RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH HERB JOHNSON

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

SHAUN ILLINGWORTH
and
JESSICA DING

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
SEPTEMBER 15, 2006

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Herb Johnson on September 16, 2006, in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Shaun Illingworth and …

Jessica Ding: … Jessica Ding …

[Editor's Note: Carl Burns was also present during interview].

SI: Mr. Johnson, thank you very much for coming here today, and you've traveled a long way to be here. To begin, could you state for the record, where and when you were born?

Herb Johnson: 1942, June 13, Harrisburg Hospital, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

SI: Could you tell me, tell us, what your parents' names were?

HJ: Robert Nelson Johnson and Marian Shuey, I don't remember her middle name anymore. Ruth.

SI: They were both also natives of that area of Central Pennsylvania?

HJ: Yes they were.

SI: Do you know how the family got to the Central Pennsylvania area?

HJ: I know the Shuey side came from Alsace-Loraine [France] in the late 1800s. The Johnsons go back to Jamestown, Virginia, because the name originated from John's son; and the only reason we know that is we have the family bible, from both sides of the family, so that we know that that's fairly accurate.

SI: What did your father do for a living?

HJ: Started out being a welder for Hershey Chocolate Corporation, used to make the molds for chocolate bars. [I don't know] whether they still do it. … If the price needs to go up, the … size of the bar goes down, so they need a new mold. … After the war, really, during the war, he welded on the ships in Dover, Delaware shipyards, and that's how he escaped World War II. His brother went and his brother was killed in Sicily. After the war then he went to work for Alling and Cory Paper Company, as a salesman, janitorial supplies and paper products in Central Pennsylvania.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside the home?

HJ: She did. She was a secretary. Before I was born, she worked for the Governor and then after, … I'm the oldest of five, so, I think, when the youngest finally went to school, … she went back to work as a secretary in the school system. … She became the administrator's secretary and then, eventually, retired from that.

SI: Did she ever tell you any stories about working for the Governor, working in that office?

HJ: Not really. She didn't talk much about it.

SI: Also, likewise, did your father ever tell you any stories about working at the shipyard during the war, in Dover?

HJ: Oh, yes. It was dangerous. They had people seriously hurt, daily, and when they sat … they had a big crane that would drop down these big steel rolls, rolls of steel cable, and they sat it down on the guy welding next to him. Of course, they've got the helmet on, the welding going on, they don't hear what's around them, and when that guy got crushed, that was the last day my father worked there. [laughter] But, that was at the end of the war.

SI: Did he ever mention any ships that he worked on?

HJ: No. They were building Liberty ships, primarily, that's my understanding, but he didn't, he never really mentioned a name of a ship, or that sort of thing.

SI: Was he ever involved with any unions?

HJ: No.

SI: Also, he was working for Hershey during the Depression, is that correct?

HJ: Right before the war, that's correct.

SI: Okay. Did he ever talk about any problems he may have had during the Depression?

HJ: No, didn't talk about the Depression at all. I didn't know it existed till I started reading about it.

SI: Do you know how they met, your parents?

HJ: In Hummelstown, there used to be a big H at the square. I still remember as a young boy, this is long gone, but the trolley unit used to run through that. There used to be a trolley from Hummelstown to Hershey. … The fun and games boys, that was the trick, was to beat the trolley through the H with your little '36, something or other jalopy. … Somehow, they met doing that. I don't know whether she was watching or that he was supposedly very skilled at beating the trolley. [laughter] That's all I heard, that from my uncle, on my mother's side. I didn't hear it from him, from my dad.

SI: Do you know, off the top of your head, the date when they were married?

HJ: I think they were married … before the war started, so '39 or '40.

SI: Where do you fall in the lineup of your siblings?

HJ: I'm the oldest.

SI: Okay, you're the oldest. Would you mind stating how many siblings you have and …

HJ: I have two brothers and two sisters. There is quite an age gap. The youngest sister was born when I came to Rutgers, so she's eighteen years my junior.

SI: Can you tell me about some of your memories of your neighborhood, your childhood?

HJ: I remember the first place we lived was … actually, it was an apartment, but it was a big, old, stone house, half a dozen or so apartments carved out, and a dentist's office on the other side. It was right next to the local appliance store, on the main street, looking up towards that square, where the H was. I can remember staying out on that porch on Sunday afternoon, waiting for my dad to come home, because that was golf day, and then, from there, I remember we moved to our house, that we built, and that was in 1951. … I got to ride in a moving van, in the back of it, because they moved me in the bed, because I was home, sick with the measles. So, I was then nine years old and that's where the rest, that's where we lived, and we sold that house when my parents died.

SI: … You were less than three [years old], when the war ended, but do you remember anything about World War II?

HJ: No, I have no memory of the war whatsoever. The Korean War, I do, distinctly, but not World War II.

SI: Not like the V-J celebration or anything …

HJ: The only thing I knew about it was my grandmother, on my father's side, was a decorated war mother [Gold Star Mother], you know. She was really into that stuff and she was never quite the same when her son was killed, but they didn't talk about it, not at all. I had to learn about it from talking to other people. In fact, that side of the family doesn't talk, period. They've moved and we've totally lost touch and there was not much attempt, even back then when I was younger, it just kind of, everybody kind of went their own way.

SI: What does stand out in your mind about the Korean War, because usually that's not on people's radars …

HJ: Back then or now? [laughter]

SI: Well, back then; let's talk from back then. As a young child what were you, what did you know about the war?

HJ: Just that coming from an area of the country I was in, a lot of guys went over there and didn't come back. A lot of guys that came home from World War II went again and they weren't real happy campers. Not an awful lot, except that those who came back were really into the local

VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and loved marching at Memorial Day parades, and that kind of thing. I didn't really identify with them.

SI: Were you involved in any kind of youth activities like Boy Scouts?

HJ: I'm Eagle Scout. I'm a former scoutmaster. My sons didn't make Eagle, but they made Life.

SI: Can you describe some of your activities, like what would your troop do? Was it mostly camping or did you do other things?

HJ: Outside of the regular meetings, there was a lot of camping, hiking, canoeing. We always went away for two weeks of summer camp, which was up on the way towards State College, which is in Pennsylvania, where Penn State is, just south of it. We used to go to the Seven Mountains. It's the range of seven mountains going into Happy Valley and that's the area we walked on, camped on, and we hiked the Appalachian Trail, every year for a long time. I have only walked it in Pennsylvania. I'd love some day to walk the whole thing.

SI: Were there any other activities, like sports?

HJ: I played football, for my freshman and sophomore years, and after that everybody else grew and I didn't. They were bigger, faster, and that was the end of that.

SI: What was your neighborhood like, was it, like, working class, middle class?

HJ: Hummelstown, the borough of Hummelstown, the Borough limits have not changed, but it's held about six thousand to seven thousand people, and that's probably ten or twelve [thousand] now, because they filled in any vacant spots you could find. High school was directly across from my home. … The athletic fields were right there, so the baseball field, the football field, everything, was right there and the tennis courts. … It was all fenced in, that didn't stop us, we had our own little tunnel right at the front door, go right in. [laughter] I remember growing up riding my bike in the Memorial Day parade, put the card and the clothespins on the wheel to make the noise, wrapped the ribbons all around it. Played Little League baseball, I played VFW ball, and I played American Legion Ball.

SI: I was wondering, you mentioned the VFW and the American Legion with the Korean War veterans, but were they a big part of the civic life in that town?

HJ: They kind of kept to themselves. They weren't as involved as you would think. An organization called the Fuzzy Few came along, and this is now my college time, and they were outgrowth of the Jaycees, Junior Chamber of Commerce people, because we celebrated our bi-centennial in '62, I believe would have been, yes it was '62. They were the ones most involved, still are.

SI: They were like veterans?

HJ: No, they were just the younger group that came along after that.

SI: What high school did you go to, Hummelstown High School?

HJ: Hummelstown High School. I was the president of the last class. I was president in my junior and senior year, and that sounds important, but there were forty-three of us, [laughter] twenty-six girls and seventeen boys.

SI: So, did the high close after that …

HJ: No, because it was combined into a jointure, regional, Lower Dolphin Township.

SI: You mentioned you were on the football team, what other activities …

HJ: Just for my sophomore year. I didn't play after that; I didn't go out for it.

SI: Were there other activities that you were heavily involved in?

HJ: Well, most of all, when the weather was good, I was caddying, saved enough money to pay for my first semester here.

SI: Was it a public course or a private course?

HJ: It was a private, First Country Club.

SI: Okay, so it would be like executives from …

HJ: It was right next to the Hershey Chocolate Factory, which was the main one at that point in time, no more, so, the country clubs now, they're administrative offices. They own the whole thing, of course, they own Hershey. [laughter]

SI: So, was it kind of, not like a company town, but did most people work for Hershey?

HJ: They worked for Hershey or the State. There were three major industries: the state government, steel companies and Hershey Chocolate Corporation, and then came Reese's and King Cup, Hershey owns all those now. The steel companies went bye-bye and the state got bigger. They also worked at what was then Middletown Air Force Base, which is now Harrisburg-York International Airport. I don't know where the international came in. [laughter] It has a long runway, because they used to repair B-52s there. So, I know a lot of guys I graduated with, some of the guys I graduated with, when I say a lot, that was three or four, they went to work there because that was considered a really, really, good paying job.

SI: As you were nearing the end of your high school career, were you and your friends, were most of them talking about college, or just getting jobs after that, or going to the military?

HJ: They were all getting jobs. Of the guys, I'm the only one who went to college. A lot of the girls did, half of the girls, the other half, they got married early. [laughter]

SI: Was it kind of like a close-knit class and a close-knit neighborhood, since it was so small?

HJ: Not as much as you would think, because of the size, people were pretty private. So it wasn't like you had a lot of bosom buddies. I never really had, the one sitting back there, but that's, that's by dumb luck.
[Editor's Note: Mr. Johnson is referring to Carl Burns.]

SI: How did you choose Rutgers as opposed to Penn State?

HJ: Good story. Because it was less expensive than Penn State. [laughter] I was accepted to Penn State, University of Pennsylvania, and Rutgers, the only three I applied to and Rutgers was the least expensive. I had a scholarship to Penn State, but it didn't make up enough of the difference. But what I liked about Rutgers, it was in another state, it got me away from Hummelstown, a major, major priority. … I had come here, I visited here, I won a trip here and, at end of my junior year, I worked in the Horticulture Department. It was all … because of the science project I did and I can't remember exactly what it was, but I took a gas and made liquid out of it by compression and freezing. I don't know why, I put gas or what, I remember, I was thinking about that coming in this morning, I'll be damned if I can remember, but I just like the history of it, the size. It was not that big and I thought I'd get a lot more opportunities coming here than I would have staying in Pennsylvania, and I don't regret that decision ever.

SI: Before we get too deep into Rutgers, I want to ask, particularly since you lived near this Air Force base that had B-52s flying out of it …

HJ: It was a maintenance facility. It was not a really active air force there. There was an officers' club, which I did work out of, I forgot that. I cleaned the bathrooms [laughter] amongst other things.

