you and you just do it. 'Run to here, run to there.' Your father can probably elaborate just as much as I am on this. It's a difficult transition for somebody that's had a pretty organized and happy childhood. It's very, very rough, but you tough it up. You at that point, you're a young man, you got to do it. You simply have to do it. And—that was my attitude anyways.

CS: The drill sergeants, besides verbal—abuse, for lack of better word...

JS: That's what it is.

CS: Did they every use physical abuse in any way in to put the, in line?

JS: Shoving and stuff like that, but I never witnessed any kind of punching or I understand that it did happen periodically in the marines. The army, the farthest it ever got was shoving. If you're moving too slow, they'll shove you.

CS: I guess the official policy was don't touch though, or was there one that you recall?

JS: No, they would have no problem with putting their hand on you and getting this far from your face [puts his hand in front of his face] and saying 'do you understand me? Do you understand what I'm saying?' and call you demeaning words like a maggot or something like that 'do you understand what I'm saying to you, maggot?' and stuff like that. So in that respect it was pretty tough, you know. And you tolerated it. I don't remember—only a handful of people and I mean a minor handful of people that were there one day that and were having difficulties. Every once in a while you get a chubby guy who couldn't do the running, who would fall to the waist side, too many times. They were singled out, sometimes ridiculed and then after two or three ridicules they would just disappear. So they would put in some other company or something like that. They couldn't handle basic training. Some of them could have been discharged under general

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conditions, medical. I don't know, a lot of them you just don't know what happened. And they were few and far between Chris. 99% of the kids, maybe 95-96% would make it through.

CS: Can you tell me about any of the jobs you held in Vietnam, besides infantry soldier. Did you have specific jobs that you did?

JS: I was both an infantry soldier and sniper.

CS: Did you train—before in basic training or after basic training, did you train for the different jobs, like sniper...

JS: No.

CS: Or did you do that once you go there?

JS: In basic training and advanced infantry training, pretty much the focus is survival and shooting. So, as you shot different weapons, there was different level of qualifications. You had targets at 50 yards, 100 yards, 150, 250, and I believe up to 500 yards. Now most of the time from the prone position, lying on the ground and shooting single shots, you would get mostly all the 50 yard targets, that's almost like a pointing thing, you can get a 50 yard target. 100 yards, you had to take an aim and then pop one. 250 little bit more, 500 was a 1 out of maybe 5 shot that you would knock a 500 target down. Well, the levels of qualification with weapons and back in those days it was both the M-14, which was the marine weapon in Vietnam and the M-16, which is still used in the service today, that's an AR1 I think they call them. The M-16 was mostly what I carried in Vietnam. But, it's a semi-automatic or automatic weapon with 5.62 with a .23 caliber ammunition. Small bullet like that [shows size with fingers] and the bullet itself maybe like the size of a cigarette butt. But very high muzzle velocity, you can do a lot of damage to a person if it hits you. The qualification levels were marksman, sharpshooter, and expert. So most of the weapons that I qualified with, I was an expert. That was noted in my record. When I went to Vietnam, you started off simply as a rifleman, you went over there as a private first class. And you were rifleman, part of a squad, which was part of platoon, which was part of a company. They were all subdivisions [bangs on the table] of strengths of military units. So the objective and the idea of an infantry company was to go out and simply engage the enemy. That was what your purpose was. As a foot soldier it's the most basic, dog-face, in the army. That's it, that's the bottom of the barrel. Everything else in the army is to support the infantry. You got artillery, you got armor, engineers, quartermaster, they all support the infantry. So, after spending quite a few months in the infantry, I was hurt pretty seriously of my back, I took a spill during an ambush one time and what happened was I fell on a rock and hurt my back pretty seriously and I was in traction. I cracked a couple of vertebrae pretty low on my back, L2, L3, L4 and hurt my back seriously and was in traction in a field hospital for 6 weeks. When I came out and when I came back from the hospital I

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was unable to carry the load that ordinary infantryman would carry, which sometime could amount to 70-80lbs of ammunition on your back. Couldn't do it, back was hurting too much. So the powers to be, the commanding officer and the first sergeant and the unit saw that I was a pretty good shot and what they did was, they sent me to sniper school with the 9th infantry division down in the Macon Delta area of Vietnam. And what I did down there was that I trained on an M-14, which is the larger weapon with 7.62 ammunition, a bullet about this big [shows size of the bullet with his fingers], but it was a national match weapon, which was an army competition rifle. That army competition rifle was used for obviously for target shooting and for snipers. And there was a scope on it and everything else. And I was shooting targets at not 500 meters (yards?), but 800 meters (yards?), with a scope and taking single shots, it was only a semiautomatic weapon so it wasn't a good weapon if you were ambushed because each time you pulled the trigger, one bullet come out and instead of squeezing the trigger and multiple bullets coming out. So what – it was a different type of operation that was required for snipers than it was for a regular infantryman. Where an infantryman would be a member of a squad or a platoon, a sniper would be usually with a squad and that squad was strictly a defensive group to support the sniper, one shot, take one guy out. So that was the principle, for day time operations for a sniper.

CS: So you held that position until you were discharged, any other jobs?

JS: You know, let me correct what I just said. I said I injured my back. When I went to sniper school, I injured my foot. I was running from mortar fire with flip-flops on and ripped the sole off my foot. Because PSP, which is metal planking, that is put on the ground in a muddy environment, that's where I was running [laughs] like hell, because incoming fire was coming and [claps] I scrambled and hooked my toe and then the bottom of my foot came off like a sardine can. So I was hospitalized for that and I wasn't hospitalized as long as like 2 or 3 days, where they stitched the back of my foot on back on after they cleaned it off. But then I had orders not to participate in any, engage in any kind of infantry activity because of the mud and all, I would have gotten a serious infection and possibly lost my foot. So I had to keep my foot dry, so the first sergeant wasn't going to have any parts of that. So him and the captain talked and they got me into sniper school. And that's where I continue from there. So the correction is, it wasn't the back injury I did have a back injury subsequent to that, that took me out of the field, so that was different incident.

CS: What can you tell me about military life, both I guess in basic training and then when you were in Vietnam? For instance, how was the food, were there certain rules you had to follow, would the hours that you had to—did you any have time off, the majority of time I'm sure was on, did but did you have time off, what did you do in your free time, the uniforms, the shelter, the weather, things like that, just everyday life was like both I guess in basic training and in Vietnam?

