UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Interview with: Major General Julius Parker
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IH: Today's date is June 28, 2007, and I am on the phone with Major General Julius Parker, Prairie View graduate of the class of 1965. Is that correct?

JP: That is correct.

IH: O.K. What is your date of birth?

JP: April 14, 1934.

IH: Where are you from originally?

JP: New Braunfels, Texas.

IH: Can you tell me about your childhood growing up, what it was like during that time?

JP: Well, I was born in a little; small German town called New Braunfels settled primarily by Germans who came from Germany, a place called "Nau Branfels". The American translation is New Braunfels. Very few black people in the city of New Braunfels. All of my neighbors were German. There was no what you would call black neighborhoods. Most of the blacks lived on the west side and we lived on the east side. Of course, there was discrimination then and we were brought up, I guess, under discrimination but in our neighborhood, all the kids played together - white, black, Mexicans down on the street. But when I went to school, we went to Booker T. Washington, they went to New Braunfels High. We never thought about discrimination because we were brought up in it and we did not know any other way. We went to the drug store to get a soda, everybody else was sitting down but you could not sit down. You could buy a soda and you had to stand at the end of the counter and they would give it to you, you paid for it and you would go outside. Our high school - we had one school, well, really had one building and it was about a 150 foot building, maybe shorter divided into two parts - grades 1 through 7, 1 through 6 on one end and 7 through 12 on the other which meant that we had all of those grades - there were only about 100 people in the entire school. There were 3 people in my graduating class. Two boys and one girl. I had 1 teacher, William Johnston, who probably was my saving grace. He came there from Prairie View and he said, "I am going to teach you math the way they teach it at Prairie View, so when you get to Prairie View" . . . he told me I was going. I did not know where I was going to school but he said, "You are going to Prairie View." I was good in math and so when I graduated from high school that is where I went. But growing up, my father was a table waiter. He worked at the Faust Hotel and my dad's brother's

children worked in the hotel. My dad would not allow me to work in the hotel. He said, "I work in a hotel. I know what goes on. You are not going to work in a hotel." So, he found me a job working for Walter Faust who owned the bank and the hotel in town. I cleaned his yard for fifty cents an hour, he and his mother, they were Christian Scientists. They sort of put me on the path of, I guess, noting discrimination because when I went to his house the first time, I went to the back door because down South, that is what you did. You went to the back door because that is what all the blacks would do. And so, he told me, "Don't ever come to my house and come to the back door. Whenever you come to my house, you come to the front door." His mother used to take me up in the mountains. They had a ranch up in the mountains and whenever they were going to have a party, they would take us up there. We would go clean it up. And, of course, back in those days, blacks did not ride in the front seat with white women. I guess I was about 14, 15 years old and I was getting ready to get in the back seat, she said, "No, Julius, you get up here in the front seat with me." Every morning at 10:00, they would always have bible reading because they were great Christian Scientists and they would always read the bible at 10:00. So, he asked me, he said, "Are you going to college?" and I said, "Yes." He said, "Where are you going to school?" I said, "I am going to Prairie View." He said, "I am going to take you." So, he took me to Prairie View. He and my mother took me to Prairie View in a brand new 1951 convertible Cadillac. I thought I was rich! But we were raised primarily in the church. We were Baptists back in those days. I am Catholic now because of my kids. We spent most of our time there. On Sundays, we would have Sunday school at 9 o'clock and then 11 o'clock service. We had a junior choir that went all over. We were good. We went all over the state singing.

And so, the church was sort of our refuge because that is where all of the young people met on Wednesday night when they had circle meetings, Friday nights for choir practice and, of course, Sunday services and then in the evenings, Baptist training union and then church at 8 o'clock. So, that was kind of the environment that we were brought up in. Very small town. Small classes. Everybody knew everybody. The whites knew all the blacks but everything was segregated. It has changed now but back then, that is the way it was.

So, when I went to Prairie View, I wanted to be a doctor and I had never seen a test tube because we did not have a chemistry lab, and I majored in biology, minored in chemistry. I got all A's in math and I got A's and B's in chemistry primarily because of Mr. Johnson. I went to school with the idea of going there to make good grades. My parents told me that is all I had to do to make good grades. And I got a scholarship and my parents sent me money. I had plenty of money when I was in school. I was a poor boy but I had spending money, I had a job working in the lab teaching supervising nurses and in the chemistry lab. I guess the one thing about going to Prairie View, now that I look at it in retrospect, you were not just a number at Prairie View, you had faculty there who sort of mentored you and they took special interest in you to stay . . . if they saw something in you, they took a special interest. I had one instructor who was the head of the chemistry department - Dr. O'Banion. I used to get so angry at Dr. O'Banion. This is organic chemistry. And once a week on Tuesday, he would not teach chemistry. He would talk about relationships and the importance of relationships, how to treat people, the need to network. And I said, "Well, why is he doing this? I came here to learn chemistry and he is up there talking about relationships." I didn't

understand what Dr. O'Banion was trying to tell me until I had come on active duty, I had graduated from Prairie View and I came on active duty and I thought I was pretty good. A gentleman was looking for an aide and I applied for the job, I interviewed for the job. I did not get the job. I was on the rifle range one day and this gentleman was out there. I was one of the range officers. He walked up to me and he said, "Julius, you were disappointed you did not get that job?" I said, "Yes, I was. I knew I was the best man. I knew the other person and I knew myself and I felt I was the best man for the job." He said, "Well, do you know Johnny Jones? I have known him for the last 10 years." He said, "The reason he got that job is because I knew that he would look out for my butt better than I would. It wasn't because you weren't qualified but I knew him." And then, all of a sudden, the light turned on and I said, this is what Dr. O'Banion was talking about. I have never forgotten that and I have always related that story to all the young guys that came up who were around me, were in my unit, to try to ensure that they understood that because a lot of the young officers who came on active duty, you know, they felt good about themselves but they did not feel that they were in an environment where they had to assimilate because they were just part of the military and they felt that they could hold their own uniqueness. They wore earrings and all these kind of things and as soldiers, you know, you just could not do that. I did not think it was right to do it anyway. So, those guys would end up getting the worse evaluations because after hours, they would go down to the clubs and put the earrings on and they would wear them around the company area. The commanders back in those days, men don't wear earrings. So, consequently, that had an impact on the kind of evaluation that they received.