SI: I was just wondering if before you went to college, if you were or how aware were you of the Cold War and the …

HJ: I don't think, I remember practicing the drills, if we got nuked. … You get under your desk, that was about as big a laugher as a fire drill was, and you got to get outside on a nice spring day, you know. I don't remember it being something, [where] everybody lived in constant fear or ever even talked about it or thought about it. Everybody just went on about their day-to-day business.

SI: Do you remember ever either you thinking about it or people talking about it, like the threat of communism or the challenge of communism?

HJ: You heard that, if you paid any attention to politics at all, but it was kind of like, well, "We'll take care of that when it gets there." It wasn't a pressing concern to the people I knew or

even with conversations I heard. I never heard my family talk much about it or anyone else. It wasn't brought up in school, that's for sure.

SI: What year did you enter Rutgers?

HJ: '60.

SI: What are your earliest memories of coming to Rutgers?

HJ: We just walked through one. I remember going to Kirkpatrick Chapel, it was a mandatory service, freshman orientation, Carl doesn't remember, but they talked about the past presidents of the university and the history of the university, from Union Seminary on, and that's all I remember. But, I just remember being impressed by the nice, neat, little chapel. Still looks the same, exactly like I remembered it.

SI: Plus, they hit you with the history of the university right off the bat. Where did you live at first?

HJ: I lived in the quadrangle, in the basement, and, of course, the basement room cost me three hundred dollars a semester versus six hundred to be upstairs. Three hundred dollars in 1960 was three hundred dollars.

SI: What do you remember about your first couple of weeks in the dorm?

HJ: The guy next to me was the dirtiest guy I've ever been exposed to in my life. [laughter] He didn't bathe then, but he did later on. It was arranged. [laughter]

SI: Was he in the room next to you or was he your roommate?

HJ: No, he was in a bunk next to me. When I say we lived in the basement, it was a basement room that [had] no walls, you had a metal locker, steel cabinet, and you had a bunk.

SI: So, it was like a barracks almost.

HJ: It was a barracks, correct, and nothing next to you. … At one end was a study room, in the other end was a study room and across from that was the wash-dry-fold section of the laundromat, which had a constant coming and going of students. So, you want to study there, there were enough distractions, because the study room had, there were twenty guys in it, each day there were ten guys.

SI: How many guys were living in the basement?

HJ: Twenty.

SI: Twenty guys in the basement. Were the study rooms just for the guys in the basement or was it for the whole building?

HJ: No, that was just for the guys in the basement. Kids upstairs had their own rooms.

SI: I never heard of that arrangement.

HJ: It's fact.

SI: So, what was it like going from your hometown, you know, kind of like a small town? You had been with the Boys Scouts, so you had been away from home before, but this is your first time living on your own, what was that like?

HJ: Cultural shock. Didn't realize that's what it was. It was just, you know, your eyes are wide-open, wow, look at this, I loved it.

SI: What was new and shocking?

HJ: Everything was new. I mean, everyday was new, because everyday, you know, I wasn't used to, I think there were close to I'd say 2,000, Carl says 1,600 students in our class, I came from forty-three. There were 1,600 kids in the school, so, everything was bigger and more exciting.

SI: A lot of people that we have talked to, who lived in the dorms, remember a lot of pranks and all that wild stuff. Do you remember any of that?

HJ: Not too much. Just the guy that needed to be bathed and that didn't work, a temporary fix. No, we were all pretty busy trying to just pass our courses. My main concern was I couldn't afford to flunk, because I would have to make it up. No, I struggled with English composition; that was the number one concern. I spent more time on one bloody course than I did in the other four.

SI: Did you find academically it was a difficult transition?

HJ: No, just English comp, because the math courses and language courses I had, I was a benefit of the *Sputnik* craze in the late '50s where we had accelerated classes, I was exposed to college level courses my junior and senior year in high school, so, some of the calculus I already had. So, why do I learn more, because they didn't cover it as well. So, you know, I didn't find that part difficult.

SI: When you came in to Rutgers, did you have any idea what you wanted to major in?

HJ: I was accepted as a biological science major, that's, believe it or not. [laughter] We don't. Didn't take me long to figure out that that was not what I was meant to do, and I became a political science major, good decision. [laughter]

SI: So, you started out as a biological science major. How did you find those classes?

HJ: They were fine, my freshman year, but I don't want to face them my sophomore year.

SI: Was it just that you found your interest changing, or was it the professors?

HJ: I realized that I wasn't that kind of a student.

SI: We were just talking about the class schedules today. It reminded me how the science majors back then had a really tough schedule about six days a week and all that.

HJ: Correct, and that interfered with working opportunities because I still needed to work to pay bills so I decided, if I'm going to make it in four [years] I need to be taking courses that I can handle with a little less effort.

SI: Did you get a job right away when you came on the campus?

HJ: Not my freshman year, I don't recall. Well, anything that was available. I did odd stuff. I remember I worked for Dr. Helgi Johnson, who was the head of the Horticultural Department. I did landscaping on his home, which was up the [Raritan] River, towards Bound Brook. I don't remember what year that was. I know we parked cars; anything the university had available, because we parked cars for concerts behind the field house, parked cars for football games no big deal.

Carl Burns: Six of us, not like the 600 that are up there now. Six of us did it.

HJ: I sold coffee, milk, and ice cream, whatever we had, to the dorms, carried those things around. I worked, scrubbed dishes in the old mess hall, which is an old World War II Army Quonset hut, a ridged chain building, off of the back of the Quad. If there was an odd job around, I was in line, if not first, I was right behind that guy, "Get out of the way." I found, mostly, my way around to a lot of them. I don't remember them all, it was nothing earth shattering.

SI: Did you find a lot of kids were in your situation, where they had to work their way through college, or to that extent?

HJ: No. I could say a lot, the kind of guys, that I knew, did that. We kind of end up gravitating together, but then we were also with other guys that didn't have to, didn't worry about a thing. I know they drove a brand new Corvette or an Aston Martin, you know. What did Bobby Woods have?

CB: Thunderbird? Colly had that Jaguar …

HJ: No, it was an Austin Healey. So we, that was with my fraternity days. But in my freshman year, we were just the twenty guys in the dormitory that were late to get accepted, but didn't have a lot of money and the way to get accepted, where they ended up being, Cooper … active fraternity brothers of ours. So, three of those twenty went on to become Zetes.

SI: How did you get involved, were you rushed by Zeta Psi in your freshman year or …

HJ: Rush was beginning of your freshman second semester, and then you moved, to live in the fraternity house, start of your sophomore year.

SI: What attracted you to Zeta Psi?

HJ: Looked like a pretty neat place. I liked the guys there, plus I was coming with two guys that I had just gone through a semester with and so we had gotten to know each other. It seemed like a natural thing. We didn't go anywhere else.

SI: What do you remember about the process of getting into the fraternity? Whatever you can tell us …

HJ: Not much, I don't remember much. I remember more about being involved in the rush, when I was in the fraternity, than actually when I rushed the fraternity. It was a couple of nights of going to different houses, meeting different guys. Then I decided not so much where you want to go and hope to touch where it came out, then it did.

SI: Did you, after being at Rutgers for a semester, did you say to yourself, "Gee, I got to get into a fraternity or else I'm …

HJ: No, that's what I wanted to do. I didn't want to stay in the dorms. That was the goal.

SI: Could you see that, you know, there was a difference between guys that were in fraternities and non-Greeks?

HJ: Definitely. I didn't want to go the other way.

CB: Unlike now, if I can interject, there was no social life outside the fraternities.

HJ: Outside the fraternities, there was none.

CB: So, the guys that have remained independent, they didn't want a social life anyway. But, all we had was what used to be called the Ledge, in between Frelinghuysen and …

HJ: That was a little student union kind of thing, but it was just a little rinky-dink, hole in the wall.

SI: What other kinds of social life do you remember at Rutgers? You must have been pretty busy, with all these jobs and rushing, but do you remember sporting events or concerts? Would you go into the events, after you were done parking the cars?

HJ: No. I was working. If I was at an event, I was working at it. But, what I remember about, after freshman year, is I was the social chairman and I could tap a keg of beer faster and better

than anybody around. [laughter] We still hold the record, twenty-one kegs in one weekend, that's when you used just beer, none of this fancy stuff. We did all right. [laughter]

SI: Yes, once that Eagle Scout training starts coming into …

HJ: That's exactly correct. Some of that training came in later on. I didn't know that that was going to be important at that point in time.

SI: When did you make the switch from bio to political science?

HJ: As soon as you could. I just changed I didn't have to take as many science courses; I already had a lot of some stuff out of the way, from my freshman year, so I was able to take more liberal arts courses from that point on. So, it was just a natural, you don't really need to declare a major till the end of your sophomore year, anyhow. Back then, because you had certain mandatory courses you had to take your freshman, sophomore year, two years of a language, two years of math, two years of science. Probably don't have to do that anymore.

SI: Do any of your professors stand out in your memory either in Poli Sci or …

HJ: Two do; one was a political science professor. I don't remember what course he taught. Carl and I were in it together, but he used to say, "You got to hate somebody." He hated us … He figured he never run into one. I doubt why I remember silly stuff like that. The other guy was a guy that would talk forever. He had a history class and everybody sat in. [laughter]

CB: What was his name?

HJ: It wasn't an exam, it was a paper when you're guaranteed a C, good course. [laughter] I don't remember the course, but I read his books. In fact, I wrote my paper on (?) or the war.

SI: Was it Peter Charanis, was it?

HJ: That name sounds familiar. He was an old guy.

SI: Yes, he was there, in the'40s I think, yes.

HJ: Real old, I mean like we considered him old, then I was twenty, old was old. [laughter] I know he's bald.

CB: It was in military warfare.

HJ: Yes, yes, that's what it was.

CB: The name of the course.

HJ: That's it. I don't remember any of the other ones. Oh, I do; I remember my Spanish professor, my freshman year; he was a Jewish fellow from Brooklyn. I couldn't understand the

guy. Second year, another Spanish professor; he was French-speaking, teaching Spanish. I couldn't understand him either. Of course, by the second year you're supposed to be fairly fluent in communicating in a language, wrong. I thought I was, but he certainly didn't like my accent, which I still have, some. He didn't like the Pennsylvania Dutch. I didn't do so well the second year.

SI: So, once you got into Zeta Psi, how much of your time did you devote to the fraternity? It seems like you were very active in the fraternity.

HJ: That was all my spare time and sometimes it wasn't spare. That was my life for the next three years. It all revolved around the fraternity.

SI: You mentioned you were involved in the rush committee.

HJ: Well, we all would be. I was a social chairman, then I was the treasurer for the last two years. So, I ran the kitchen and the waiters, and all that stuff, and the books for the house.

SI: Since you were the treasurer, were you able to, drop some of these other jobs that you were doing?

HJ: Yes, because I got room, and by waiting tables, I paid for most of my meals. So, that was a major, major savings, but we still worked at anything we could. If it snowed, we all would line up to get on the railroad.

SI: It is kind of difficult to formulate a question that will get this answer out, but, in general, could you tell me what it was like to be in a fraternity in those days? What did it mean to you personally? What kind of activities were the norm?