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JS: Basic training and advanced infantry training you lived primarily in barracks. So there would be usually a platoon of men on the first and second floor of barracks with a sergeant at the end of the barracks. They were heated, there was running water, there were bathroom facilities, shower facilities, etc. So you had pretty much bare bones convenience, but you had double bunks, a foot locker and a wall locker and that was your whole life, you had no civilian clothes at all. Back in those days, so everything was army uniform, everyday, all the time. Even your underwear was army issued, so I mean it was just extremely strict. During the day you would be trained on rifle ranges and bivwak, where you would stay out at night and stuff like that. And all this was in preparation for Vietnam.

When you arrived in Vietnam you processed into a brigade main base camp. The brigade that I was in was the 199th Light Infantry Brigade. There were two brigade sized operations in Vietnam, everything else was a division, which a brigade is a subdivision of a division. A division is large. A division is usually commanded by a major general, a 2 star. A separate brigade is usually commanded by a 1 star general. Brigades within a division are usually commanded by a general—by a colonel, a full colonel. Now when you get into the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, there were 4 line battalions, which is the next subdivision, lower than the brigade. That would be the equivalent of 5 companies. A company was generally about 140 to a 150 men, would have been an average sized infantry company. A, B, C, D, E company. So that would be the 5 companies of a battalion. I was in the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, Delta Company, 4th Platoon.

So that's [bangs on the table] the subdivisions all the way down.

When we got to Vietnam, we processed into the main base camp which was a huge base camp in Long Binh, Vietnam. I believe about 20 miles, 25 miles from Saigon, which was the capital of Vietnam. The 199th then had the base camp here [uses a napkin and then points with his hand to show the location of various camps] and all the battalions would have been in these different locations, which were called forward support bases, fire support bases. So you would have possibility 3 or more companies in these fire support bases. Now each company had its own captain, who was the commanding officer and a lieutenant who was the platoon commander, the platoon leader they called him. The platoon leader was a guy who got right out there in the field with you, so you would leave that base camp [bangs on the table] and either do a patrol during day operations, again, attempting to engage the enemy. Either there would be reports from intelligence that there's Vietcong out there, go get them. At night the operation was you would stay in the base camp during the day [bangs on the table] and then just around night fall, you would move out and set up an ambush position hoping to engage the enemy moving at night. So this was every day, every night.

About once a week you would have what was known as a stand down, where you wouldn't do either one of them. You would just stay at the main base camp and either drink a few beers or something like that, because you were in a pretty protected environment. Not that the enemy couldn't shoot mortar rounds in on you or try to sneak up on you through the barbed wire and stuff like that. There were barbed wire all around the base camp and an entrance and it was all armed and guarded, but you would stay in the base camp and sleep in these little, what we called hooch's. Which was a piece of

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steel in an arc that had maybe 3 or 4 layers of sandbags on the top and that was usually two men per unit in one of them. So that was basically the life of an infantryman. Sometimes you would stay out for multiple days. We had a patrol one time that was patrol and ambush combination. Where we went out and stayed—it was close to a month in duration where you were supplied, your food and everything else by helicopters hovering over and then dropping C rations in and stuff like that.

CS: Obviously being in tropical area, very, very humid, very hot conditions. When you were back at base camp, was the food adequate usually?

JS: The food was better in base camp because they had the cooks for the battalion there, who would prepare the food. So you would have hot meals back at the forward base camp. When you were in the field they came in little cartons like this [shows size with his hands] and your dad would also remember these, little cases like this. A can of meat, a can of fruit, a can of vegetables, sometimes a can within a can with cheese and crackers and stuff like that, almost like a cheese whiz and then usually a four pack of cigarettes and—candy bars were sometimes in there, like a Nestlé's Crackle in a round container that was covered with foil and there'd be a little fork and knife and stuff like that, sometimes heating tablets if you could do the luxury of heating the thing up.

CS: Was food usually adequate? Did you ever have any experiences where there wasn't enough food?

JS: No.

CS: So food was usually pretty adequate?

JS: We were always well supplied. If we got into dense jungle vegetation, we would be resupplied and told that what you have has to last you 4 days or something like that. So then you would get all the C rations, break them down instead of having them in the little boxes you'd put them usually in a pair of socks and just stack these things up and each can was marked what it was. And you would have to go sometimes 4 and 5 days on C rations.

CS: Uniforms, did they give you 2 or...

JS: They always gave you clean uniforms. There was some kind of laundry service or something that the army engaged in with the local towns and stuff like that. But you would get uniforms. When you were in the field it got pretty rough sometimes, you would be in the same uniform for 4 or 5 days. And being in same uniform for 4 or 5 days health habits became questionable—you got extremely filthy. If you got insect bites on you, they would start festering and stuff like that, so that could become an issue. If you didn't keep yourself as clean as possible and it was extremely rough to keep yourself

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clean because there wasn't that much clean water over there. I mean if you would find a river or a stream, you would bath in it. But you had to be very careful there, because the enemy would around there, catch you in precarious position, and shoot your ass up. So that was the situation with that.

[We took about a 5 minute break at this point. The recorder was paused during this time. When the break was over, we continued the interview]

CS: Moving on with the military experience. How did you get to the war zone? Did you just walk right out of the base camp or was there a method of transportation?

JS: No, after advanced infantry training in Fort Polk, Louisiana, it was around—March of 1969. I would've gone on a 30 day leave and then from the 30 day leave you were issued orders before you left on leave. So the orders would tell you where your next duty assignment was. And back in those days you have to remember the 1969 and 1970 was the biggest build up of Vietnam. There were more US soldiers in Vietnam back in those days than any other time in history.

CS: What was your first experience when you got—was Vietnam the time you had had gone to a foreign country?

JS: Yes, outside of Bermuda or something like that.

CS: So what was your experience? First, we'll take it just the fact it was a foreign country, somewhere you hadn't been before, the other side of the world. And then we can ask what was your first impression of maybe the people you saw there, whatever. So we can break it down to the country first and then maybe the people.