IH: That is interesting. I have some questions on OERs. That is certainly one to ask. Before we go any further, can you tell me about, do you have any recollection about your grandparents and the impact they had on your life?

JP: No. On my daddy's side, I never knew him. I remember my mother's father but he died, I think I was about 10 or 11 years old when he died. But no, I do not remember my grandfather. My uncle was the guy who impacted us. His name was Lemon Wilson, my mother's brother. He was the one that always would come by on Sunday and we would always go to church together. He and I would always talk politics and current events and all this kind of stuff. He was sort of. . . my father died early and he sort of became the guy that mentored me as I came along.

IH: Do you know whether any of your grandparents or parents were descendants of slaves or anything like that?

JP: My mother's father, he used to say all the time, "He was born in 1875." I remember that. He was. My mother's side of the family were descendents of slaves and I have never been able to, or I have never taken the time to go back and retrace that to do that lineage. On my father's side, my father's side were Indians. There was a Cherokee Indian by the name of Guana Parker. He was on the reservation in Oklahoma and he came down in 1945 to New Braunfels centennial, for the 100th anniversary. And I remember my father telling me that that was our great, great-grandfather, Guana Parker,

who was on the reservation in Oklahoma. I have since gotten a book about all that stuff, about Guana Parker - quite a famous Indian there in Oklahoma and Texas.

IH: About your uncle, since he was kind of a step-in father for you after your dad died, can you remember anything in particular that he instilled or impressed upon you that followed you throughout your career and life?

JP: Well, I guess one thing he used to say that has stuck with me and I use it quite often now, "If a task is once begun, do not leave it until it is done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all." That was one of his sayings (inaudible)_____. And believing in God, putting your trust in him. I guess he was a clerk in the largest department store in New Braunfels and his name was Lemon Wilson. He knew that store better than the owner. Any time they needed anything, did not know where it was, they would always come and get Lemon. He could have run that store by himself. He was a deacon in the church. I used to love to hear him pray because he could really pray good prayers, the kind that I liked to hear. Every Sunday, he would walk home with us. We would always have a lot of fun walking home from church. We did not have a car and he did not have one either so we would walk home from church telling jokes and laughing every Sunday. He would always keep us in stitches. A wonderful guy. Took care of his parents. He never got married. He married early and divorced. His parents got sick and he was the only child that took care of his parents until they died.

IH: He sounds like a pretty impressive man. So, back to Prairie View, what year did you enter PV?

JP: September of 1951.

IH: So, that was during the Korean War.

JP: The Korean War had just started after I got to Prairie View.

IH: And tell me about your experience at PV. Was Colonel Chase, Hyman Wyatt Chase, was he one of your instructors there.

JP: He was a PMS and T when I arrived at Prairie View. Lieutenant colonel, Ph.D. from Stanford University, Hyman Wyatt Chase. He would let you know that in a minute. A smart guy but he was a very dictatorial kind of guy. But he was bent on preparing us to come on active duty and be good soldiers. He never mentioned anything about you are entering into a white military. He said, "What we are going to do for you, we are going to teach you the field manual and we are going to teach you how to do things in the military like drills and ceremonies. We knew that. We could do that backwards and forwards. We knew map reading and all of that stuff. They at Prairie View were preparing us to come on active duty and to graduate from Fort Benning because Prairie View was an infantry ROTC. So, everybody who graduated from Prairie View during my day graduated in infantry and you had to go to the officers'

basic course at Fort Benning, Georgia. And if you did not graduate from Fort Benning, you got kicked out. So, our class, the class of 1955, we lost 2 people out of our class. It was the highest percentage of graduates to come on active duty and I think they did a pretty good job at Prairie View to do that. And we had drills and ceremonies every Thursday. I will tell you, I was not a military kind of guy. Academically, I was good. I had a 99.9 average in ROTC. And if you look at my transcript from Prairie View and ROTC, they are all C's. So, the officers there told me that I had a bad attitude towards the ROTC staff. And that was due primarily to the fact that I was not a boot licker, I was not a (inaudible)_____, I did not go to their house and shine their shoes and wash their cars and cut their grass. I said I came to school to get an education and that is what I am going to do. If they wanted me to paint a fence, I told them "I did not come to Prairie View to paint fences." So, old Captain _(inaudible)_____ said . . . I said, "Look, I got a 99.9 average in ROTC." He said, "Parker, you have a bad attitude." So, the highest rank I ever held in ROTC was first lieutenant.

IH: If they could only see you now. Wow! Was there anyone during your time at PV you were particularly close to, like the cadets or anything like that?

JP: Cadets? My best friend was Franklin Fisher. He and I were roommates for 3 years. I had Reynaldo Yearwood who was the best man in my wedding. Of course, he is deceased now. Booker Hogan was a roommate of mine. We were always the 4 horsemen. Dr. Martin, I don't know if you know Dr. Martin or not. Edward Martin?

IH: He was a cadet as well, right?

JP: No. He was one of our faculty. He taught me biology and, of course, he went on to become the head of the science department at Prairie View. I still remain in contact with him. All 13 of the guys who were in my class: D.R. Butler, Lawson Harris . . . Oliver Harrison was one that did not make it . . . Arthur Butcher, Phillip Thorn, Carly Alton. Those were all guys I could think of right now. Roland Goodman.

IH: Yes, his name has come up before.

JP: Yes, Roland was an MP.

IH: Did you have much contact with the president, Dr. George Wolfolk?

JP: No, George was head of the history department. He had a golden voice and he used to speak at our church services on Sundays. He had a golden deep voice. He is dead though. I never took any history courses. I did not even get a chance to know him or know who he was.

IH: So, after you graduated PV, what was your first duty assignment? What was that like?

JP: After I graduated from Prairie View, after Fort Benning, Georgia, my first duty station was Fort Ord, California. I was a platoon leader and second battalion infantry regiment.

IH: Now, coming from an HBCU, again, this is still kind of the Jim Crow era, did you experience a kind of racialre-socialization program coming from an all black college than going to a predominantly white military?

JP: What do you mean re-socialization?