HJ: It was like living with a lot of your, we're brothers, but it was like living, it was a family. You know, you always had the odd ball over here. It was just a collection of guys that had pretty much similar beliefs, but there was a wide range. You know, there were no closed doors, unless somebody was really seriously studying and you kind of respected that to a degree.

CB: There was nothing to steal.

HJ: There wasn't anything to steal. We never, we didn't have computers; we didn't have stereo equipment, we didn't have TVs. We didn't have, somebody might have had a radio, I don't remember that because we wouldn't play radio. We had a radio, with the TV, down in the TV room in the basement and we had a radio, did we have a radio in the bum room?

CB: I don't even think we did there.

HJ: Whatever. It was organizing the social weekends and planning for them, and cleaning the place, maintaining the place. We took pride in our home.

CB: The biggest electronic device we had, I think … it was an immersion heater.

HJ: An immersion heater?

CB: Yes, it's that little thing you plugged in and you put in your hot water?

HJ: Yes, it almost put the place on fire. [laughter] Yes, we did. That was about it, that was high tech. Except for the few guys we mentioned earlier that had cars, about, in the fraternity we had sixty-some brothers.

CB: Right.

HJ: Maybe ten had cars and some of those were townies; don't make them bad people, but they lived in town and, you know, they were fraternity brothers. But the rest of us we got home by train, thumb, walking, if we wanted to go home.

SI: Of all your brothers, you're probably one of the ones that lived furthest out, where most people …

HJ: Well, Acton and Cooper were from the DC area. Gardner was from Long Island. Most of the guys were from New Jersey, if I remember. Another guy from Pennsylvania, Greg Post, from the coal regions, but that's it. I think everybody else mostly was from around the Jersey area, you know, State of New Jersey. My brother-in-law is from South Jersey, ex-brother-in-law.

SI: So, would you spend most of your weekends on campus? Would you go home very often?

HJ: Went home for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

SI: So, you were very focused on the campus.

HJ: Yes. Came back as soon as I could, before school started, since I could afford to.

SI: You mentioned that you spent most of the week kind of preparing for these weekend parties and social events. Do any of them stand out in your memory …

HJ: Princeton, every fall, yes. That was the big, that's the start of the year. That was a big deal and then after that, we had regular, we had organized ones. I don't remember anyone specifically after. We didn't need a lot of excuse to having a social affair, it was kind of mandatory.

CB: Homecoming was big.

HJ: Homecoming was big, yes, and we, we didn't do anything special for spring.

CB: We had a Spring Pink Tea. We kind of try to put on.

HJ: We used to have housemother. We had a housemother. She had the premier apartment, in the basement, really, but it was a ground level entrance, which should have been wrecked, which is another story. We had chaperones at our parties. People thought I was nuts, I had my parents there. It didn't bother me any. We weren't doing anything to upset them. They loved it. [laughter]

CB: We were laughing before, this is homecoming; so when we brought our dates and we sat in the student section, we wore sport jackets, and ties and the girls wore culottes or kilts with high socks …

HJ: We bought them mums, flowers. Now they had kilts, plaid kilts on. They didn't have culottes. I know them all. I'll check that out. We were preppy, that's what I liked about the Zeta house, they were preppy. The DU [[Delta Upsilon] house was, like, a separate class and Chi Psi was even lower, you know.

SI: Would you have, a formal dinner every night with jacket and tie and all?

HJ: Yes.

CB: Did we wear jacket and tie to dinner every night? Yes, we did.

HJ: Yes, we did, and the housemother had her premier place of honor,
at the head table with the president, every night.

CB: April 15, the guys were allowed to wear Bermuda shorts, with a jacket.

HJ: Right, oh, yeah. Thursday night was roast beef night, so that was a big turnout night. Everybody that didn't live in the house showed up that night, pay for one meal and eat three. Used to have to plan ahead, because after lunch on Saturday, the kitchen closed in the house, so if you didn't plan ahead, you didn't eat until Monday morning. There were several weekends I didn't eat till Monday morning. [laughter] But, we used to hide away a little bread and the peanut butter. You see, microwaves didn't exist then.

SI: Yes, you probably didn't even have a hot plate or anything.

HJ: No.

SI: When you would have something, like the Princeton game, would you make floats?

HJ: Made a float. Big deal, that's a float building contest that was our pride and joy. How many times did we win?

CB: That's homecoming.

HJ: Oh, that was homecoming?

CB: Yes, because it would be here.

HJ: Okay. Yes, we used to build it up in that old field house. I call it field house because it had a dirt floor, used to play indoor soccer, rugby, in there. I don't know if it's still here. That was leftover from World War II; that's where ROTC had drill and meetings. But that's where we'd built it. That was an all-night party before the game, because you had to build it the night before. You did the framework, a lot of it, then you stuffed it. It was all crepe paper, Mache, stuff thing. We had some elaborate ones that moved and stuff. We had, you know, we had a couple of guys that were engineers. [laughter] They did all the dirty work, [laughter] but we had fun. That was a good time, because that was a date night, as well. You know, brought your girls, everybody you could find, to keep stuffing this thing, because it was an all-night deal, then you stay and guard it. Because that's later on. In the early morning hours is when visitors arrive. You want to make sure your float is presentable. Because it has to get to the Heights, from that field house. If it's nasty weather, they don't look real good when they get up there.

SI: Did you have inter-fraternity rivalries, like, would you try to sabotage somebody's float?

HJ: Yes, I don't remember, we kind of, Phi Gamma was a rival of ours and was it Chi Phi or Chi Psi?

CB: Chi Psi.

HJ: Yes, that's the big white house, right?

CB: Correct…

HJ: Across from the quad, those two, they competed for the same kind of guys. We could have put, you could interchange the brotherhood of those three houses and probably would have been pretty close to the same.

SI: Do you remember any of the forms that the rivalry would take?

HJ: No, it was just friendly rivalry; it was just guys that were competing because they're guys. It wasn't anything more than that.

SI: Were you involved in any intra-fraternity sports?

HJ: Yes, football. No, I didn't play on the basketball team. No, just the football team. I don't think we had any other ones, did we? Football and basketball is the only intramurals I remember.

CB: Softball, bowling.

HJ: Don't remember those. Could have, I don't remember.

SI: I was wondering if that was important or …

HJ: Yes, we went to the finals on the football, but we lost that. But, basketball didn't do quite as well. In my junior year, we did, but then the big guys graduated and we didn't have enough tall guys in our class. [laughter]

SI: So, you mentioned that there was, like, this range of guys in the fraternity and also you mentioned characters, when you weren't living in the fraternity …

HJ: I'm going to back you up, because now I just remembered something I wanted to tell you that kind of helps you understand where I came from. I never knew or met a black person before I came to Rutgers. They just didn't exist. You knew they were there, if you were any half-way aware of what's going. So, I have a good friend here, from freshman year on, so that was my first, that was a big mental thing for me. I just remember that. I always, because I was brought up to think, there was something wrong there; never told why, but there was something wrong with these people. It's a family's built-in prejudice, that goes back long before me or my parents. On my, I just learned this, my mother's grandfather fought in the Civil War, at Gettysburg, against my father's grandfather, or great grandfather who fought on the South's side. Trivia. I didn't know that until, I have an uncle that's really into trying to trace our family history before we all disappear. So, he's been sharing some of these little tidbits with me, because I wrote him, asked him, "What my grand[father's], I just remember Pappy Balsbaugh, he was Grandpa (Balls Balls?) as a kid, what was his first name and what was his wife's name?" because his wife had passed, I never met her. Well, she was Jenny and he can't remember Pappy (Balls Balls?) name either; he was always Pappy (Balls Balls?). He was a character, shot of bourbon lunch, breakfast, at lunch and dinner and two for a nightcap. I think he cheated in between, too.

SI: So, coming to Rutgers really was an attitude changing experience?

HJ: It was a lifestyle change, total, because I found that I had no problems in high school or school, you know, there was never any pressure. When I got to college, I found there were a lot of smart guys around and, you know, "You ain't so smart, Herb." That was the eye-opening thing. "This is different."

SI: We kind of talked a little bit about your classes, but what do you remember, in general, about your political science classes? Could you identify any kind of leaning or major topic at that time? It was a very interesting time and …

HJ: Really wasn't. There wasn't really anything interesting going on in '60, '61, '62, '63, '64; not that was covered in any political science course I had. It was all about what happened one-hundred or fifty years ago, what have you. It wasn't current. I don't remember anything. They taught me how to think, but I don't remember anything in particular standing out from any of those courses.

SI: Do you remember following, say, politics or world events at this time?

HJ: No, I don't remember, because I didn't. I really wasn't. …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE----------

HJ: Now, we didn't talk about it. ROTC, when I came to school, was mandatory in my freshman year. When they made it non-mandatory, bye-bye, I dropped.

SI: What do you remember about your year in ROTC?

HJ: I put on a blue uniform every Wednesday afternoon and go to drill.

SI: It didn't make much of an impression on you.

HJ: It was a joke. [laughter]

SI: At that point, did you think that you might have to serve in the military?

HJ: Never, furthest thought in my mind; I never ever gave it a thought, and I didn't, until September of 1965, actually July of '65, when I got orders to report to my draft board.

SI: Can you tell us about that?

HJ: Oh, sure. [laughter] When I graduated, I wanted to work. But I worked, my first sales territory was Elizabeth, Bayonne, Jersey City, etc, so, I lived in Elizabeth, but I didn't change my draft board from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to New Jersey, because that was my home of record, or whatever. So, I was drafted out of Harrisburg. I learned later if I had changed my draft board to Elizabeth, New Jersey, the odds of me being drafted weren't as great, and then, I remember, you took a physical, and they said, "You will get orders in thirty days," and I did. Then it was party time.

SI: Where were you working at this point?

HJ: I was a salesman; I had just been promoted by Procter and Gamble, as a sales manager and now, as a district head salesman, based out of Cranford, New Jersey. So, I was handling what was then the biggest chain around here, called ShopRite.

SI: So, tell us about the process of going from about to be drafted, to how you got into uniform.

HJ: Well, the next thing is when you get your draft orders, you were told to report to some fort in Mississippi, or Alabama, on such and such a date. So I proceeded to go to, well, I had, my first choice was I wasn't going to Canada, or anywhere else. I was not going to go in the reserves or National Guard, because I didn't want seven-year commitments of meetings and summer camps. So, I said, "Well, I need to get into an OCS [Officer Candidate School] program." I went to the Coast Guard. They weren't interested; they had plenty, plenty of applicants, etc, etc, because the Army already had me saying, "Yes, you can apply for OCS after boot camp," which meant … a four-year commitment. So I got to the Marine Corps, after I left the Navy, because their offices were right across from each other. I think it's Number 10 Church Street, in

Manhattan, downtown somewhere … Took their test and did a deep knee bend and I was sworn in. That's how I got in the Marine Corps.

SI: Had you ever had any interest before that, in being a Marine or anything like that?

HJ: No. I knew about them. I figured, if I'm going to go, I'll be with the best. That was the only thing I remember thinking, that I'm going to go with these guys. Not a bad decision.