JS: Best described as traumatic. The day or the evening that I arrived in Vietnam they put us into large roofed hooch's with open air sides. It was stifling hot. There was no fans, there was no electricity. So the first thing I saw around the base camp were these parachuted flares that would light up the sky and the earth. Usually what there fired out of are artillery tubes and fired up into the air because they suspect enemy movement out there. You would hear the crackling of gunfire and you'd [laughs] just came the reality that this is real stuff. This is not messing around. There's bullets flying out there and there's people that want to do harm to you. And it is absolutely traumatic. Plus, it's hot as hell, it stinks, it's a retched environment from sleeping in a bed somewhere. Traumatic is the only way to describe it, I can't really go into any [laughs] more detail than that, it was just—something that I wasn't used to, I always slept in a bed, even when I was in the service. You had a cot to sleep in, it had a mattress, it had sheets on it, it had a pillow. This was just an open—it was like an army cot with a canvas below you, I don't recall if there were sheets, I frankly doubt it. And maybe a—they had canvas pillows that you blow up and stick under your head. And they were partially rubber and partially canvas, so you'd be sweating your tail off after 5 minutes of lying in this thing.

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Obviously no sleep at all the first night. And then you'd have mosquitoes buzzing around, --horrendous.

CS: What was the first time you came in contact with any Vietnamese people, either friendly or foe?

JS: Friendly, as you walked around the base camp the next day, they would usually have you on these details, either KP or filling sand bags or doing some real dirt bag stuff, real basic crap that you would be engaged in. You would see the Vietnamese people who would be doing the laundry and stuff like that, walking around the base camp. So the first thing— 'who are these people, what are they doing here?' And that would have been your first exposure to the Vietnamese people and you would start noticing that they would smile at you and be friendly toward you, but you still didn't know what are they smiling at me for?[laughs] Very, very skeptical of everybody and every movement around you. That was life the first couple of days in the main base camp. Before they assigned you to a unit and shipped you out.

CS: Do you remember anything about your fellow soldiers or about your commanders? We can take your fellow soldiers, anything that distinctively stuck out in your mind? And then we can talk about your commanders maybe, anything that stuck out in your mind about the commanders?

JS: Well you had a potpourri of personalities back in those days. You would have guys that were quiet, you would had guys that were rambunctious, you would have guys that were flamboyant—you just had a variety of personalities, just like you had with anything else. The infantry didn't necessarily mean you were the dumbest guy that came along, because we had our share of college graduates that were in our group. And there would always be somebody that you would attach to, you'd say 'hi you doing?' 'Oh I'm from Philadelphia too', or something like that and you would start talking and then that guy over there is from Phoenixville or that guy over there is from Jersey and then you start chatting with them. And it usually was your local that started to bring you closer together and it's the same way you develop any other relationship. What makes a person in your teaching environment closer to you, what makes this guy different from that guy? Who knows what the answer to that is? It's whatever that magnetism that draws 2 people together, but it usually starts as 'where you from?' and you know goes on from there.

CS: What struck you about the commanders, anything in particular?

JS: The commanders—you weren't exposed to any commanders aside from some of the sergeants, some of the lower ranking sergeants. Buck sergeants, staff sergeants that would be in charge of getting you to do the details. Now the first thing you noticed was they were a lot different than drill sergeants. Now you have somebody that wants to be close to you. They don't want to be your enemy, for whatever reason. They don't want to make life miserable for you. They know that you have a detail, the guy would say

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‘okay we got fill 100 sandbags’ instead of saying ‘you’ll fill a 100 sandbags and you’ll do it with a smile on your face and don’t give me any B.S. about it!’ They would say, ‘listen give us a hand here we got to get 200 of these sandbags.’ So in just a different demeanor, with the NCO’s of the training era vs. the war time era. So there was a difference—still not exposed whatsoever to any officers.

CS: Quick question I probably should have asked before, before you went to Vietnam and got drafted, in school did you learn anything about Vietnam? Did you have any idea about this place before you went there or did you really learn as you went?

JS: You know something, in the 4th year, in my senior year of high school, there was a course called national problems. And national problems was I guess another word for current events. And we talked about Vietnam a little bit. My mother and father—it was on the news every night. There was always body counts and plus there had been kids in my neighborhood that lost their lives because of Vietnam. So Vietnam was a place on the other side of the globe, that there was a lot of problems going on and there were people losing their lives over there and there were protests that were beginning in the United States, demanding an answer to why are we in Vietnam? What’s the purpose of this? There seemed to be a lot of lives being lost and nobody has ever really defined a clear purpose other than to stop the spread of communism in the Far East. China was a communist country, Russia was a communist country. Russia bordered China to the north and out to the east. And Vietnam was below there and it was kind of cradled with countries that were communist. So, the United States’ intention initially was to stop the spread of communism. So that was the purpose of Vietnam. But then as lives were lost, you know there were 58,000 people that were killed in Vietnam, and scores and scores of other that are wounded and stills suffering from it today, that was the result of Vietnam. So this was getting more and more to the forefront as a result of the protests but my mother and father being conservative Republicans, believed in God and country. So the protestors were just more of an annoyance and rebel-rousers and the one running to Canada were cowards, things of that nature. So that was kind of the political air that was going on and I was pulled into this because of what my background was and I was never to much—I was a rebel-rouser in school. Like I said I was a discipline—I’m not going to call it a problem, because I was never thrown out of school, but I was close to suspended a couple time for being a jackass and just doing things that you shouldn’t be doing in school. Being a class clown and stuff like that, getting into trouble in that respect. But never anything or any violent nature.

CS: Is there any particular battles that were involved in that you would classify as battles or engaged in?

JS: Tet of ’69 I was involved in.

CS: You were involved in the Tet?

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JS: Of '69, not '68, '68 was the real, real bad one. Tet of '69 was not as bad.

CS: What is your view of the Tet Offensive? Because, you know militarily it was considered a huge defeat for the communists because you know what they were trying to put together, it was considered a victory for the US, but the media really spun it. And not to—the man just passed away, Walter Cronkite, came out against the Tet Offensive, so media wise at home people were seeing it as a defeat. What is your view of that whole situation?