IH: Well, I mean, again, you are used to being around all African Americans but then, you know, when you go to your first duty station, it is predominantly white. Was that a problem or was that kind of . . .

JP: Well, I told you, in my home town, I was used to being around white people. There were more whites there than we were black except on Sunday at church, so that was not a factor, you know, with me. Of course, everywhere we have ever been, there were very few blacks. In Intelligence, when I had a battalion, I had 600 people and I had maybe 10 blacks. When I had a brigade, I had about 3,000 people and I had maybe 40 or 50 that were black. So, I have always been almost the Lone Ranger in my corps. Right now, I am still the highest ranking black. There is another guy who is a two star but we just have not grown any. In fact, in the olden days, I think it was J. Edgar Hoover who had sort of distrust for African Americans, blacks, and we did not get an

Intelligence. I think that required a security clearance. And so, consequently, you did not find many of us in Intelligence and that is so even today. I do not know if that is still the reason but in fact, in the olden days, I heard them say, "Well, suppose we got into a war with Africa? Do you think they would fight with us against Africa?" They did not know where our allegiance would be. They were kind of afraid of that. I think that was the reason they were giving.

IH: Yes, I was just about to ask you that, why there were so few blacks in Intel. That is interesting. So, they said that suppose we had gotten into war with Africa, they were worried about American blacks' allegiance? Wow!

JP: They were worried about our allegiance, who would we _____ our allegiance be? Would it be to other black people or would it be to America?

IH: Wow, that is interesting.

JP: I do not know why anyone would . . . it seems to me that is a dumb question and to even ask. You know, since I can remember and in all the research that I have done, going back to the Civil War when blacks were slaves, some were indentured servants when the war came along, even though they had been treated, I guess, less than human and the opportunity presented itself to fight on the side of the . . . I cannot even think of who they were but in the Civil War, the troops in the North, when Lincoln freed the slaves and I think he did not do it because he loved the slaves, I think he did it because

he needed the manpower, and Congress passed a bill authorizing blacks, you know, to fight in the war. And so, they did and they cleared themselves. I think even during the Civil War, there were 100 something Congressional medals of honor that were awarded to blacks. Every war we have ever fought, whether it was in the Indian War, the Indian American War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, blacks have always maintained their allegiance to this country and could easily have persuaded themselves to go the other way. But we have always maintained an allegiance to this country.

IH: Fast forwarding to the late 1950s and early 1960s, can you talk about what it was like in the military during the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement, which that was in the late 1960s but as a black officer, what was that like then?

JP: Well, I do not know what it was like in the 1940s. I can tell you what it was like when I came in, in 1956.

IH: In the late 1950s and early 1960s.

JP: In the late 1950s, you know, Eisenhower had already decreed that the Armed Forces would be desegregated. At Fort Ord, California, that was my first duty station. You know, you did not have discrimination in California. And they always seemed to put people in areas like California who knew a little something about desegregation or knew something about all races. I did not have a problem socially at Fort Ord, although I could not command a rifle company at Fort Ord. You could command a headquarters

company and they would tell you that - "African Americans don't command rifle units." I will never forget - we had a guy who had a DSC, Levy Hollis, who was commander who was in our battalion, the only job he could get. He was a captain. The only job he could get was headquarters company commander. But our regimental commander, full colonel, was John Montgomery. Whenever we went to a party, you know, there were only maybe 3 or 4 black couples there, we would be out on the floor dancing and he said, "Hey Parker, let's change partners." I danced with his wife, he danced with my wife. Every place we went, we always felt like we were . . . I did not feel any tinges of segregation or hatred. I always tried to be a sharp lieutenant with my boots shined, fatigues pressed and everything and I had a platoon. I had 40 men and I had maybe 5 or 6 blacks and the rest were all white. One of the things they used to tell us at Prairie View, they said, "When you go to the unit, you know, you are a second lieutenant. You are brand new. You have never done this job before. You have got NCOs there who have been in for 10, 15, 20 years, you know. Use those guys. If there is something you don't understand, you ask them for recommendations but don't go into a unit with your bars on your shoulder thinking you are God's gift to the military because if you do that, they are going to let you down at the most inopportune time." And I found that to be very good advice. I could tell when I had my noncommissioned officers in the palm of my hand. I did what they told me to do. We did all of our own training. We did our own weapons firing. This was an experiment which our battalion was selected to decentralize training of RFA troops. And so, we did all of our own training. Before that, they had committees to do the training. When I was listening to my sergeant, they did not know I was listening, when they started calling me their lieutenant, "my lieutenant

said this, my lieutenant said that," I knew I had them, when they began to refer to me as their lieutenant. I had one guy there who was a lieutenant and he was this guy who felt that, I got the rank, you know, that everybody else was going to have to cow-tow to me and do what I say and do it as I say it. And so, he treated his people like animals. He did not treat them like people.

They were preparing for an inspection one night and so he left. He left about 8:00. Every Friday, they used to have a GI party. He left at 8:00 and went home. When he went home, they went home. So, when the IG came the next morning and the first room he went to and he opened the first closet, everything just fell out on the floor. So, that was their way of getting back at him because he had treated them like animals rather than human beings, and that was one of the things I think that we were taught, is that, you know, you do not have any experience, you know, you are there to learn and you learn from the NCOs. And if you make them feel that you do not think that they are a bunch of crap, they will take care of you. And that is exactly what happened to me. I think in every command that I have ever had, I have always tried to engender that kind of relationship with the officer and the NCO. A lot of people do not realize . . . a lot of people, they spend so much I, I, I. The importance is always on the individual. And when you are in an organization and you are responsible, the closest you ever come in being control of your own destiny is when you are second lieutenant because you are down there with those 40 men. Even then, you have 4 squads who can also make you look good or bad but as you rise in the chain of command . . . they used to tell me, "The higher you go up that flag pole, the more your butt hangs out," and you have to remember that how you fare as you move up the ladder depends on how well the people