SI: Having interviewed some of your other classmates, or people who graduated before or after, as you were nearing the end of your years at Rutgers, was anybody discussing what they were going to do in terms of …

HJ: Yes, a lot of them stayed in ROTC, because they all wanted to make military careers. They're going to fly, most of them. The Air Force guys wanted to fly and then there were some crazy guys who wanted to fly choppers, and thank God for them, but that's a whole another story.

SI: But when you graduated Rutgers, you just wanted to get a job and just kind of see where you …

HJ: My goal was to get to work. Well, you know, once I went to political science, I keep going back and forth on you, but I thought, "Well, I might want to, I'd liked to go to law school." By the time I was a senior, I realized that I can't go to law school and pay for it, as I'm now broke. So I need to go to work; plus, I've met a girl and my intentions were to get married. So, the number one priority was go to work. I wasn't paying any attention to what was going on in the world, outside of peripheral, you know, not a lot of heavy thinking going on about that.

SI: So, Vietnam wasn't really on the horizon.

HJ: I never thought of Vietnam until '65.

SI: Do you remember where you were when you heard that Kennedy had been assassinated?

HJ: Sure, I was in the fraternity house, watched it for the whole Thanksgiving weekend, wasn't it? It was November, cold. Might have been before Thanksgiving, and it was a depressing time; that was a … shock. You can't believe that happened.

SI: Do you remember how, your fraternity brothers and just, the campus in general reacted?

HJ: Yes, we all kind of were numb; everybody went their own way, did their own thing.

SI: There weren't any kind of …

HJ: There was no mass gathering. No, I don't recall one. If there was, I didn't attend it.

CB: We had a party scheduled that weekend …

HJ: We cancelled everything. The place was shut down, yes, that's all I remember.

CB: Everybody brought their dates over or the Douglass girls brought their friends and we just kind of hung out … drank beer …

HJ: I don't remember that.

SI: So, you wound up in the Marine Corps and you were already signed up for … OCS?

HJ: No. What they did was, I had orders to report that month, that's for … end of September, beginning of October. They swore me into the Marine Corps Reserve and then I had my choice to go to, and I was in the Reserves effective that date, what I had my choice of going to Officer Candidate School in November or in March. I said," I'll go in March." It's cold in Virginia in the winter, plus … I figure I need to make as much money as I can before I go, because, when I go in for ten weeks, I'm going back to making a hundred bucks a month. I was married then. Of course, my wife was working, but there was always an economic factor in all these decisions.

SI: How did your family react to the news that you would be going to the Marine Corps?

HJ: Like they did to anything else: no reaction. If they had one, they didn't share it with me. I know they did, because I learned of it later, but they didn't share anything with me, that's how my family reacted. They thought,
"Tomorrow will always be better than yesterday." You know, nothing wrong with that, that's a pretty good attitude.

SI: So, you were able to work a little bit longer.

HJ: I went … to OCS at the beginning of March. I remember the date. I remembered riding down there with my wife and Jay Miller, who was another Procter and Gamble employee, also a Rutgers graduate; he was from DU. … We were … in the last group to arrive. You had till midnight to report in, roughly, stayed free to the last minute. What I didn't realize was by doing that, that put me in the last platoon, which is a no-no. "You're the last platoon to get here," said the staff sergeants and the drill sergeants running that organization; they're not happy, because they got assigned to you. … From that point on, for the next thirty-six hours, they ran your little tail ragged. Because you got in at midnight, you're in time to go to work," that means you went through your physicals, your shots, your haircuts, you know, all those indoctrination stuff. That was my first exposure to the Marine Corps; and the next thing was, to learn at breakfast that morning, whatever you take, you better eat it all.

SI: Yes, a lot of Marines I've interviewed say they were shocked to go from civilian life to the Marine training.

HJ: It's night and day. It makes that change look insignificant. It's like going from one side of the moon to the other.

SI: So, were they like in the movies, were they're yelling at you and berating you?

HJ: Oh yes. No, OCS is a little different than boot camp. There's more intimidation in boot camp. … In boot camp, you're trying to get your troops to work together, as a team. In OCS, you're trying to develop your leadership skills, so they want you to be more independent, but get people to work for you. So it's a little different, but not big, but a little different direction. It's intimidating and it's totally physical. You better be able to run.

SI: What stands out in your memory about your training at Quantico?

HJ: That I needed to build up my upper body strength. [laughter] I was fine running, because I had started running before I went in. From that October period on till March, because I had another guy that worked for me, was in the platoon leader's training course, he's not a Rutgers grad, Lyle Johnson,
and he said, "What's the toughest thing to start? Running," and I did. We did a three-mile run everyday, sometimes twice a day, but the hardest thing was climbing that damned rope with seventy pounds of gear on your back. I didn't make it the first time. So, you get put in, they call it "The Fat Boy Platoon," so it's made up of guys who can't climb the rope and the guys who can't run. So, they worked the fat off one and give it to the guys that need it. Yes, I went in at 148 [pounds] and came out at 167, but it was all upper body … it was all muscle. I still weigh at 167, but it's not all muscle.

SI: How did Procter and Gamble treat you when you went into the military? Was it a problem or were they pretty accepting?

HJ: Nope. Nothing they could say about it. I was going one-way or the other, either by draft orders or by my enlisting in OCS. They just wished me well, kept me posted. … It all counted as time of employment. My job was here when I came back. I can walk right back into the job, in two weeks, which was wrong, but I did. They were perfect. I have absolutely no complaints. My wife was still covered on medical plans, even though she was covered at the service when she moved with me, she would have been covered through the company. They took care of the people.

SI: Yes, I've heard some companies really take care of their people and the others … [do not].

HJ: I'm sure they did. I didn't have that experience at all. … My first son was born in Camp Lejeune, but that was in the military, so I could have, he could have been born in a civilian hospital, but in Jacksonville, North Carolina, you want to stay in Camp Lejeune. You don't go main side.

SI: It was very physical, intensely physical training, what else stands out in the training? What about the leadership aspects, what did they do to fill that up?

HJ: The leadership part was, you know, just you being able to get the other candidates to work with you and for you, that you got different leadership roles through OCS, and basic school is more into the leadership part. Where OCS was weeding out those who just couldn't physically make it or take the intimidation and the regimentation. The thing I remember most was finally

being able to get my stuff organized, because I hate, you get thrown into it and you can't even hang up your clothes. [laughter] Your civilian clothes are long gone, once you've been issued all these gear, just in one big stack.

SI: … Was it the kind of thing where the hangers have to be spaced a certain distance and everything has to be exactly perfect?

HJ: Certain things were supposed to be put in your locker, hanging locker or in your footlocker … Yes, it's all got its place for a reason, that's where it works best. But that they did not measure between, you just did that out of habit. I never saw anybody measure. The only thing I ever got dinged for was, "Candidate, you have dust on your glasses." Now the sun is streaming through, you know, how everybody has dust on. I just remember that one. [laughter]

SI: How long was your OCS training?

HJ: Ten weeks.

SI: At Quantico

HJ: At Quantico, and then its twenty-one weeks of basic school, which is really advanced infantry training, communications, etc, etc, etc. That's where you really learn, you are a platoon leader. … You'll get groups of men, you rotate through different assignments, at whatever role that's going to be. Platoon leader is one that sticks to my mind, because that's what you wanted to be.

SI: Did you receive your commission at the end of OCS, or at the end of basic?

HJ: End of OCS. After ten weeks I was a second lieutenant, that was May of '66. … Then I knew a lot about Vietnam, I knew a lot by then. That was a major topic. … that's all you wanted to know. Everybody who … came from over there, you wanted to talk to. They didn't tell you a lot. But that was the major, major topic, because everybody knew that's where we were going. There was no doubt about it. What amazed me was, and I became part of that group, though I didn't go in that way, is that I want to go too. But when I started I didn't. I was trying to figure how to avoid that.

SI: How do you think that change came about?

HJ: [I] have no idea. It just happened. Let's see, the group you're with, I guess, there's a pressure you feel around [them], or maybe you just get [it] in your mind, you say, "I've got to find out what that's all about." I got here (?), I still am. I didn't change. (?) some place different. I'll try that. I didn't go right away. … I didn't go; when I left basic school, my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] was, I went to supply school, again, because of my scores on their aptitude tests. They think I'm smarter, when I just do well on aptitude tests, those stupid things. Give me multiple choice, I'll get the right answer without knowing the answer. I don't know why. So, when I got out of Camp Lejeune, they were in dire need of a supply officer, for the Second Engineer Battalion, that can organize. One of the things I developed a little expertise

on is how to load out a ship, for an amphibious landing. So, I knew how to do it for these … Caribbean, Battalion Landing Teams afloat, and then for the Mediterranean, and that's what I did with the Second Engineer Battalion, out of Camp Lejeune, for, supposed to be for six months, but I ended up there nearly a year and a half, almost two years. That's what I went into Vietnam as, as supply officer, but I hardly ever worked at it.

SI: It's interesting …we just did an exhibit, not that long ago, and one of the people that the exhibit was focused on was the guy who developed the combat loading process at Little Creek in …

HJ: Yes I worked in Little Creek. I went up there, did that, we did a lot of training for the Second Division up there and also at [Isla] Vieques, off from Puerto Rico; those were live fire, live fire landings.

SI: When you first look at it, it doesn't seem like a very complicated concept, but then when you get into like the nitty gritty of it …

HJ: That's the first thing you want off, that's the last thing you put on. That part's simple, what it is, it gets real complicated.

SI: … We kind of breezed over some of your training. Did anything stand out about your time in basic, in Camp Lejeune? Did they put you with a platoon that was going through training itself, or were they already …

HJ: Once I got to the Second Division, I was probably working with the staff. I had warehouses. I had a whole company of engineers that I had, that were working at Onslow Beach [Editor's Note: Onslow Beach is a part of Camp Lejeune]. I forgot what the heck they were building. I was primarily doing load outs, and it's all paperwork, till you physically got to put them together. Then we physically loaded ships, down there, off Onslow Beach, and then also at Little Creek, is where we did a lot of that. I was spending as much time in Little Creek as I did at Lejeune, but that was temporary duty. My wife was, we were living on base at Lejeune.

SI: What were the conditions like for a Marine officer and …

HJ: Not bad. You don't make a lot of money. Housing was adequate. We did move once my son was born. We got a bigger place, so we'd have a second bedroom. We were only there, maybe six months, till I went overseas. But I am trying to think what else stands out. It was … weird in that most of the people, who were there were getting ready to go to Vietnam, or had just come back. The ones coming back, we were trying, all involved with taking care of them, in some manner, shape or form. So you had a lot of, you know, guys had different problems. Everybody has some kind of issue. Some were easily solved and some were unsolvable.

SI: These are like personal problems?

HJ: Some personal, some medical, some physical. Most of it's emotional, mental. You know even the guys … they still had mental problems or anguish over; you know, "I got banged here," or what have you. That's trauma.