JS: Well the Tet Offensive was primarily—the defensive of '68 was primarily targeted at Saigon to—it was all over the country of Vietnam, but my unit, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade and in particular the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry, was involved in the Tet Offensive in Saigon where they had to defend the city against the onslaught of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese regulars. It was viewed as a tremendous victory even though the loss of life on the American side was rather high, but in relationship to the loss of life, and I guess that is the only way you can measure who was successful vs. who wasn't successful. The guy that had the most deaths and injuries was the loser and the bottom line was that the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese were never able to reestablish their stronghold in Saigon. They tried, but they couldn't do it. And it was because of units like the 199th that they were unable to do it. So, our view of the Tet Offensive was fantastic. The unit itself won a presidential unit citation for it, now I mean a lot of these awards are—some of them are B.S. They give them, the president says 'we're going to award the 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry a presidential unit citation', which is the highest unit citation award you can get, even though there might have been 2-300 dead. They could care less about the presidential unit citation. Same thing with people that are seriously injured, but the bottom line, the objective was that Saigon was held. So, in that respect from a military strategic position, it was a gain.

CS: Now did you see any news reporters, since Tet Offensive was considered really the first media covered event, like you know in past news reels of WWII or Korea, but unlike previous, you know they say the Tet Offensive was really the time when the media went in, were actually in there when the combat was going on.

JS: Periodically we would have war correspondents with us on operations. Sometimes they lasted a couple of days, sometimes they would be out with us at night, just to have this situation where they witnessed a battle or something like that. We were always instructed by our officers and by our high ranking non-com's, 'we don't want you talking to these people. If they want any information, direct them to us.' So in that respect we were kind of shaded from them—there were some ill feeling held toward the officer ranks sometimes from the rank and file. I had very few problems with the officers and the noncommissioned officers that I worked with, some people did. Some people that were more politically astute than myself at that time in my life, would really have some problems with taking orders from some of the lieutenants and stuff like that.

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CS: What was your feeling about America being in the war? I mean did you have the—as you said before your background were you just felt my family background says I'm here so I'm here, or did you feel I'm here even though I really don't want to be here, I have objections to the war? What was your personal feelings about the country being involved in Vietnam?

JS: Sort of a dichotomy in what was going on internally with me. When I first arrived in Vietnam I was gun hoe to do my part, then when I got involved in some of the actual fighting and stuff like that, my attitude somewhat changed. I never really loved my enemy, but I began to kind of understand what they were fighting for and I started to understand and I started to understand why the protestors were protesting. Because it just seemed like a lot of stuff we were doing was aimless. Just going out, trying to pick a fight that was an aimless thing. We never really gained any ground, we would go over here, clear it, it would be clear there [bangs on table, gestures with hands to different locations] then we come over here and clear this area, then this area would come back. It was just a cat and mouse game. And the thing with that cat and mouse game, it was a very, very dangerous cat and mouse game because along the way people would be getting blown up, people would be getting killed, people would be getting injured. So it became—as I progressed through there, I started to, in my mind question, especially the upper levels of authority. Now when I'm talking about the upper levels of authority, I very seldom questioned my lieutenant because I recognized that he was acting under orders and the captain was always okay in my mind because those guys again, wanted to stay close to you. They realized they were your commanding officers, but they also wanted to be your buddies. Just because [laughs] you had a gun in your hand and they needed cooperation from—they needed you, more than you needed them. So that was always the feeling with an infantry soldier and his relationship to his immediate commanders, his lieutenants and his captain. You got beyond there to the battalion commander who was a lt. colonel, you usually thought of him as being just that jerk that makes us do everything that we don't want to do. There were problems from that level on up and I think I'm speaking for the majority of dog-faced soldiers [bangs on table] that you're talking about. That line of—the level of demarcation was between you, your NCO's, your lieutenant and your captain, who was the company commander. Once you got beyond the captain, there wasn't a hell of a lot of respect for the upper level of commanding officers.

CS: What was your view of the enemy? In other words did you feel an immense amount of hatred towards them? Did you feel that they were doing, just like you were following orders, they were in a since following orders? What was your feelings about who they were?

JS: There was combination of fear and hatred initially because their intention was the same to you as you to kill as many of you as they can and you're to kill as many of them as you can. So in order to have that level of a relationship it almost provokes a feeling of hatred.

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You can't—well you're supposed to love your enemy, again, according to the Christian belief, but it's pretty tough when somebody is sneaking something that wants to blow your ass away—to love that guy. There is going to be fear and hatred. Fear for the fact that these guys were so less equipped than you were, yet as an individual soldier because they were operating on their own turf, they were so much sharper than you were. They could hide better than you, they could anticipate what your move was much better than you could anticipate what their next move was. Later—I began to respect them as soldiers and stuff like that.

CS: Did you ever see the enemy?

JS: Oh yeah.

CS: You did?

JS: Yeah.

CS: Switching gears, you talked a little bit about the anti-war protests, I guess before you went over. What are your feelings I guess before or while you were serving and maybe when you came back about the anti-war protests going on in the United States against Vietnam, against the war—against what you were serving in?

JS: That's correct. When I came back from Vietnam, the first thing we would ordered to do, not ordered, but suggested to do, we landed in San Francisco and we came back from Vietnam in our jungle fatigues, because we had not other uniforms, we had no clothing whatsoever, than the clothing on our back. When we processed back into the United States, they reissued you all your class A uniforms, your green army uniforms, they sew your new rank on there, your patches, everything else, so you were a new guy when you came back from Vietnam. It took roughly 2 days to process you through San Francisco. They suggested that you go out and buy civilian clothing because of the massive protests that were going on in the United States. Now this is 1969, so you're talking about the height of the protests and everything else that was going on—when you read history about the Vietnam War that was the pinnacle of the Vietnam War, 1960, 1970. 1970 [bangs on table] was actually when they started drawing down the troops from Vietnam. '69 was the high point where there was the majority, the most troops that they had in Vietnam was during 1968 and '69. And I guess Johnson was the president then, correct?

CS: Nixon was what '73 when—that's when the pullout began, or was that a little bit later. Pullout I guess was a little later a few years—I'm trying to think when he made his speech, '75?

JS: No pullout was '75, when they bailed, but scaling down the number of troops began in the later part of '70. I got out of Vietnam in the beginning of April 1970. Around October, November 1970, Vietnam started scaling down, including my unit. But it

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was suggested that we traveled in civilian clothing so that we weren't harassed or picked on by any protestors because it seemed like the feeling of the United States back then was very much anti-Vietnam, more so than it was pro-Vietnam. It tilted actually a little bit toward the anti-Vietnam movement.