who work for you take care of you and how well they excel. So, if your people do a good job for you, that as a commander, you are obligated to take care of them and ensure they get the ratings that are going to move them or as opposed to taking all of the credit and gravy for yourself. You take care of your people and your people will take care of you. And as you move up the ladder, you look for people who you think are going somewhere. They used to tell me and I learn it is true - "If you can control your destiny, never work for a loser, never work for an individual who is not moving up the ladder. Always try to work for the guys who are outstanding, who are making promotion below the zone." A lot of times, you cannot control that but whenever you can, you do that because that individual knows what it took for him to get where he is. If he thinks you are of the same mold and cut from the same cloth, he is going to make your record look like his. And, to me, that has always served me in good standing. A lot of times, you cannot control who you work for but whenever you can, you look for the guy who is going places and you latch onto him and he will get . . . if you are one of his boys and you have taken care of him and you have done a good job for him, he is going to make sure that you rise with him. He is going to reach down and get you because as you move up the ladder, you need people like the general told me, "I have known this guy for 10 years. I know he is going to take care of me," and that is what people look for, is other people who take care of his butt as it is hanging out going up the pole. In my younger days, I could never understand why you did not get what you thought you really deserved. It is all because of the relationships and the people who know you and they know what you can do - they will select you, you will be on their team because everybody wants somebody who is going to make them look good. Nobody wants an

unknown quantity. That is the reason why I think when you are in the senior ranks, you get appointed when you get your 3 and 4 stars. It gets the Chief of Staff of the Army to select his boys, who is going to take care of him. And it works in civilian life. It is being a known quantity. If you work for winners and you have what it takes, you will be a winner, too. If you work for a loser, a guy who has been passed on for promotion, he knows what his record looks like and he is going to make their record look just like his. I found that to be true, that they will make your record look exactly like theirs.

IH: O.K. Excellent advice. During your time as a junior officer, did you ever have any brushes with racial tension where maybe some of the Caucasian enlisted officers had problems with taking orders from a black commander or anything like that?

JP: No, I have never had that. You know, when I got my battalion, Michael Davidson who is Commander in Chief in the United States Army Europe, that is when they were looking for a black commander . . . he said "10% of all my commanders will be black." I was supposed to have gone to Fort Bragg. I was in the Pentagon then. I was supposed to go on to Fort Bragg to command an MI battalion in Fort Bragg but one day, the branch chief called me and told me that I was not going to get that command down there, that his emphasis was going to be on those (inaudible)_____ who were nearing the end of their eligibility for the workouts. He thought they should get the command first. So, I was working in the Chief of Staff for Intelligence Office and there was a black gentleman who worked there by the name of Oliver Dillard. I do not know if you have ever heard of him. Ollie was the Assistant Deputy Chief Staff

(inaudible)_____. I was walking down the hallway at the Pentagon and he said, "Park, I thought you were down at Fort Bragg." I said, "No, sir. I did not get that job." He did not say anything to me but later on, I found out he went back through his office and he told his ex-soldier, he said, "Get me a sedan. I want to go and see the brass chief." So, he went to see the brass chief and about 2 hours later, I get this telephone call stating that, "I have a command that has come open in Europe and I need to know within the next 30 minutes whether or not you will accept." And then, he said, "Oh, by the way, General Dillard's visit had absolutely nothing to do with it."

So, I went to Germany and I reported in to my group commander, 66 MI group commander in Munich, Germany. I was the first black in my battalion commander. And he proceeded to tell me how to command whites, how to treat white people because, he did not tell us you did not have a lot of black people. So, I guess he felt that though my being black, that I had never had an opportunity to command white people, so he proceeded to tell me how to command white people but I just listened to what he had to say and I said, "You know, I have been in the military now for about 12, 13 years. I realized I was born in the south. We always had a couple of rules that I had learned that apply no matter where you are or no matter with whom you are dealing." I said, "Number one, do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Here is the golden rule. Number two, know your people and look out for their welfare. I have used those two principles for the last 14 years and I have never had any problem and I do not expect to have any problem in the 165th MI battalion. So, I ended up being the best battalion commander. But this guy, when he rated me, he rated me as second block and he did not show anybody their report. He just left and left everybody's report. I was

fortunate in that when I reported in to that battalion, the chief of staff of 5th corps . . . my battalion headquarters was in that same building. His name was General Harold (inaudible)_____. He took a liking to me for some reason. And all of a sudden, he became the Deputy Chief Staff for a _(inaudible)_____ in Heidelberg. He called me in to his office one day, he said, "Parker, I am going up to Heidelberg to be the (inaudible)_____," and he said, "You and I are going to show these bastards how to operate." So, every Monday morning, he would call me and give me my instructions. Well, my boss worked for him. My boss worked for the _(inaudible)_____ in Heidelberg. So, he would not call my boss and say, "I told Parker to do this." I had to call my boss and tell him that General _____ told me to do this. And so, we were at a party one night and my boss, Colonel Kelly, he got high. When he was high enough, he said, "Parker, you have been conspiring against me with the (inaudible)_____." Oh, I said, God! Shit! I really screwed this thing up! I said, there is no way I am going to get a good report out of this guy. We were the only MI units that ever caught a spy. We had done everything well. General (inaudible)_____ knew this. And so, when Kelly left, (inaudible)_____ called the 66th room. He said, "I want all of the battalion commanders evaluations sent to me." So, he took Kelly's evaluation of me. He wrote a one page addendum to the report stating that this is the best MI battalion commander. Right after that, I went on to the War College. I went to the 3rd Army Division of G2 and then after that, to the War College. But if it had not been for General Erin, man, I would have been . . . I think I probably would have been up the creek. You cannot get a two blocking command or, at least back there, you could not [end of side 1]