SI: How did you react to that and what did that, did that kind of put in your head that this is more than just …

HJ: I'm a young man and I'm untouchable. I didn't react to it. I'd handled it and … "Hope that's not me." That's the thing you're thinking. You're afraid, but you know you're a Marine, so you don't show that. But, you're afraid. Now I know what real terror is. I didn't learn that at Lejeune though.

SI: I was curious, because most people say the same thing, that before they go into any kind of combat, they have this invincible image of themselves.

HJ: Somehow I'm going to come out of it. … You know I still feel that way about everything I take on, "I'm going to do, I'm going to get it done," because I learned that from my family. Tomorrow is going to be a better day. You will overcome this and if you don't, you don't. You know, you tried.

SI: So, what do you remember about some of these live fire unloading exercises and all that, do any of them stand out in your mind?

HJ: Learned that it was a waste of time because we're never going to do it. It's rewarding when you see you got it organized, and you got it done right, and not having ever really done it, in a real live situation. But I did one in Vietnam and that was a joke. That was a walk on. I … would love to have been, I would like to have seen how hectic, I think I would like to have experienced landing at Tarawa or Saipan or Okinawa or Iwo [Jima], because … they didn't have the same technology we had in the '60s. Stuff we had in the '60s compared to what they have now is like the dark ages. We feel, that as a Marine, you know, you always want to be tested, so, we would have liked to have done it in a real live situation. Thank God, we didn't have to, because the equipment we had wasn't worth a damn. If I put 120 amphibious tractors in the water at one time, I'd be lucky to get half of them to the beach. That's with no live fire; breakdown, mechanical, they don't have parts, they were shot. They were from Korea, they were from the '50s. This … is fifteen years later.

SI: … Did you always feel that you were getting second-hand equipment?

HJ: Yes. The Marine Corps is the last to get it. You know, where we got our first M16s from? Navy, because they had them. I take that back, the Air Force, perimeter control at Da Nang. [laughter] Actually, I got mine in Okinawa. … See in the early '60s, we didn't have M16s, we had M14s, it was a hellava lot better weapon, because it fired the 7.62[mm] round versus 5.56[mm], and 7.62 [mm] was a nice caliber, and if you were in jungle, it goes through stuff.

SI: The M16 doesn't?

HJ: No, it goes all over. This is a flipping round; it doesn't spin.

SI: I've read that they had a lot of problems early on, with jungle fighting …

HJ: They were a piece of crap. We called them Mattel Toys, because it'd jam if you tried to fire anything more than a two-round burst, of course you put it on automatic; you get a trooper in combat, his immediate thing, if you got him shooting, he pulls back on the trigger and he don't let up until it goes, "Putt, putt, putt." Did you ever hear about deer hunters? The first time they shoot … at a deer and they freeze and don't shoot it? That happens in combat, too, even with experienced guys. But the M16s we … got in the beginning were awful. … It would heat up and the retractor wouldn't expel the spent cartridge and jam the weapon. … It would jam with a live round and then you got a real problem.

SI: … But you did get better, they got a little better?

HJ: They got a little better. Anytime I could get my hands on an M14, I'd try to have at least one M14 in every squad. He'd be my sniper because … he was trained to shoot on that weapon. He wasn't trained to shoot on an M16, because at that point, we still didn't have them in training. They weren't in the States, they were only overseas.

SI: Going into your job, do you know that you don't have the best equipment or …

HJ: You don't know that. I didn't know that. That's my belief today after coming back from there and understanding what we had, but, at the time, you took what you had and made the best of it.

SI: Yes, that's what I'm trying to get at, like how did you compensate for the shortcomings?

HJ: Jury-rigged it. You find a way to get it done. Get it to say what you got, you learned how to take care of things, because you knew you weren't going to get it. You couldn't just go down the street and get another one. But that's our tradition in the Marines. They have got to make through with whatever they have and they're proud of that. [laughter]

SI: Even like you said, if you put 120 tractors in the water, sixty of them weren't going to get ashore, how do you compensate for that, something of that scale in your planning? You just work in the fact that half of your equipment would break down?

HJ: You can't. You know it's going to happen. It's called combat loss. You make sure you got enough ammo, enough water, and enough food. The other stuff breaks down. You hope that there's something more coming behind it, because in the first wave you're planning for thirty days of combat, that's it. The equipment you have is designed to last thirty days, not three years. And you have equipment that was hand me down. After it had been in Korea, through Okinawa, back to the States, pretty bad stuff. … It's been maintained, but it's been used.

SI: When you got out to the Second Division, in the Engineering unit, did the people you were serving with, had they been in the Marine Corps for a while, or were they like you, people that had just come in?

HJ: Staff NCOs [Non-Commissioned Officers], yes. Field grade officers and above, yes. Everybody else was just like me, including the troops. They were in there for two [years] and out. Maybe, one out of every forty or so guys was going to be a career; they called them lifers. That was a bad name.

SI: Most people … hadn't had any combat experience, before going to Vietnam?

HJ: That's correct. Out of enlisted troops, by '65, '66, correct. Now '66, '67, you got some that cycle back through, but they were now NCOs, or staff NCOs already and they were maybe twenty or twenty-one.

SI: So, you were with the Second Engineering Battalion in …

HJ: Until the … second half of '66 and all of '67, and then in January of '68, I went overseas.

SI: By yourself?

HJ: Oh, yes. I was going to Vietnam, didn't take anybody with you

SI: Your unit didn't go over to Vietnam.

HJ: No. The units went in initially, but after that, it was individual replacement, which was a wrong way, that was totally wrong, because you spent all these time developing an *esprit de corps* and camaraderie, and as soon as you start rotating troops by individuals you just destroyed it. You can't replace it. So you, whenever you had a company or a platoon or a squad, … in a squad, you had thirteen guys that didn't even know each other. You didn't know who you could depend on; you didn't know who did this or who did what. That's the wrong way to run any kind of operation. You know, if we bring in … all our professors at one time, here and there, you know, what do you got? You don't have any cohesiveness. That's the complaint about how the war was run, but that's what we had. At any given time, you had people going on R&R [Rest and Relaxation], people going home, people coming in, people who are sick, people who are hit. So you never had, if you had one hundred percent on paper, you're lucky to have fifty percent effective. If I had a two hundred-man company, I'm lucky to have one hundred men. Most of the time, I worked with two platoons under strength, as a company commander, seventy-eighty guys that were supposed to do the job at two hundred. We did, you did, what you could, with what you had.

SI: But, by that point, you'd already been indoctrinated with this idea that the Marines can make do with …

HJ: Oh, yes, you learned that after ten weeks. I'm already there. They put a lot into ten weeks.

SI: Tell us about the process of going from …

HJ: You've got to remember something. I was doing a lot, without a lot to begin with; you know, I was doing a lot of things to get there, long before I got in the Marine Corps, so I didn't have any problem with that concept.

SI: Your experience and personality fit well with the situation.

HJ: You know, I remember at home, I had a '49 Chevy, I thought that was cool. Then I had a '48 Ford, had four flat tires going from here to Pennsylvania. [laughter] … I made it, one-hundred dollars special. Anyhow, you patch it up and get it going, it will work.

SI: Can you explain the process, going from the Engineering Battalion in the States over to Vietnam?

HJ: … I was on liberty; I was home for Christmas. "You have orders, Lieutenant; you got to come back." So we did. I packed up my wife and she moved to New Jersey, and I went to, I had orders to go, to be at Travis, at such and such a date and was given air fare from Newark to San Francisco. You know, I had to find Travis Air Force Base. They didn't tell me it was about fifty miles up the road. [laughter] And then from Travis, we hung around for a couple of days, so there was a flight and … you boarded in Travis, you would get shipped over to Okinawa to be acclimated and I spent, I got stuck there, because they found out that I knew about loading and the logistics etc, etc. … So I got to work gunnery range and some other stuff and that's where I first got exposed to an M16. So I was fortunate that I had two weeks working with them and knew what some of the problems were, before I went in country, and I took some good ones in with me. That's where I got my Air Force M16 because Army's … the ones we were getting from the Army were awful. … That's the first time I had any input in how to train the troops with the weapon, because up there, at that point, people trained me. I said, "We can't just go to a range and just lay down and start shooting these things, or stand around, or whatever off hand position, we need to work in there, moving. It's live fire, anyhow, let's set up targets and walk through them." So, we kind of set up our own range and a general saw this; at that point, that was the greatest thing since canned beer. To me, it didn't seem like a big deal. But that's what we learned; I could get the troops trained, two or three round bursts, that's a lot more effective than burp. So I got stuck doing that for, I think, I was there seventeen days, … that sticks to my mind. But the idea was (Hanson's?). On the north end of Okinawa, and it's the same kind of terrain or similar terrain, but the weather is pretty much the same as in South Vietnam, hot, hotter than hell. When you're a Jersey boy, it's a different climate. [laughter] Then you got to fly into, … I didn't know which division I was going to, I just got orders, "Go to Vietnam," you get on this Flying Tiger charter on Okinawa. Flying Tiger Airlines, man, the old 707; Jesus, it must have been original. We come into Da Nang. Da Nang is one of the most beautiful harbors you ever want to see, the beaches. The China Beach that they showed, that TV show, that's a joke, that never existed, but this China Beach was just pristine. You come, swing around Monkey Mountain and come down and around, and as we're coming around, I see this stuff going off around me. I said, "What is that?" "They're shooting at you, you dummy!" [laughter] Yes, they were shooting. They would come in, and they got lucky, the rocket propelled grenade hit the … We were coming in from the south, it hit the port engine, outside port engine, and I'm sitting on

the starboard side, on the wing, and I could see that through the window, that, we did one of these. [Editor's note: Mr. Johnson imitates the plane spinning out of control after taking fire]. That's how it landed. We caught one. All the way down, till we landed, we just spun around, blew tires out, and the landing gear goes, bellied in.

SI: A real introduction to the war zone …

HJ: Yes, and here's what ticks me off. I hadn't even carried a weapon. Here I am, walking into a firefight, I had thrown them into the baggage gear that I had; I had three M16s. … Marines get good at gathering equipment. If we don't ever get it, we have to go find it. I didn't have them and I couldn't get them, because you couldn't get near the plane. It was burning, then it starts to pop, because I had ammunition in there, too, forgot that. [laughter]

SI: Most people I talk to say, "Yes, they don't mind being shot at as long as they can shoot back."

HJ: You got it. You walk around the base and they're taking incoming. I didn't realize that firefight was about five miles away, about five clicks probably. It seemed like it was right next door. I think they're shooting at me, because I've never been shot at. I understand what it was to be shooting at, but never been shot at. So that was … my biggest concern going in country, was, "Man, I got to get a rifle," and then, "I got to get jungle fatigues." I got to get out of these cotton-starched utilities, which couldn't breath, and you couldn't move them. Of course, they rotted away in about ten days.

SI: Aside from being shot at, were there any injuries or any …

HJ: Oh, there were a number of guys hurt on the plane, but that was broken arms, banged heads, concussions … blood, you know, from head wounds, head scrapes and all that. I didn't have a scratch. I was stiff because you get kind of banged around, but I didn't feel that for a couple of days. I just knew the adrenalin was going a mile a minute. Man, I was up, and I was looking for a rifle. I found one, but then I couldn't find ammo. [laughter] I had one magazine for a day. The next thing I did was find the officers' club.