CS: What do you think made Vietnam so different? WWI was a very patriotic, WWII was considered the great romantic war, it's been romanticized, Korea even was for the most part, maybe it was a lack of media or whatever. What made Vietnam so different do you think than all of the...

JS: The objectives.

CS: The objectives in the war?

JS: The objectives, sure. I can't answer WWI too much, but WWII was the Nazi spread through Europe and then the spread of Japanese in the Pacific, I mean they were going to dominate the world, it was—we had to stop them. Vietnam was never portrayed as that, it was just to stop the spread of communism in the Middle East (Far East), Vietnam was—what was this?

CS: Was it more of a faceless enemy that might have added to it?

JS: It was not only faceless enemy, but it was just – again the objective. What was the purpose of us being there? And the purpose that was stated was to stop the spread of communism in the Far East. But it had nothing to do—it was never a threat of the Vietnamese to any American—nation or—you know to Guam or any of the countries that were close to the United States, there was no threat whatsoever. It was just, they thought that the spread would go there and then maybe go out to Philippians or something or down to Australia, I don't know. But the Australians were involved in the Vietnam War, Canadians were over there, so not only did the United States itself get involved in Vietnam, but there were some pretty large---the Koreans, the South Koreans were in Vietnam helping, were allied to the United States. And we fought with some of those people, by our side.

CS: What do you think of the anti-war protestors as with what they were doing now? Do you think that they were, it was fact that they were Americans and some people have the perspective that's what they were fighting for, for the people to have the ability to protest as they were? Do you feel that they were being counter to what was trying to be done by the military? What were your personal feelings about these people that were protesting? Against you basically for being a soldier, fighting over there.

JS: That was a tough call and I was pretty annoyed with that because I felt that all I did was what I was called to do by my country. And back in those days there was a saying that I think either, well Goldwater had brought it out, Barry Goldwater, Presidential Republican

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Presidential candidate had brought it out. It was ‘my country, right or wrong, my country.’ So the idea was regardless of what your feeling is toward what the decision makers of your country are going through, it’s still your country and you still need to defend it.

CS: So do you think the protestors were misplaced in where they were taking their aggression out?

JS: The protestors for taking their aggression out against the soldiers that served in Vietnam in my opinion were absolutely wrong, absolutely wrong. The protesting of the higher authority of the President, of the Congress, the generals running the war that was all in my opinion, correct. But to take it to level of the soldiers, no, unacceptable, and I still feel that way today [bangs hand on the table].

CS: How did you feel when the war finally ended? When it was officially ended?

JS: That was 1975—I was pretty saddened by it—because of the loss of life and because of the—losses that so many veterans had experienced. In a nutshell, very, very sad—I cried like a baby when I saw the films of them being chased out of Saigon and tanks rolling down the street, stuff like that, I was saddened by it. But there was also a feeling of relief that all the crap that was going on in the country was probably having a good chance now of being ended because of it. But the feeling of sadness far outweighed that because I was a part of it.

CS: Do you consider Vietnam a failure—by the American military?

JS: Yes—and not a failure Chris due to the soldiers it was a failure to the administrations and the people running the war.

CS: And you said the objective of the war?

JS: Yeah, if the objectives of the war would have been to change Vietnam, to change the landscape of Vietnam to annihilate the enemy, that would have been a different story. We never did that. It was always a defensive move and then these little offensive pushes here and there and then regroup and defend yourself again and little pushes, it was stupid after awhile.

CS: Switching gears a little bit. Did you receive any medals or citations in the war?

JS: Yeah.

CS: What were those medals or citations, do you remember?

01:38:02

JS: Yeah—let's see starting from the highest to the lowest. I received 3 army commendation medals, I received an air medal, I received a Vietnam service medal with 2 bronze stars, I received a Vietnam campaign medal, I received a Vietnam cross of gallantry medal, the national defense service medal, the combat infantryman's badge, 3 presidential unit citations, 1 meritorious unit citation, and that's it.

CS: Sounds like a lot to me.

JS: Yeah.

CS: When you were over in Vietnam, do you recall any USO shows or famous people coming to entertain the troops?

JS: Yes.

CS: Do you recall anybody that sticks out in your mind, any...

JS: Yeah, I actually saw Bob Hope. In the 1969 Christmas Show. I believe at either Binh Long or Long Binh, but I did see Bob Hope, yeah.

CS: What was your feeling about in the fact that there were celebrities coming to see the soldiers in Vietnam?

JS: Well that was the support group for the United States and all the—when Bob Hope appeared in the stage, he'd always be with a division commander a 2 star or a 3 star general, that's the only time you would see these real big shots. I mean, he did his best with his troop to entertain the troops and lighten their loads a little bit.

CS: I'm going to move away from and just have some general Vietnam questions. One of them being what were your political views about the wars being handled by say the Kennedy administration, the Johnson administration, the Nixon administration, do you believe that one was more on the ball than the other? Do you believe that all the way through the administrations didn't know what they were doing or you weren't on board with what they were doing?

JS: I think Vietnam really started, I'm going to say under the Eisenhower administration, I think there were some advisors sent over to Vietnam. And it was primarily to assist the French. The French were embattled in a war with Ho Chi Minh's Vietcong at the time or Vietmen I think they were called. And the French were trying to colonize Vietnam and the Vietnamese wanted no parts of it. So eventually they kicked the French out and then Ho Chi Minh I believe was being viewed as a communist. And back in those days, communist was a dirty word, that was the McCarthy Era and all that, with communism and the spread of communism in the world. The Cold War had just gotten

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on its feet then with our relationship with Russia after WWII and after Korea. But—then during the Kennedy administration I believe that the spread of communism became the pinnacle of why we wanted to get involved in Vietnam. And during the Kennedy administration, I believe that there were a couple puppet governments that were built by the United States that started to escalate the war in Vietnam. Where Ho Chi Minh was from North Vietnam and a true, from what I understand, a true patriot and wanted independence for Vietnam, initially from the French, and won that war. Now he has a bigger—deal to contend with the United State and the United States and its puppet governments. So, the spread through Kennedy and Johnson was just an escalation of the war. The troop strength began to build, build, build. During the Johnson administration it was, it hit a point where it was I think 850,000 troops were over there at some point. So you're talking almost a million troops in a country on the other side of the planet. The objective never really changed. A couple times they tried an offensive to knock out North Vietnam and they always pulled back. The bombing Hanoi on a regular basis, but every time they were bomb Hanoi, Hanoi would come back again because of the patriotic nature of the folks that were supporting Ho Chi Minh. I just believe that the war was always status quo, except for some of the offensives to bomb the Ho Chi Minh trail and North Vietnam, were probably the most offensive moves that we made, but we never really finished the job. We always would retreat back to South Vietnam and then just defend our positions and then not really move much to do anything other than get involved in skirmishes and a couple people would die.