The person who did the most for me in my military career was a white guy by the name of Bruce Merritt. He was from Douglasville, Georgia where they used to lynch blacks. When I came into the military, I was not a regular Army officer. I was a reserve officer. After I left, I guess, Fort Willis, Washington, they called me one day. I guess they were looking for somebody to go to Image Interpretation School which is part of Intelligence. And so, they said, "We want to know if you want to go to Image Interpretation School." And I said, "I want to go to the advanced course." They said, "Oh, you will go to the advanced course after you do the Image Interpretation course." I said, "O.K." And that happened. I went to the advanced course and then I went on to Europe. My assignment in Europe was commander of the 207 MI detachment, my first job. I was an infantry officer commander of MI detachment. Bruce Merritt was the G2 of 7th Corps. The Intelligence detachment came under his supervision, so the chief of staff called Bruce Merritt in one day and said, "We are having an IG inspection here and he said, "Those MI pukes better do as well as the rest of the corps of troops or else I am going to have your butt." So, when all was said and done, we not only did as well, we did better than anybody else. And so, Bruce Merritt called me to his office. He said, "Julius, what are you going to do?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Are you going to stay in or are you going to get out of the military?" I said, "Well, I have not decided yet." He said, "Have your regular Army papers on my desk Monday morning." This was on Friday. And so, I went home, I talked to my wife about it. I filled out the papers, gave them to him Monday morning. Thirty days later, I was in the regular Army, (inaudible)_____ OF 105 501. That made all the difference in my career after I became RA because the next month, I got a call from the assignment officer asking me

what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go and what my plans were for my career. So, I could tell the difference after working for Bruce. I left there, went to TRADOC and then for 1 year in joint training and then to Vietnam. I was an advisor, district senior advisor in Duc Tron district and down in the Delta. (In Vietnam)

IH: What year did you go to Nam?

JP: That was in 1967. I left Germany in 1966, May of 1966, was at Fort Monroe for 1 year. In July of 1967, I went to Vietnam as a district senior advisor to Duc Trong District. And after that, I went to the Commanding General Staff College.

IH: Now, were you a major?

JP: I was a major then. I got voted at Fort Monroe.

IH: Now, let me ask you this real quick: When an officer comes up, if he is other than regular Army and he is coming up for his regular Army or he applies for regular Army commission, what do they look at that determines this guy is going to become regular Army or not?

JP: They look at your evaluations and who you work for. If you got outstanding, a very high evaluation, they will say this guy looks like he would make a good regular Army soldier. The difference between the regular Army and the Reserves is that the

regular Army can stay in for 30 and the Reserves had to get out at 20. In fact, I had a guy when I was at Fort Lewis, you know. He was the executive of the battle group. He was a Reservist. I said, "I have had two companies here. We were the best on the post. We were the best ATTs and I was made the assistant S3 of the battle group and you are giving me a two block." He said, "What are you worried about J? You are a Reserve officer. You are Christmas help. You don't need a good evaluation. The regular Army guys need the high evaluation because they have to make an active duty promotion list and they have to make a regular Army promotion list." The Reserve guy told me, he said, "I was Christmas help."

IH: Wow! Excellent. I was wondering about that. Thank you.

JP: That was the difference. Back in those days, if you did not make your regular Army promotions, you had to make active duty promotion and in some cases, you could miss your regular Army which means that you will not get promoted your next time around.

IH: So, you would be below the zone?

JP: Oh, that is not below the zone.

JP: I have never been passed over. I got promoted below the zone twice.

IH: No, not you specifically, I mean just in general, if an officer gets passed over more than once, that is called outside of the primary zone?

JP: Yes. And it used to be if you got passed over twice, you had to get out.

IH: O.K. Now, sticking with the 1960s, again, you are in Vietnam now, what were your impressions of Dr. Martin Luther King?

JP: Well, initially, I was not a fan of Martin Luther King. I believed in the Civil Rights Movement. I liked what Civil Rights was doing but I did not become a Martin Luther King fan until later on down the line. When the Black Power Movement came along, I felt that Martin was a little too passive but it proved that he was smarter than I. He believed in turning the other cheek. He did not believe in violence. He was nonviolent. And the Black Power Movement, I thought it woke up the American community, the white community. It gave them an idea of what it would be like for blacks to have arms. I was not a Black Power advocate although I understood what they were trying to do. I was initially not a Martin Luther King advocate either because I did not think he was moving fast enough but I have since changed my mind. I do not think the Black Power Movement would have succeeded because you cannot have a militant group within a republic. The republic has to have a government and the rules and laws have to apply equally across the board to everybody. I did not think that Black Power could succeed because they did not have enough power. They did not have enough

weapons. You know, if it got real nasty, they would have lost drastically and they would have been over very, very rapidly if it had turned to a kind of war between the blacks and the rest of the country. But that is when I began to see where I think Martin Luther King was going as I began to read things and I read a lot of history that we give ourselves a lot of credit for what has occurred in the country and I think we deserve that, but I do not think the total credit belongs to the blacks because as I read history, the Civil Rights Movement would not have succeeded without the whites. That was one of the things that Martin Luther King sensed that he knew. It appeared to me that when you look at what had happened in the past, you looked at Eisenhower - Eisenhower desegregated the military. Eisenhower had taken 4 of us out of the door down in Little Rock. He sent troops in to desegregate Mississippi and Arkansas and Alabama. And I thought that after he saw that, that he began to opine the rules, the laws of this country, I think the United States is willing to execute the law. If you take a look at what Eisenhower did and all those places to integrate the schools, I think America is ready for something like this. They implement the laws about the schools; they implement the laws about lunch counters and hotels and everything else. And as I looked about and you look at the Tuskegee Airmen, do you know that Tuskegee would not have succeeded without white people? It would not have succeeded without Eleanor Roosevelt. If Eleanor Roosevelt had not interceded, I do not know if we would have a Tuskegee Airmen today because she was the one that went back and told Congress, give them a shot. And they gave them a shot. There is one thing about excellence - It seems to me that excellence wears no color. Even though the flight instructors down at Tuskegee had been given instructions to wash out the Tuskegee Airmen, the guys were so good, they could not do

it. And I have seen that time and time again. That is the reason I say I give ourselves a lot of credit and I give Martin Luther King and all the other Civil Rights people a lot of credit because they started it. But it would not have been successful without the support of many whites. I remember reading not too long ago about during the bus strike down in Selma, that every day that bus strike went on, there were white women, not men but women, following the blacks who were walking and offered them rides to take them to work because they could not use the buses. And, of course, you are familiar with the NAACP and the work that, I guess, the Jews did with the NAACP. But there has been a lot of support out there for what African Americans were trying to do. And so, whenever I give a speech, I always try to recognize that point, even though, you know, when you talk about the 19th of June, I do not celebrate the 19th of June. People call, come and ask me to deliver speeches and I say, "I am sorry, I do not celebrate the 19th of June." I find nothing for me to celebrate about Abraham Lincoln freeing the slaves who should never have been slaves anyway. I do not have anything to celebrate. Many other people can think of reasons to celebrate but I do not have one.