SI: How did you react to that first combat experience?

HJ: I thought they were just giving me a special welcome. [laughter] I thought if that was just dumb luck, I didn't have any, yes. I said, "Does that happen often?" They said, "No." You got to remember, we had female flight attendants on that flight, the flight coming in; that was the last time they did that, I gather. Some people told me that later on, they weren't allowed … into country anymore.

SI: How did they react, the female flight attendants? Were they pretty steady when the plane got hit?

HJ: Yes, they were steady. As all girls, they were Asians; I don't know whether Vietnamese or Chinese. They were definitely Asian.

SI: There was no panic?

HJ: No. They were trained, no screaming, yelling or anything. Said, "Look at that Jesus!" and then we started spinning. [laughter]

SI: So after that harrowing experience, were you put in a pool for assignment or did you already have an assignment?

HJ: They didn't know what to do with us. They didn't want, didn't know we were coming. Because it was a whole planeload, well, no, that's a different story. On this one, I had to go to Marine Headquarters, wherever it was, and they told me, they sent me to a transit barracks, BOQ [Bachelor Officers Quarters] and they said, "You'll get orders, somebody will come around and let you know where you're going to be sent." So, I went looking for the officers' club and food … because we landed right, I want to say, middle of the day. It was fairly early in the morning or afternoon. I was there two or three days, till they said, "You're getting on that C130 [military cargo aircraft] to Dong Ha," and that got changed, because we're starting to get action. Up there was a lot of stuff going on, up north of Dong Ha [Dong Hoi], and Khe Sanh was already underway. "We need a re-supply run, you're a supply officer; you take this re-supply run from Da Nang to Dong Ha." So, I got a convoy of six-bys [military trucks] and assorted other crap, to escort up to Dong Ha and I'm given, I want to say, twenty-five or thirty Marines and a couple, I had some CBs [Navy Construction Battalions] with me, and I had a company of ARVN [the Army of the Republic of Vietnam], that's South Vietnamese army, and they're supposedly under this first lieutenant's orders, but, there's a major in charge of this group of ARVN. That was my convoy. We got ambushed about, we didn't make that, we just up over the first pass. Up where we were going was called the "Route Without Joy," because it was ambush alley and the first one we hit, I said, "Man, look at that!" They're shooting at us, big stuff, fifty[mm] caliber," … fifty-five or fifty-one, but it wasn't a fifty, big stuff. The fifty caliber you don't see, unless it's a mechanized vehicle of some sort. We had held with M16s. But fortunately, that's my first experience to chopper pilots. These were Marines and they come in, … did some strafing and we got through that one. I lost about half a dozen trucks; I don't know how many guys. But, I had loaded this out so, my ammo trucks were interspersed; they weren't all at one section. I had food and water, ammo; food and water, ammo, and at the rear I had the heavy ammo, which I was bringing up. I had … a six-by full of 105 rounds, 105 millimeter cannon rounds, that was it. I had two trucks of that. I was trying to … spread it around a little bit. I put the grenades in with the water. I remember doing that. We made it, and then, I got stuck with the same group … and different people were added for the next forty-five days, because that was the Tet Offensive. [January 30 to September 23, 1968]

SI: So, you just made these convoy runs …

HJ: Nope. From there, we went up to Charlie 2, Tutchie [Cu Chi], something like that, north of Dong Ha. We went west to Camp Carroll, which was going up to Cua Viet River, on a way to Khe Sanh and "the rock pile." The rock pile was where this group that I had, no longer existed. We were in constant combat. I mean, it was one firefight to the next. We got long enough to just grab a smoke, and then, we were sent in there, I think, I had eight guys left and I got a whole

new group of … Marines. They were just, whatever they could scrounge out of Dong Ha. As they came trickling in, some came down from (Chowlin?), some came up from the mouth of Cua Viet, some came up from Da Nang. There wasn't much flying in and out. … Everybody was really banged up. Units were getting so torn apart. We eventually, straddled back and got into the wire, behind Dong Ha, because that was a main base, but, that … was maybe day forty, or thereabouts. It was a … time of total confusion, no unit, no small unit control, very little control, period. Because we were surrounded, between, by six or seven North Vietnamese Divisions against one pretty well shot up Marine Division. We gave back, what we got, tenfold. … That's my indoctrination to Vietnam. After that, it was a piece of cake.

SI: … You had been trained in this one specialty, in the States and then, you know, you're immediately flown into a situation that's totally, it seems very different …

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

HJ: But, your number one training and focus is to be a rifleman, or a rifle platoon leader. … I know what happened after day forty-five; I made captain, then. … One of the units I was with, during that time frame, was Bravo Company of the 9th Marines, First Battalion, 9th Marines, and … their nickname was the "Proud Warriors," goes back over many generations. But in Vietnam, they got the nickname of the "Walking Dead," because every time we went anywhere, we got hit. So even if you're in F Company, you're going to get hit; we did, at least during that timeframe. By the way, I'm looking at that book up there, James Webb, *Fields of Fire*; he doesn't have a clue, not a clue.

SI: Why?

HJ: I've read it.

SI: What do you think he got wrong?

HJ: He wasn't there, if that's what he saw. I didn't. He's got some right, but, he's missing the main thrust.

SI: What do you think he's missing? What in your experience …

HJ: We were fighting with our hands tied behind our back, and [Webb] never addresses that point. … Well, I didn't get the letter of reprimand; I was promised it, but they never gave it to me. I wish I had. … After this forty-five day period, I became a supply officer for the 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion, at the mouth of the Cua Viet River, and the significance of that is, the 3rd Marine Division, and anybody else coming north, was supplied by Mike Boat [LCM-8, Landing Craft Mechanized], up the Cua Viet River, so LSTs [Landing Ship Tanks] would come into the mouth. There was a detachment of CBs down there that handled the unloading and loading of these boats, and I had the fuel for them there, jet fuel. … I don't know what the hell it was, I think it was JP-4 [Jet Propellant], but whatever. Then I also had a detachment at Dong Ha, and wherever else the 3rd Marine Division was working. So, I didn't spend my time, all the

time at the base. Cua Viet was lovely, it's right on the beach, on the South China Sea, but the problem is, it's five clicks south of the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone]. North and South Vietnam were divided by the Demilitarized Zone, after World War II, and the Benhai River runs down through the middle of it. Well, these bad guys sit on the other side and shoot at us. … We're not allowed to go over there and shoot them. So we had a Charlie 4 outpost, which is three clicks up north of the mouth of the river, so, I took that company, … we got tired of getting shot at, so, we went north and cleaned that out. We weren't allowed to go across the river, because you're invading a foreign country. I was a hero, my guys loved me. That's all that counted to me at that time.

SI: But, you did cross where you weren't supposed to?

HJ: Yes. We blew it up. They didn't shoot at us anymore.

SI: How did you go in?

HJ: Walk.

SI: You walked there.

HJ: Yes. We went in three different directions. I sent one tractor, that was still running, up the beach to draw their fire and distract them, because they loved shooting anything. A tank; you never got around tanks. I'll tell that story in a minute. … The other two platoons. … It's a catch-all unit, because these are supposed to be amphibian tractor drivers and operators, were grunts. Because we were supposed to have a hundred and twenty-one tractors, we have six that run, that have motors; I take it back, six that have motors. They don't all run. At any given time, one or two we can keep going. They've been in country now for, this is '68, they've been in country since '65. Remember, these were thirty-day vehicles, okay? A lot of them are buried in the sand; they're buried all over the place, abandoned junk. But the other two. … We had another outpost, halfway up the Cua Viet River, because they used to like to infiltrate through there. It's rice paddy flooded land, and it's thick stuff, but not the triple-canopy jungle. So, they liked to get down to the river, and then they'd put mines in the river and float them down, so these Mike boats that go up and down run into them. Well, that bothered me, too. So, my unit from over at that outpost and the one over on the beach side, we kind of went in and we had the tractor running up the beach. … We met at the mouth there. … We had a listening post up here and then we just walked across. We didn't just walk across; you've got to do a little snooping and pooping. We blew it up.

SI: How many men did you send across?

HJ: I don't think I had probably thirty or thirty-five guys in total, divided between the three units, basically, squad-sized, each one.

SI: Where were you during this operation? Were you with one of the squads?

HJ: I was at the point. That's where you are; if you're running it, you're running it. This is small unit tactics, completely; nobody up above knows anything about it. I don't have any support at all.

SI: Even calling for artillery, or air support, or anything?

HJ: This is a "no bombing" phase. This is where we're not going to bomb and all this other crap. I don't have any air support after; you know, this is after having the [*USS New*] *Jersey* on call for part of the time, the air before that, B-52 [strategic bomber], arc lights that would come in, just destroy everything. It was Forth of July type. We didn't have anything except what we could carry. But I had plenty of C-4 [plastic explosives], that's what we blew it up with.

SI: How long did the whole operation take?

HJ: We went out one night, set in; checked the place out in the other night; next night took them at night, about three in the morning. I lost that tractor on the beach, yet I got it, got two guys back from that. They didn't shoot at us anymore and we stopped the mines floating down for a while. But that was a major infiltration route during Tet; that's where the first contact had been made. I didn't know that at the time. As I only heard about, at that point, was there's a regiment, reinforced regiment trapped at Khe Sanh, not trapped; I got in there, but I got right out. I was in there one day; I said. "I'm out." I volunteered. You do not volunteer in the Marine Corps, because you're going to sure as hell get sent to the wrong place. So, we were lead company coming out of there. That was bloody. That was Marines at their best. One company against a division. But we kind of confused them, dumb luck. We hit the point where they were vulnerable and got through, so the rest of the regiment came right out through the same way.

SI: You were sent in, to break that area of the siege and let people out.

HJ: I was sent in there to relieve an officer, take over for an officer who had been hit. I don't remember what company I was assigned to, or what outfit, because the group I had was just a hundred and ninety-two guys they threw together. Eight of us made the top of that hill. That's also when I learned not to stand next to a tank.

SI: Was this the tank story you were going to tell earlier?

HJ: Well, I was trying to tell this guy, I'm on the phone to him trying to talk, off the back of the tank, I'm trying to tell him where to aim his gun, his cannon at. I'm trying to direct his fire, and I can't get his attention, he's shooting, where I need him to shoot at and, sure enough a rocket propelled grenade takes him on his left port quarter, front port quarter; I'm on the right rear starboard side; blows me up. I got that twice the same way.

SI: When was the other time?

HJ: I don't remember. I just know I got hit. When was it? It was at the end of that whole deal; that was sappers coming through the wire at Dong Ha, the second time. I don't remember, the second one was at the end of it. That whole forty-five days is a jumble and then the other little

escapade I told you about was about three months later. But that whole first six months kind of meshed into one. All I could think of was confusion, chaos, and absolute fear, terror. You just go for one; you just pray for the next minute, and keep on going.

SI: Your unit was kind of thrown together.