Nixon on the other hand, and I'm pretty sure that Nixon was President in 1970, I'm pretty sure of it. Nixon was actually the first one to say 'it's enough, were going to get out.' That was probably one of Nixon's major accomplishments, was to do draw down to a point where 1975—now I don't remember when Nixon resigned, if he was in his 2nd term or what the story was, I can't—my recollection is not that vivid for back then, in those days, but Nixon was probably the only President that I respected for his decisions and to be making decisions because it just seemed that most of the time the administration wasn't making decisions and that was part of the quagmire of Vietnam. [claps his hands]

CS: Much is said about the drug use in Vietnam. Do you think—was their really a widespread drug problem or has it been greatly exaggerated?

JS: Greatly exaggerated. I experienced some drug use with marijuana and there was a French drug called obesital, which was an upper, speed, it was a speed drug. It came in little bottles about the size of a vanilla extract bottle. And you would see guys drink that and than their eyes would bug out. It was almost dangerous because they would sort of hallucinate with it. And you didn't want anybody in your group that was doing that stuff because they would loud sometimes and if you were set up for an ambush you certainly didn't want to give your position away. And generally a sergeant, if he caught somebody doing that would report it to the commander officer and the commanding officer would take disciplinary action. And in a lot of cases that guy was pulled.

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CS: So it wasn't tolerated?

JS: It was not tolerated by the commanders whatsoever.

CS: Did you have any idea where the drugs came—did they come from the locals? Did the people bring...

JS: They probably came from the locals, sure.

CS: I didn't know if—you said there were French, and there was Australians, and then there Koreans, I didn't know if they might of had any, that your aware of.

JS: I think everyone of these folks had a minor portion of their armies that would participate in this stuff. I think drug use as far as marijuana goes was more prevalent in the Vietnam society. I think that a lot of them use to smoke hash and marijuana on a regular basis. It was just part of their culture to do that. The United States viewed it as a drug and it wasn't tolerated.

CS: Would you say that there was any one movie or book you think that sums up what Vietnam was like, that you may have seen? Some people have mentioned movie *Platoon* some people the more recent...

JS: *Platoon* was extremely realistic. There was called *The Deerslayer* I think. That had some merit to it. The one that was with Marlon Brando and the title of that movie escapes me at this point, it was a very popular one during that time—was completely out to lunch I thought.

CS: *Full Metal Jacket* is another one that's supposed to be of the training situations...

JS: I believe that was marines training and I believe that depicted a very real situation. Not that I have ever witnessed anything that went as traumatic as that, but I could picture that as being a possible situation.

CS: And the recent one with Mel Gibson, *We Were Soldiers*, that of the Americans having a very tight grasp of the situation, the beginning of the war, that it there was a clear objective, at least they felt and everything and how they handled it. I don't know if you've seen that movie or not?

JS: That was the first battalion sized operation that I think went up against a division of North Vietnamese and from what I understand—now I never experienced an operation that large. And that was quite a battle from what I see, and I believe that was probably realistically depicted based on—I think that was the la Drang Valley.

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CS: Sounds right.

JS: And that was around 1965 or '66. And again I believe that was the first cavalry division that—Mel Gibson was the battalion commander. Now I could never, ever envision a battalion commander getting in the thick of something like that, but then by the same token, let's say that in one of these fire support bases that I was talking about, if we were invaded on 3 or 4 sides, by a division of North Vietnamese regular, I could see the same kind of a battle ensuing. But I don't know how a group could amass that big because it would just take an unbelievable amount of intelligence on their behalf to be able to skirt all the defensive positions of the United States, I don't think it was possible to do it. Maybe back when that Mel Gibson movie was, it probably was because there weren't that many troops over there. But you're talking about 850,000 troops pocketed here, here, here, here [points to area at the table] you couldn't possibility amass a division sized operation to go on an offense against, a battalion. And that's what that was.

CS: Do you still—from what my father's told me, you're involved in the local VFW?

JS: Correct.

CS: So do you stay in contact with those you served with in Vietnam—are they just military veterans in general from other engagements or wars? So two part question I'm trying to say, do you stay in contact with those you served with and what is your relationship with veterans today?

JS: The first part of the question, yes I do stay in contact with those who I served with. We meet in Washington (DC) every couple of years and have actually a group—and it's bigger than just my platoon. It's the 199th Light Infantry Brigade has a reunion down there every couple of years. And it's pretty well organized. If you want to look up a website it's called redcatcher, R-E-D-C-A-T-C-H-E-R. That was the name of the—redcather.org or something and just take a look at that and that'll tell about—my unit was '37, 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry.

CS: And you said the local VFW you're involved with...

JS: The local VFW, I don't know of anybody but one guy in the 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry, which was another line—battalion of the 199th that I know of that is in our VFW unit. I'm the quartermaster for the VFW, which is the chief financial officer. So I still function as that.

CS: How is the VFW structured? Like for instance, there is one right down the street from me. Is there smaller and than a larger, are they under an umbrella of a larger group?

JS: There's a national organization of the VFW that is housed in Kansas City, Missouri. The VFW stands for the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The criteria for being a member of the

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VFW is you have to had served in a military unit in combat or in a combat theater at the time of a war. So you have to be a Vietnam veteran, a Korean veteran, a WWII veteran who served in the theater to be—so it's a distinctive group of people. The national organization than is split up into 50 states, Guam, Puerto Rico, etc., there called departments. The departments are then divided as to counties, this is the 13th district in Gloucester County of the state of NJ, the department of NJ, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. And then I'm in post #6332, which is Washington Township Memorial Post. So there's national, state, county, post. There's 4 smaller divisions. We have roughly a 100 members of people that have served in WWII, Korea, Cuban Missile Crisis, German Occupation, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and the recent Persian Gulf.