IH: Yes. I am from Ohio and when I came down here, I did not even know what Juneteenth was. Someone asked me, "Are you going to take tomorrow off?" I said, "Take tomorrow off for what? Is there a holiday I do not know about?" And they said, "Yes, Juneteenth." I said, “Juneteenth? What is that?"

JP: In New Braunfels, you did not ask a black person to work on Juneteenth. That is an insult. As I got older and I started reading for myself and learning for myself, I just decided on my own that, you know, this is not something I want to celebrate.

IH: I understand. I agree totally. Let's talk a little bit about the promotion system and the OERs which happen to be the chapter I am finishing up now. What do you think were some of the biggest problems concerning the OERs and the promotion system in general for the Officer Corps during the Vietnam era? From 1963 up to, maybe 1973?

JP: You have interviewed a lot of people and I am probably the only one that . . . I do not find a lot of complaint with most of the system from Vietnam and it had not been my experience. And perhaps there are others who had that experience. But I found that during the Vietnam era, this was the era in which black officers were sort of coming into their own and also coming into demand. The system was looking for African Americans to promote and the problem that you had was that in the early years, you know, when the Secretary of the Army comes in to brief the promotion board, you know, they used to have what they called the whole man.

IH: Yes, total man concept.

JP: Whole man concept, yes. And so, you go back from the time when you were second lieutenant and that is what was causing us problems. When you start comparing the records of the African Americans with the whites, in the early years, they were just

beating the shit out of us. They were getting one (inaudible)_____, we were getting two and three. And see, the guy told me one day, he said, "Well, you know, here is my philosophy" . . . I did not know any better because nobody ever told me. He said, "Here is my philosophy about promotion." He said, "I start you out in the middle and then, see, your next report, I move you up. I move you up a notch or two. And then your next one, I move you up a notch or two until you get to the top block." I was a brand new second lieutenant when he told me that and it sounded reasonable to me. But after I got into the system and found out that you come high or stay at home every time, don't play this gradual escalation. That is wrong. At least, it is wrong from a promotion standpoint because your records are being compared against others and they are always going to take the highest. But then, when the Secretary of the Army comes in, the Secretary of the Army . . . I had been on several general officer boards and I had been on colonel boards, E9 boards, and they do say, "I want you to remember," and they used to call it the Butler Study "because the Butler Study which clearly shows that in the African American's earlier years, those officers were discriminated against and were not rated the same as whites. So, I want you to ensure that you take that into consideration when you review these records." And they may still do that today, I do not know, but I did not see a lot during the Vietnam era. I remember when I graduated; I left Vietnam, went to Command General Staff College and went to the Pentagon. We got our first general since B.O. Davis, Sr., by 1970 or 1971 when I was in the Pentagon. I should never forget that day. He used to command the MDW. He was 8th Division commander. He was 8th ID commander. He became the first general since B.O. Davis, Sr., and that is when Chappy James got his third star, second or third star, and he was made the chief of

information for the Department of Defense. There were many blacks who were getting commands then. They were monitoring the number of commanders in various units like I told you. Michael Davidson said 10% of his commanders would be black. So, all of those gates you had to pass through and we were not passing through those. We were not getting the commands. But once we started getting the commands and getting good evaluation reports, we were being promoted just like everybody else. And there still may have been some subtle racism out there. You know, today, even here at the University today in 2007, there is subtle racism here. So, I do not think you are ever going to get rid of it but it was not prevalent during the Vietnam era that I can recall based on what I knew and my experience.

IH: It seems that after 1965, well, the report came out in 1971, 1972, but there were these projections that there was going to be a shortage of black officers and quite possibly if things did not change, they would go back to World War II and Korean strength in the black officer corps. Can you talk about that, from your experience, what you saw and maybe how the military overcame that or did you see that coming, I guess - that type of impact coming if the Army did not make changes in the OER system or something like that?

JP: Well, I think this was . . . DESPER did that study and maybe Butler was part of it. What was happening was that the black officers were no longer coming into the military.

IH: Why do you think that was?

JP: Blacks were becoming more significant on the outside and so they were going other places. I know they used to send us to the various ROTCs to give talks that would motivate people to come on active duty but they just were in the pipeline. If they are not in the pipeline, you are not going to get the numbers that you want. That is probably one of the reasons why we do not have a lot in military intelligence today is because they were not going in the pipeline and military intelligence was so discriminating, they would only take certain kinds of . . . officers with certain records, certain aptitudes, certain levels of intelligence, but I do not remember now what, and I do not know if this has changed today, whether we have the number of officers coming in that we need. I do know that it seems to me that at the general officer level, the promotions kept coming but when you look at . . . I know when I was in, when I looked at my level and I start backing down to the colonels, lieutenant colonels, captains and majors, they were not there. The numbers just were not there. And I have not kept up with it over the years. I do not know if we have overcome that or not. Probably not due to the fact that ROTC units are getting smaller. The last time I went to Prairie View, they had 7 or 8 graduates in the Army ROTC. The Navy was not filling their quotas. The Army was not filling their quotas. Here at the University of Arizona, we are not filling our quotas here. So, I do not really know, Isaac, about that.

IH: Now, what year did you put on your first star, General?

JP: In 1979.

IH: I am having trouble tracking down - maybe you remember - it was after Butler's report came out, that you had 4 colonels make general? Was that 1972 or 1973, if you have any recollection at all? I have not been able to track that down.

JP: This guy's name was Freddie Davidson. Freddie came out in 1970, 1971, and then you had Ed Greer. I used to know all these guys.

IH: Is Greer Navy?

JP: No, Greer was Army. He was artillery.

IH: Ed Greer was artillery. I see the names, but Dr. Butler was telling me, he said after the report came out and they looked at that, that is when they said, well look, we have to do something.

JP: Yes, that is right because when he gave the report to the DESPER three star, he did not know what to do with it. He did not know what to do with it.

IH: Sticking with the OERs, did you see a problem with inflation with some of the ratings that was happening in the system in the Vietnam era or did you suspect?