HJ: I never really had a unit. I had men assigned to me. I couldn't call it a unit, because you never had, in a typical sense of the word, where you had your own barracks, your own training program, your own headquarters, and stay up, and there was a regimental organization, didn't exist. Everyman got a job and everyman did it, some better than others, some guys knew that they had to take care of this guy.

SI: Was it, like, that there was problems with, getting replacements to the right place, getting …

HJ: Yes you didn't. You didn't count on replacements, reinforcements, or anything. All you did was pray for a chopper to come in and get your wounded out, and pray for a chopper to bring you more ammo and water and food.

SI: Sounds like there were a lot of supply problems where you were, getting supplies …

HJ: In the beginning, yes, always, throughout the whole year I was over there.

SI: Particularly during those forty-five days in Tet.

HJ: Yes. But that was true in the whole area. I mean, in South Vietnam it was divided into two different wars, the Vietcong and the organized guerilla-types, in the south. In the North, we were fighting regular, trained, organized, army units from the North. They were all North Vietnamese, or expatriated South Vietnamese, that wanted to be North Vietnamese. They were fighting for different reasons. But they [the North Vietnamese] were more highly trained and better equipped, much better equipped.

SI: When you talk about getting hit, what would they throw at you? Would it be infantry, artillery, would it be something bigger?

HJ: They had tanks. We shot them down out west. They could get artillery into places you don't think you could get artillery to. Khe Sanh had the place ringed with artillery, big stuff. They also had it down as far as Dong Ha; and that's why I had to tell the story, or Carl would be upset with me. But when we got back to Dong Ha, we think we're finally back inside the wire, because this is a big Marine base. It was headquarters for the 1st Marine Division, at that point. They moved us farther south to Quan Tri, after that, because it was out of range of incoming. But anyhow, at that point, it still was, and I got called in for a briefing or something. I want to remember it as being early, early in the morning, like first light, and they were lobbing stuff at us all night and, eventually, they got lucky and they hit the ammo dump and it was going up. … I've, guys go into the division bunker, this is a huge bunker complex. It's built on top of these timbers that you couldn't put your arms around, big stuff, and it's probably twenty-thirty feet underground; it's down. I go down there; I grabbed whatever I had to get, I don't know what it

was anymore. But as I'm coming up the ladder well, stairwell, they put a round, big stuff, right down the smokestack out there. The whole thing collapsed. I was in the ladder well, going up, so I got tumbled around in there somehow. But my boot was sticking out and, where my head was, I had air, because, eventually, I just remember, somebody pulled me out and they said, "Lieutenant, we got you." I said, "I'm a captain." [laughter] I just made it the day before. I didn't have captain's bars, I don't have any rank showing. But my boot was sticking out, that's how they did it. It looks like they were grabbing a casualty; they thought the guy was dead. It was me.

SI: Do you remember any other close calls like that?

HJ: Just the tanks and that. The other ones, they're too close for comfort. We'll skip those. When you get overrun; you know, when you got somebody's knife at your throat, those we skip.

SI: The enemy wasn't just at a distance, they were close.

HJ: You fight for your life.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We have talked about some of the intense periods, but like you just said before the tape went back on, there was periods of a lot of boredom. What would you do in those periods and what was your average day like then?

HJ: Clean gear, sleep, eat, drink beer, if you could find it, cold preferably. But, my claim to fame was, before I came home, Easter Sunday of 1969, we had a ship come in at Cua Viet. We were at Cua Viet, that was like in country R&R [Rest and Relaxation], because we were on a little beach there, and we had to help off load this thing, and the last pallet off was a whole pallet of Jim Beam Bourbon, a pallet. That became this Marine's pallet. Good thing we didn't have any visitors for a while. I don't remember seeing the sun go down, or come up. So, evidently, two days later I came to. We knew what to do with it.

SI: I have interviewed people, who were near Saigon, or, you know, around that area, how different was it where you were stationed up north?

HJ: Can't talk about Saigon, because I never got any farther south than Da Nang.

SI: There was no cities, no interaction with the countryside?

HJ: North of Da Nang, except outside of Hue, now, those are the two major cities, in I Corps, everything else is like totally rural and most of, any of the peasants or people, they were kind of concentrated in different locals, but they weren't living where they had been living, prior to that time. I Corps was a free fire zone. Anything that moved at night got shot. So, you didn't move at night, unless you were dumb. Water buffaloes are dumb; we shot a lot of them.

SI: Did you have any interaction with the people, the Vietnamese?

HJ: Yes you did. Outside of Cua Viet, at the mouth, was a little village. I had to go out there as a civil affairs officer or something like that, you catch all these catch-all jobs. Basically, I was taking the corpsman out, to treat their kids and any of the older people, or anybody that had mostly sores and burns, that sort of thing. A lot of babies were born with cleft palates, and they almost all suffered from malnutrition of some sort; their diet was rice. The only other time you saw them was up at Dong Ha, around every morning their were hangers-on. Where they got it from, God only knows, but they always have plenty of beer and Coke, and they would sell Coke for a dollar, you know, or beer. That's the extent of my interaction with them.

SI: Was there any fear that, the people that you're interacting might be, Vietcong?

HJ: There weren't any Vietcong alive in I Corps. If they were, they didn't let you know, they weren't operating. We fought against an organized, trained military unit, period. That's from the beginning of '68; guys tell me it was the same before, but I can't speak for '67-'66. Now, there were some Vietcong around Hue or Da Nang, but they were long gone, too. They were up in the mountains, or they went south, down by Saigon; that was still a different war.

SI: So, interacting with these people, you won't have to worry about them poisoning the beer or putting in ground glass or anything?

HJ: No, no. We just didn't go near their women, if you were smart. Venereal disease was rampant.

SI: Jessica wrote up a whole list of questions.

JD: How long has it been since you have been back to Rutgers? How long has it been since you actually been on campus?

HJ: I've been, is it two years ago? I came back for, was it our fortieth reunion, and I have been back, during the '70s, a couple of times, and then because of work, changed job, transferred, I was living in Florida and then California, so I wasn't close by. Even in Long Island, we were raising two young boys, we didn't have a chance to get over here that often. If we did, we visited parents and to come to a game on campus for anything, it wasn't convenient.

SI: So, you lived in this area for a while?

HJ: I came back from Vietnam in May of '69 and then I went to work in June, back at Procter and Gamble and went right back to my old job, based out of Cranford. … By July, I was promoted and had a sales territory in Long Island. … Then a couple of years later, I was promoted; I had the sales territory of New York. … Then I was promoted and I had New England and New York, and then I had the East Coast. … Then I had the twelve, I was national accounts manager for the company; I had the twelve largest customers and handled policy for those twelve, and then, after that, I had the job for the restructure in Florida. … I pioneered the team concept with Wal-Mart, which has now become, it's been our largest customer for sometime. We had five managers in house, representing each of the five major divisions. They

lived there five days a week, that was their office, Wal-Mart, so that we satisfy that customer's needs. We had never done that with a major account before. We had that one person over all of them, representing the company in total, and now we'd done that with all the major accounts.

SI: So, you continued, you know, you learned logistical organization in the military; it kind of became your career.

HJ: Yes I also, when I was in New York, I helped design and then introduced what we called the Treperone Pallet Systems, because, up to that point in time, we were still shipping what's called dead pile; that's for loose boxes thrown on the truck. …. We shipped volumes of, you know, Tide is a big, Pampers, there are a lot of big-time brands here. But the grocery trade is geared to wooden pallets, with sticks, not enough with space and weight, but we couldn't get them out of it. So, and our plants were all clamp chop, cardboard chutes and clamps, until we got into where they got, the truckers owned the pallets and maintained them. So we don't want pallets in our plants. It's a nuisance, it takes up space and they're expensive. We introduced that first in New York and it's since expanded nationally, in all divisions, but it was easier for me to do it in New York, because of the proximity of the major accounts to our plant and our shipping points. You know the Marine Corps helped me for a lot of that stuff. My fraternity social chairman business helped me to be the sales manager.

SI: That's good, you're able to use both your military training and your Rutgers experience.

HJ: Yes I guess I did, never thought about it, but, you know, I learned that and you got a new job and you apply what you've done to what you got going now.

SI: Is there anything specific that you know you saw the problem, in Vietnam, or anytime in your Marine career and said, 'You know, when I get a chance I'm going to fix this or I'm going to do this differently?"

HJ: No. The problem is too big. The problem is bigger than that. The problem is political or governmental, or the problem is, never go into something you haven't looked at first and know what your consequences are. We, keep doing that, as a country, as a government. I try not to do that in my own life, but we do. It's human nature, misjudge something and take on something we can't handle, but, then, don't know how to get out of it.

SI: It just reminded me of it, when you mentioned this, the team concept of putting the managers actually in the store …

HJ: If we were allowed to run the war over there right; you see, you can't send non-military people running military people. It's like me trying to tell the professor of American history how to run his course, his curriculum. I maybe interested in it and know a lot about it, but it's not my expertise; it's his. Every time we get into a war, where we get people killed, we got the wrong people trying to run it. There's nothing wrong, sometimes you got to go to war, I firmly believe in that. So, why train these people, from the Marine Corps, and teach us, the most highly trained fighting people there is, we're the best spirit, you can't match it. The Army has similar units, all the military does. Let them do what they're trained to do, if you're going to send them. Here's

your job, do it. After that forty-five day period I talked about, we could have walked to Hanoi, if there was somebody gave me the transportation, and the water, and food, and some more ammo. We didn't have any real resistance. Those six or seven divisions I referred to [North Vietnamese], they were decimated. They were no longer a cohesive unit at all. What we did, for the next year, is allowed them to regroup, so, when we left, they walked south.

SI: Was there that sense among your fellow officers and the men, at that time, that you were missing an opportunity?

HJ: We already missed it. We knew it. We just want to survive. That was the feeling before I even went over. We knew it. That was the feeling from '66-'67 on.

SI: Did anybody ever talk about, you know, winning the war or …

HJ: No. We talked about getting home, back to the world, troops and officers alike; there was no, very little difference, whether you're a lifer or you're just doing your time; you talked about getting home.

SI: Between the one-year rotation system and the way the units you said were organized, did you ever have a chance to, kind of develop a bond with anybody?

HJ: We tried not to, you know. You did. What another officer or one of your gunnies, or something, you did, that's inevitable. You tried not to, because it just was set up that way, and that's only why you kept wrapped a little; you tried not to. See, I had nothing wrong with the one-year rotation, if it was a rotation of individuals rather than units, because if you got to subject your trained troops to that period of combat, intense combat, you got to bring them back and refit. Every army, in every war ever fought, does that. We can't keep them there for extended periods of time, without bringing them back and re-outfitting them. They need boots, socks. They were just talking about it last night. To this day, I finally got rid of my athlete's foot that I've had ever since Vietnam. Had it a little bit, when I was in high school playing ball. But over there, man, the skin would peel off the bottom of your feet, soles on, just jungle rot, that's what it's called. It's a fungus, whatever bacteria or fungus, whatever. I've had everything. I had dermatologists prescribe $50.00 creams; you know what works? Vicks VapoRub, like a champ. It's cleared up, one tube, $3.98 or whatever; bet you didn't hear that before.