CS: So you have people that are Iraq and Afghanistan veterans?

JS: Yeah. As a matter of fact we have a guy, who's our senior vice-commander, who was just deployed, he's a marine master sergeant, was just deployed to Afghanistan.

CS: That's actually, I had a quick question. A lot of comparison has been made between the current Iraq situation and Vietnam. Somewhat with the fact that of it being a preemptive war, that we weren't threatened directly by Iraq, but the administration, Bush administration decided to go there and confront the situation there. Do you think there is some merit to that, that it is a similar situation? Or what are your views of the Iraq War and Afghanistan, but Iraq more because I think it's more connected they say with Vietnam.

JS: The Iraq War, I was totally against. Being a Vietnam Veteran I was totally against deploying troops to Iraq. My opinion of that was George Bush Jr. was trying to make up for the fact that Saddam Hussein tried to assassinate his father. And that's just my personal opinion of it and I believe that he deployed 100,000 troops or more to avenge the threat of his father. That's—again a personal opinion. I don't think that's shared by too many people. I am not at all a fan of George W. Bush. I think he was the most dismal, representative of the office of President of the United States in my lifetime, by far. Even worse than Nixon, far worse than Carter, I can't compare him to anybody. I think he was a dismal failure. And that's my opinion.

CS: What are your feelings about—so you were against it because of the, being a Vietnam Veteran, you believe it was the same sort of situation? Where they were going in and the objective wasn't clear?

JS: The objective was certainly not clear.

CS: It was something sort of abstract, thing sort of as—Vietnam was against communism, this is against terrorism or this is against...

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JS: Well terrorism is more defined situation than communism. Communism was a political philosophy. Terrorism is—it's almost non-political. I don't really how to define communism (terrorism). It's a group of people that are generally of the Muslim faith, that hate the United States and all it represents.

CS: Maybe Islamic Fundamentalists would be better term...

JS: Correct.

CS: To use when comparing it to communism, since they are both political situations. The Islamic Fundamentalist want to restore to an Islamic State the—their against democracy and people making laws...

JS: It's more of a religious...

CS: Right, mixed together in a sense. I know it's difficult because communism against religion and it's difficult to make comparison, but a lot has been said—I was just curious of your take on Vietnam and Iraq. What about Afghanistan?

JS: Afghanistan I think is a justifiable war because they—the terrorists that bombed New York City, they believe in their heart or hearts was in Afghanistan...

CS: You mean being funded by that government?

JS: The eye was taking off the ball when we went into Iraq and kind of paid secondary attention to Afghanistan. Where we sent 100,000, amassed a huge war machine to go into Iraq to get Saddam Hussein, the same thing was not done in Afghanistan. The Taliban as far as I know had nothing to do with the bombing of New York City, it was this group, this fundamentalist called al-Qaida that nobody is really sure what the structure of that is. It seems to me a mystical—no one says 'I got a card, that I'm a member of al-Qaida' there's no such thing.

CS: Sort of an underground movement?

JS: It's a terrorist movement that seemed to have gotten into the [bangs on the table] the Afghanistan area and is kind of contaminating Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia, is it Indonesia?

CS: Well it's flourishing in Indonesia, the Middle East, you know there's even talks of it getting now into Africa, you know like the horn of Africa and everything, Somalia.

JS: Absolutely.

02:01:10

CS: I was just curious of your take on that. I'm going to change gears real quick here kind of bring this to a conclusion. I was just going to ask about—you talked about that your wife and you had met, you lived in the same area?

JS: Yeah, she was a neighbor of mine, 3 blocks down.

CS: So you grew up together and you said you got married...

JS: In Hawaii.

CS: In Hawaii, while you had leave?

JS: R&R, yeah it's the same thing. That's rest and recuperation. But it's leave from a military war zone.

CS: So when you were discharged from Vietnam, you came home, you were already married, correct?

JS: Correct.

CS: And you decided to settle in the same area? Or when did you come to NJ?

JS: No, we settled initially in Philadelphia, up around Holy Child Parish, which was at Broad and Lindley, down the street from LaSalle. We had an apartment there for a year and a half, from 1970 to sometime during 1971. Then I bought a bungalow in Pine Hill, it was a tiny bungalow, I think it was 400 square feet. I expanded the bungalow. I went out the side 40 more and out the back 40 more, so it was—whatever the hell the dimensions of the house, built a 3 bedroom house. And I did that while I was still working and going to LaSalle, I did most of the building myself. Got a construction loan to put the frame up around me, but then did all the interior wallboard, a lot of the plumbing, a lot of the electricity, the insulation, the painting, the drywall stuff and—I worked my tail off for years and years. So we moved to Pine Hill in late 1971, stayed in Pine Hill till 19—81, My daughter was born in 1980, so we moved out of Pine Hill in '81, and I moved to Washington Township in '81 and I've lived there ever since in the same house.

CS: When were your children born?

JS: My son was born in 1977 and my daughter was born in 1980.

CS: Are they married?

JS: Yeah, both of them are married.

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CS: Both are married?

JS: Yeah.

CS: Grandkids?

JS: No grandchildren at all.

CS: Does your wife work?

JS: My wife is a administrator, she's in Collingswood Public School, she's a guidance director.

CS: And you said that you recently retired? What did you retire from? What last job?

JS: The last job I had at, not Tower Perrin, but EDS. And I was an IT Specialist.

CS: You were there for a little while?

JS: 10 years.

CS: 10 years?

JS: Exactly 10 years.

CS: Before that when you left and you finished your degree at LaSalle, where did you start working?

JS: I had a job at *Public Federal Savings and Loan* in Philadelphia from 1971 through 1977. I was an internal auditor. I was audit manager at the next savings and loan that I worked with, which was *Farmers and Mechanics Savings and Loan* in Burlington, NJ. That was from '77-'79. From '79 to '95 I was an internal auditor with *Sun Oil Company* in Philadelphia and then I lost my—I had a heart attack in 1990 which started off a series of problems where I had to go on disability. While I was on disability with *Sun Oil*, they fired me from my job, which I subsequently sued them—I mean [laughs] I don't know if you need this information or not—and won the law suit. And till this day I'm still bitter about that. I have feelings of animosity toward *Sun Oil Company* for doing what they did to me [bangs on table]. And then I was forced to take this job with—with *Towers Perrin* and then subsequently *EDS* for the rest of my career. I started stashing cash [bangs on the table] probably 5 years before I retired. I was able to retire at age 60. So, I got out of the workforce, didn't want to look, didn't have a very happy last 20 years of my career. Happy to be away from it.