JP: That is a good question but the answer, you know, regarding inflation is that the system is normally going, as a matter of course, is going to inflate. You are not going to

keep it from inflating because officers out there feel that they have guys working for them who should be promoted and the way you get a guy promoted is to give him a max report. That is one way you ensure that he gets promoted because his record is going to be one of the top records. And so, pretty soon, what you have is everybody out there is giving max reports. It got so at one time that if you were not in the top block, you would not get promoted because that is what everybody else was getting, and it was all because people want to take care of their guys - the guy is a work bug, this guy worked hard, he is that kind of material and I think he should get promoted - and the way to do it is to give him a max report. You know, a lot of people say, well, that is impossible. Everybody cannot be outstanding.

When I was at Fort Huachuca, I was Chief of the Intelligence Corps and my philosophy was, as a chief, I am entitled to have any officer I wanted and I want the very best officers in the MI Corps. And I just brought them to Fort Huachuca. And I could not just rate one number one and the next number two and the next number three and the next number four because they were all that good. They were the best in their group. So, maybe I contributed to the inflation but that is what I felt they deserved. It was out there and I think that in many cases, you had people who were getting the top block who did not deserve it but they were working for guys who said, well, that is the going thing now. That is what you have to get. Oxford knows it, too, so if he does not get a top block, then he is disappointed and he is going to go back and he is going to file an appeal and all this kind of stuff because he knows that it hurts his career if he does not get a top block. I do not know what the solution to the inflation of reports is but that is how people progress in the military is through these inflated reports. We have changed

systems. Every time you change systems, the average rating goes down. Pretty soon, somebody conducts an analysis and they said, well, on this last promotion board, 90% of the people who were promoted had top block. So, after that, after that has been revealed to the public officer corps, then everybody starts moving everybody up to the top block. I do not know what the solution is to it. It is all about records and it is all about people. In the military, I never interviewed for a job except when I applied for that position as an aide. The rest of the time, even as a general officer, it was my records that went before that committee and not me. And, of course, there were people on the board who knew me as a general officer. What is most important to you is the person sitting on the board who knows you because the Secretary of the Army told us, he said, "Personal knowledge takes precedence over anything in the file." So, it did not make any difference if you had . . . I will never forget, when I was on the selection board, we had to select 26 colonels to brigadier. We were on this three panel system. I guess you have heard of that. Our panel had selected our 26, the other panel selected their 26 and the third panel selected their 26. We merged the lists and then came up with one list of 26. So, we gave that to the Secretary of the Army. He came in and he said, "Gentlemen, I have your 26 officers. Now, here is what I want each one of you to do. I want you to look at this list and I want you to ask yourself the question, is there anybody on this list who should not be a general officer?" And when it was all done, 3 guys were removed from that list because the guys started standing up saying, "Well, I know Johnny Jones. Johnny Jones will walk over his mother to be a general." Or, this guy devours people. You would just see everybody lining them off. We lost 3. They had it made. All they had to do was turn in the list to Desper to be published and their names would have been on the list. But when he said,

"Is there anybody on this list . . . I want you to ask yourself the question, is there anybody on this list who should not be a general officer?" and we lost it.

IH: You said personal knowledge takes precedence over . . .

JP: Personal knowledge takes precedence over anything written in the file because my belief is that most people have no guts. They can tell you something bad but they are not willing to tell you something that is not complementary. So, when they write it on a piece of paper, most of what they write will be complimentary. In most instances, it will be complimentary. And the non-complimentary thing, they will not write. But on the board, where they can use their personal knowledge without any fear of reprisals or without the person finding out about it, they become very honest. We had a situation here at the university where I was looking for a facilities engineer and the guy that we wanted, according to the files, was a guy from UCLA. And so, I was in charge of the committee and so I just called up the guy he worked for. I said, "We were considering this individual who applied for our facilities management engineer position. This guy appears to be very good and I noticed that he worked for you and you gave him a very glowing report." And so, the guy said, "That is not the man you want." He said, "If I were you, I would not hire him." That is just the way I found people to be, that they do not have the guts to tell you something bad or write something bad. They would rather for you to feel good about you than go behind your back and tell the truth. And a lot of people in the Officer Corps were the same way.

IH: We are down to just a couple more questions, sir. Going back to Vietnam for a moment, you were there in 1967. As commander, did you ever sense that there was a black subculture in the enlisted ranks?

JP: What does that mean?

IH: Well, things like African Americans doing self-segregation -- the Black Power sign, things like that. Did you ever encounter anything like that in your command or witness it in a country when you were over there? Like, for example, did you ever have a black enlisted give you the Black Power salute instead of a regular salute or anything like that?

JP: No, I never experienced that but, you know, as long as I could ever remember, African Americans would always congregate, no matter where they are. I remember when we were in Germany at the 5th Corps, you know, a white officer would pass by and he would say, "Uh oh, they must be plotting something." And then sometimes we would be talking, we would say, well, we had better scatter here because one round will get us all here. They would keep up with that. You know, when they would see a group of blacks talking to each other, they wondered what was going on. But I noticed that in the enlisted ranks, you would always see a lot of African Americans together. I guess primarily when they went off the base, you know, they had certain clubs they frequented and they would go off and frequent their clubs, the white guys would go to theirs. But in the officer rank, we went to all of the major functions that the unit had but we got

together on weekends or at private parties in our homes. We always had that subculture and I think it is because most of us came from the HBCUs, we knew people who . . . like, I knew guys from Southern and from Florida A&M, North Carolina A&T, Virginia State. We would just get together to have a good time. I never felt I did not want to associate with any whites but I felt that the blacks understood each other much better.

IH: Of course, yes, right. One more thing: I know you said you were in Nam in 1967. Were you there in 1968 when King was assassinated or were you already out of the country? Were you in the country when that happened one year later?

JP: I think I was at Major General Staff College. What month was it?

IH: I believe it was April or May of 1968.

JP: I was in Vietnam. I went to Vietnam in 1967, July of 1967, and I came back in July of 1968.

IH: O.K., yes, I guess if something happened, you would have sort of remembered it. Now, from your experience as a black officer, what did you see were the biggest problems in the military in relation to being a person of color from the whole time you were in?

JP: The biggest problem?

IH: Yes, that you saw in the military in relation to being a person of color, and I am sure it changed over time - probably got better.