SI: Were there other problems that you know the environment caused for you?

HJ: In Vietnam?

SI: Yes, both with your men and also with your equipment.

HJ: Just dirty, filthy. You got a Third World country, it was a Fifth World country. There was absolutely nothing there of any consequence, in the North, in I Corps. The only thing that I saw of any consequence there, was the runway at Da Nang, and China Beach was a pretty beach, if you overlook the barbed wire. But there weren't any pretty girls. I didn't see a female, other than the peasants, till I came back to the States, well, Okinawa.

SI: Did you get any leaves while you were in Vietnam?

HJ: I went on R&R to Hawaii. I met my wife in Hawaii, that's five days, two days going, two days going back, or something, whatever it is. It's a long ways.

SI: How well were you able to communicate with your family back home?

HJ: During or after?

SI: While you were in Vietnam.

HJ: Hardly at all.

SI: No letters or anything?

HJ: Yes you get some, some that we're supposed to get, they said they wrote you, you never got. I don't know whether they ever did or not. You didn't hear too much.

SI: Did you know much about anything happening beyond, you know the world around you?

HJ: No.

SI: So, you weren't …

HJ: I missed the New York Jets beating the Baltimore Colts. I didn't believe that till I heard about it days later. Nah, it didn't happen.

SI: Were they able to provide any kind of entertainment for you guys? I mean …

HJ: USO groups weren't allowed to come any farther north than Da Nang. We were on the Demilitarized Zone, that's where the 3rd Division was. The 1st Division was at Chu Lai, south of Da Nang.

JD: So I guess you were aware of the protests that were going on in the States?

HJ: We knew about it, yes. The riots and the protests, yes we kind of, we just wanted to get back. Did that affect anybody one-way or the other? Yes, the troops, see, what you dealt with, the troops, that's whole another subject. After the Tet Offensive of '68, we now were into that boredom period, and then, once in a while, we'd get some infiltration going on, or somebody probing the wire. It wasn't a lot of activity. It was nowhere near the same. So, the troops got into dope problem and you name it; they called it skag. I have no idea, whatever they were smoking, they smoked it. So, they were either stoned or mostly stoned. By middle of '68, all my replacements were black and they were all from the inner city, because they were given two choices, "jail or Marine Corps." They were not very motivated. They were motivated to survive. Some of them turned out to be some of the best troops I ever had. They knew how to fight, but,

you know, it was disgusting, because they, I don't consider it the Marine Corps, and they didn't stay. To hell with it, the bulk didn't, but a couple of good ones did. Some found a new life, not in Vietnam necessarily, but in the Marine Corps. They didn't need the regimentation or that lifestyle or they got a mentor that helped. I think, I helped a couple; we tried, but that was a waste of time then.

SI: Were there any internal problems between Marines, whether they're racially based or other personal problems?

HJ: They were all black, so we had some problems, but it was gang against gang; what we would call gangs today. They weren't quite organized that way, but it was more of that nature, or they just didn't like each other. I never saw, in my four years in there, any real racial tension. Everybody pretty much melded together; once they go through boot camp and they're into a unit. It did start to unravel in Vietnam, given the black power stuff, because nobody really cared; we just want to come home then. But there wasn't any real effort to stop it and I don't think we could have, if we had tried.

SI: Before mid-'68, how well integrated would you say the Marine Corps had been?

HJ: It had started to unravel before that, because the first wave of the first people that went in, who already come back and have been replaced, but, again, piecemeal. There was some, but not nearly what would have been in the beginning.

SI: So, once you came back to the States you quickly …

HJ: I went right back to doing what I was doing before.

SI: You were separated …

HJ: I took two weeks off and went back to work.

SI: You mentioned earlier that you didn't think that was …

HJ: I probably should have taken more time off. I don't know what I would have done, but I thought work would be the best way to get over it, forget about it; "It's over, done, fine, get back to work," so that's what I did.

SI: Did you stay involved in any Marine Corps associations?

HJ: No.

SI: Did you join like the VFW?

HJ: No. I only did that this year, never before involved in it at all.

SI: How long was it for you, before you would talk about what you had done in Vietnam? Did you talk about it at all when you came back?

HJ: No. A little bit with Carl, that's it, and he and I, we have seen each other half a dozen times since then? Not more than that. Don't talk to my family. They didn't really ask me, but I wasn't going to talk to them anyway. They can't possibly understand what you were. You know, it's over.

CB: Shawn, he knows more about my experience than my own kids.

HJ: Yes. My sons don't know anything, you know, "He was a Marine, they went to Vietnam," you know, that's not unusual. My father-in-law was in the Marine Corps, in Okinawa and in Saipan, didn't talk about it at all, never did. Talked to me, when he knew he was dying, because he knew I would understand.

SI: Do you feel like you were discriminated against at all, as a Vietnam veteran?

HJ: Yes, oh, yes. When I came back, I came into El Toro [Marine Corps Air Station] and we were supposed to have a two-week de-animalization program, because we're back from the war, right? It's two hundred Marine captains, all getting out, because I was due to get out in another two months; I think. I got out a little early, because Nixon was, they had to draw down the forces, balance the budget, or cut personnel cost, so, they are letting all these captains go, because they knew we weren't staying. Only brought you back to try to indoctrinate you to stay. I was given the opportunity, "if you re-enlist we'll guarantee your majority and make you a regular Marine," as I was a reserve Marine officer. "That's enough, thank you." But they brought us back. All my clothes had been left, my dress uniforms were left in Okinawa, which had burned in a warehouse fire, or something, so, all I have is jungle utilities, which I've had on for God knows how many days, and now I'm in El Toro. I mean, I'm in the world, but I'm on a Marine base. They didn't pay us. What they forgot is we all got on board, we still have what we were carrying; this was a rush, rush deal. I have a loaded M-16. So, we went to the PX [Post Exchange, a store operated by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service], signed IOUs, got clothes, towels; then we went to the O [Officer's] Club. … After that, we commandeered two vehicles and went out downtown. I don't remember all where we went. Then they called us, they found us, and they brought us back. They said, "You're out. You can go home." This is when I was discriminated against. I went to LAX [Los Angeles International Airport] to board a plane, and this guy spit on me; it was the wrong thing to do. Now, in my Class A uniform and I am a Marine; he won't spit anymore. But you have people frown at you, you know. I have run into a little bit of it back when, in business not so much but they were kind of leery of you. I don't know how to explain it, it's like, plus you were different. Well, I didn't think I was different. I know I am or was; I know that now, but at the time, I didn't really think I was different. I was glad to be home. But, you know, people would kind of be a little strange around you. I know, because they felt guilty, and I thought, "Why?" This wasn't a discrimination thing, but I was, like, everybody has been awful to, like, we want to have our little celebration "coming home," because there was none, zilch, and, then, they had that parade in Manhattan in the '80s. I said, "I'm going to go to that. I'm going to march with guys that, if I can identify with one unit." I finally see, I'm seeing all these guys walking down lower Manhattan, like they thought they

dressed in Vietnam. I'm looking at these guys; I'm saying, "That guy's never even been there." You know, they had jungle utilities and half-ass uniforms. I ain't, don't want any part of that. "That's over, guys, get real." That's what the country didn't do right. I can't go to the Wall either. [The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C.] I got too many names on there. I'm afraid to do that. I just saw one down here [Rutgers Vietnam Memorial in Voorhees Mall], that has two of our fraternity brothers on it, both of which I knew pretty well. We were struggling young students, right? My grandmother, faithfully, for four years of college, sent me a check, for cash, $2.00 every week, every week. This is when you could get a scoop of beer for a quarter. What do you think happened to the $2.00? Amen. Honest to God, true story, every week, she was great.

SI: I know Zeta Psi, did it have a connection to the Corner Tavern?

HJ: We did, I did in those days. We owned it.

CB: A lot of us, I washed dished over there, I bused, I waited, bused tables. I wasn't old enough to tend bar, but when Herb mentioned that he was treasurer and when I was president, over there, as president I got room and board.

HJ: I didn't get board, I just got room.

CB: Other than that year I was president, I was in the kitchen sink over there.

HJ: Yes. He was one of our waiters.

CB: Either at the Corner Tavern or …

HJ: Yes, me too.

CB: A way to get a meal.

HJ: I forgot that I waited tables for a couple of years.

CB: The better part about the Corner Tavern, if you worked over there, you got a meal too and you got a scoop of beer, plus, if the bartender was in a good mood that day, and nobody pissed him off.

HJ: You get two. You get him to make the right roast beef, the right London broil. He still had the best sauce for London broil, I can't duplicate it.

CB: We all did the same odd jobs.

HJ: We all worked the same ones, none of them was that all important, in the scheme of things. You name it, we'd do it.

CB: Different times, as I said, six of us used to park the cars up, for a football game. Now you can't go ten yards without twelve guys …

HJ: We had a different size crowd. What did we have, 14-15,000? That's all it held. I don't think, if it was sold out, that end zone didn't have seats; that was grass down there, where the scoreboard was; people would be sitting in that, in the weeds.

CB: We had, Bob Ochs was …

SI: Director of Public Safety, head of the police.

CB: He had all of but three or four guys.

HJ: Bob Ochs; I used to park cars.

CB: And he had all, three, four cops, only a couple had guns.

HJ: I forgot their names; I remember the face.

CB: I told you the story of mine, how we'd be sitting at the fraternity house having beer, or something, and what have you, we had left-over kegs and Harold, the campus cop, come over at this end of the campus, would come walking by, I said, "Harold, you got tired and come have one." They can't try to do that today. He'd come in and have a scoop with us.

HJ: You know, if you worked there, you waited on half the faculty too, because lots of them ate there.

SI: Would you guys have faculty over for like dinners?

HJ: Yes, we invited them periodically, for different stuff.

CB: At least once a month we had it.

HJ: We'd have that spring thing.

CB: We'd have a smoker, what we called a smoker. Everybody would invite their favorite professor, had them all over at one time.

SI: Why was it called the smoker?

CB: That's an old phrase that goes back.

HJ: Because there used to be guys that get together and have brandy and a cigar. So it was called a smoker, but we were having beer or cigarettes. I didn't even smoke then.

CB: It's probably a phrase or a term that goes back.

HJ: I smoke now, but I didn't in between.

SI: One last question. Do you have any memories of Mason Gross?

HJ: Yes, I do; big, tall guy, very distinguished, very elegant, a character.

CB: A good speaker, he had a booming voice, approachable and the college was much smaller, too.

HJ: He was very visible. He wasn't somebody who hid off in his office. You saw him every week, a couple of times a week. He was all over the campus and a dean …

CB: (Grossman?)?

HJ: Yes, he was the other one.

CB: Howard (Grossman?), he was dean of students.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Daniel Feinberg 3/1/2007
Reviewed by Mike K. Johnson 3/1/2007
Reviewed by Edwin J. Robinson 10/14/2007
Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 11/6/2007
Reviewed by Edwin J. Robinson 12/3/2007
Reviewed by Herb Johnson 3/17/2016
Reviewed by Molly Graham 4/1/2016