02:06:17

CS: Happy to be retired [laughs]?

JS: Yeah, absolutely.

CS: Now that your retired, how have your interests changed as you've matured do you think? Do you think—and maybe I just say even your views, do you think that your political views have changed as you've matured? Has there certain things now your more interested in that your weren't interested in before, both leisurely or things that you said you said your involved in the VFW maybe you weren't as interested in stuff like that before, but now your more interested in things like that?

JS: Well my views of war have in general have changed dramatically. Like I said, I viewed Vietnam in 1975, when they bailed out, I viewed it as a failure. I believe that, they have to think long and hard about the situation. When I'm saying they, I'm talking about Congress, the President, the generals, have to think long and hard about sending anybody into harm's way, before they do it. It just simply has to be done. The mistakes of Vietnam, actually prior to that, the mistakes of Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq in my opinion—you won't get a consensus with that of course because some people believe that George Bush made the right decision on going into Iraq, I'm not of that opinion. But, you have to think long and hard [bangs on the table] before you commit troops into harm's way. Because of what my personal experiences were in life—as far as my thoughts about veterans, I think they are greatest people in the world, because I'm a believer that a veteran does offer that blank check to his government saying 'you can take me and take everything you want including my life.' So I think they are very, very special people and their the salt of the earth, their generally working class people that are not usually from upper crust, how many of the politicians do we know? Now there are a few of them, but generally speaking they're pretty high ranking officers. If they're the sons or daughters of congressman and senators, that are in the military. I think John McCain might be an exception to that rule. I think he's got a son who is serving in the marines...

CS: Yes, I do believe so.

JS: In Afghanistan and there's a couple congressman that are still reserve officers in the army, there's a couple of them from South Carolina, I know of officers in the military. I haven't opinion of officers than I do of the enlisted ranks. I believe that by and large high ranking officers are prima donnas that they really don't understand or don't choose to understand the people at the lower ranks. I think if you have somebody as special as what I perceived Ike to be in that movie I was telling you about [prior to the start of the interview, Mr. Szczur spoke about an HBO movie, *Ike*, and how he enjoyed the portrayal of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. This is what he is referencing here], I think you have a special officer. I had a personal experience from a general that I had in Vietnam who was, at that point—I believe the only black brigadier general in the United States, that was my commanding general in Vietnam, who was reassigned to the United States after doing a 6 month tour of duty in Vietnam and he got a 2nd star and he was in charge of

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personnel and made the announcement to any troop who was interested in getting reassigned, if they got assigned back to the United States and it wasn't what they wanted to write him a letter and he would get them reassigned or he would attempt to get them reassigned. I was one of those guys that did that. They sent me to Fort Carson, Colorado after I was spent a year in Vietnam, I wanted Fort Dix or Fort Meade. Guess what? I wrote him a letter and [bangs on the table] was reassigned to Fort Meade. So a man of his word, a man who showed up a couple times for our 199th reunions. So he was an anomaly when it came to being a general officer. You didn't see that, you wouldn't see that with Westmoreland or Craton Abrams, those guys were not similar to him whatsoever. He was a soldiers' soldier.

CS: Aside from working with the VFW, how are you spending your retirement? Golfing, traveling?

JS: I do play a lot of golf, but recently I injured my shoulder and I haven't been able to play golf. I had a rotator cup situation that I'm trying to nurse back to full health again, but haven't been playing the last month and half. Do we travel? Yes, we go to, we're big fans of Myrtle Beach. We go down there one or two times a year. I was just down there two weeks ago and then traveled to Florida. I do a lot of automobile travel. I'm not afraid to get in an automobile and do a 2500 or 3000 mile trip in a couple weeks as long as I can get agreement from my wife on what she wants to do. Last year we visited Tennessee and just wanted to see places like Nashville and Knoxville and Memphis and places like that and the Smokey Mountains and all that stuff. So we do stuff like that and I'm planning, I own a place on Long Beach Island right now, which I have an agreement of sale on. I'm selling that place and I bought a house in North Wildwood and I'm also going buy a place either in Florida or South Carolina and my plan is short range, 2 ½ years after Kathleen retires, which is going to happen in 2 years, to be in South Carolina or Florida for 6 or 7 months and then in Wildwood for the other 5 months. So I'll sell the place in Washington Township and then commute back and forth, in 2 favorable locations like that. We have tons of friends in Wildwood, that's why I chose Wildwood and my wife chose Wildwood because, it's almost like getting together with the folks from Kensington down there. And we have a blast every time we go there down there.

CS: So I guess it comes full circle there?

JS: Oh yeah, so it's kind of neat. We don't know anybody in South Carolina. We know my cousin in Destin (Florida), the people in South Carolina, there's a community down there that's interested in organizations that I'm interested in. I'm interested in the Elks in the VFW, and the American Legion, and the Vietnam Vet's of America. The American Legion, the VFW, and Elks are all in this Murrells Inlet, where I go. And they all have golfing groups and stuff like that. So I think I could very, very easily melt in with those people, with no problem.

02:14:33

CS: As we draw this to a conclusion is there anything else you want to add that maybe I missed. That this is part of Veterans History Project and any other veteran or any researchers or students that would here this, is there anything you'd like to add additionally?

JS: You know Chris, I can't really think of anything off the top of my head. I mean I'm glad you had the questions for me. I could've prepared a detailed history of what I did, like I told you before I used to address the class of my buddy George Handlin at Father Judge High School every year. And would strictly talk about my military experience, maybe just a flash in the beginning and a flash at the end, but primarily focused on the military experience because that's what his students wanted to hear. But you've covered a vast array of my childhood up to the present point. So I can't really think of anything else.

CS: I didn't mean to put you on the spot, I just wanted to make sure that everything you wanted to say was said.

JS: Yeah, I can't really think of anything else.

CS: I like to thank you for giving your story the Library of Congress as well as LaSalle and myself. And I'm sure that future generations will hear this, it'll be really good that they can hear your experience. Thank you.

JS: Thank you.