JP: I think the biggest problem is the lack of understanding on the part of whites about African Americans and how to treat them. Most of the time, we only wanted a fair shake and a lot of the whites would not give you a fair shake. If you have a white guy and a black guy up for a job, any job, even though the black guy is better qualified (inaudible)_____ in most cases, he would not get the job because they would prefer to have a white guy because they may not understand blacks or may not even like blacks, may not even like to deal with them. I think it is just a lack of . . . inability to understand people and inability to execute the principle of do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I guess a good example . . . when I was at Fort Benning, George, we were all integrated into one company (inaudible)_____ Alabama, Arkansas, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, UCLA, one of my roommates was from Tupelo, Mississippi. His name was Joe Neeley. I will never forget Joe Neeley. His bedspread was a Confederate flag. Every day when he got up, he would make up his bed and put this Confederate flag on there. He seemed to be kind of a nice enough guy, friendly guy, but he was from Mississippi and he used to talk about blacks picking cotton and all this kind of stuff. So, when I went to Fort Ord, California, Joe Neeley was also assigned to Fort Ord, California. So, he had never been in an environment where black people were doing things, you know. So, after we had been at Fort Ord for about 6 months, he came to me one day. He came to my office. I had a little platoon office. He said, "J, can I talk to you?" I said, "Yes."

He said, "I owe you an apology." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You know, when we were back at Fort Benning, I probably wasn't too kind. I said a lot of things about black people but I was only repeating what I had been taught and what I had been told over the years," and he said, "I want to apologize to you because my parents, my people are wrong." And he said, "I want you to know that I was wrong and I apologize to you." Now, that is what I mean when they lack that understanding because of what they were told. You know, like during World War II when the whites told the German girls over there that blacks had tails. The guys went to their house, went to the Germans' house, they were giving them a pillow to sit on so they would not hurt their tail.

IH: I never heard that part.

JP: That is what the guys who were in World War II said. I think that has a lot to do with how people are brought up and what they have been told, and what they want to believe, what they choose to believe. And when you get to a point where you can observe for yourself and find out what the real scoop is, just like I did about the guy from Douglasville, Georgia. As I said, white or black, he is the guy that did more for me than anybody else. And when I got promoted to general, I invited him and I gave him credit for it because he was the one.

IH: O.K. Coming to the very last question, what do you feel people need to know about African Americans' military service during the Vietnam era that has not been told or written about?

JP: What I feel that they need to know?

IH: Yes, be informed about black military service during that time.

JP: I do not know of anything that needs to be said. I think it has all been said. I think the record speaks for itself, you know. You had Roscoe Robinson who became a four star general, who I rode back on the plane with from Vietnam. He was a battalion commander over there. You had Freddy Davidson who was with the 173rd Airborne in Vietnam. He was a brigade commander over there. Let me see - who else was over there during that time? Those two, for sure, because they were over there with me. I think we acquitted ourselves quite well and it really showed that given the opportunity, that the color of the skin is irrelevant when it comes to commanding troops. If you have the training, blacks were just as good as anybody else or better. I think Vietnam kind of showed that and I think we earned our stripes over there because we had a chance to demonstrate. Everybody was looking for a black general. We kept saying the last general we had was father and son. B.O. Davis, Sr. and Bill Davis, Jr. And the officer, the black officer corps, me included, we were saying, "Where is our general? We don't see any general. We don't see any black generals. When are we going to get a black general?" Freddy Davidson went to Vietnam to command the 173rd and he came back to Washington in Desops and I guess within 3 months, he was a brigadier. And the same with Roscoe. Roscoe went all the way up to 4 stars. And I do not remember all those other guys.

I am number 16 of the General Officer Corps. I was number 16 (16th African American general officer in the U.S. military.) I remember 1981, they brought all of the black generals together in Washington for a big party, the Secretary of Defense did. Every general officer was sent back to Washington and they were presented with an award or a token. It was a crystal pyramid. I have forgotten what is even written on it but it was the first time that they had ever gathered all of the black generals in one place to give recognition to the accomplishments of black officers. And that was in 1981, 1982, when I was in Germany that they gave that.

IH: When you say you were number 16, you were the 16th black officer in history?

JP: Yes. There is a photo you may even run across that was taken at that occasion in 1982 in Washington and they got all the generals up to that point on there and they were numbered by date of rank on that picture. That is the reason I know I was number 16.

IH: 1982 photo. O.K. I am going to find that. All black generals.

JP: I do not even know how many we have right now. I have lost count. It is not as important as it used to be back in those days [end of tape 1, side 2]

. . . send this to you.

IH: Yes, feel free to answer it. I skipped over it because, you know, when we were talking about your uncle, I said, O.K., well, there is the answer right there but please expound upon that question.

JP: My uncle, he was the closest one to me but I did not look to sports figures. Muhammad Ali represented manliness to me because he stood for something and he did not cave in when the pressure got great or even when the threat of going to prison, he did not cave in. To me, that is what I call manliness. I do not call being a sports figure like Jim Brown . . . I guess you could say Jim Brown is a man but when I say "man," I am talking about a guy who represented something for his people and did something that would signify importance to the country. The guy that I have always admired was Ralph Bunch. He was the American mediator to Palestine way back there. And the other guy was A.G. Gaston. Have you ever heard of him?

IH: Yes, I have heard of him.

JP: I count him as a figure of manliness because he gave to the African Americans what they needed in order to survive. In a segregated society, he provided things that you needed and you could not get them from whites because that is where most of them were available, like he had funeral homes. You had to be buried. He had hotels. I guess back in the early days when I was staying in Holiday Inn when I was lieutenant captain, he had a hotel in Selma, Alabama, or Montgomery, Alabama, that looked just like a Holiday Inn. He had a bank. He loaned money to people. He was a multimillionaire. That is the

kind of guy I would look to as an . . . he did this during the segregated era. He was a businessman, he saw a need and he filled it. But a lot of other people could have done that, too, but they did not do it. Back in the early days, those are the kind of people I looked at.

IH: Well, thank you for going into that question. O.K., I am going to stop the recorder now.

JP: We got involved with some regular units but normally, it was with these little scatter groups who did not have a lot of fire power and when they came in for tests, they brought in the 155s and the recoilless rifles and everything else. But I would think that the guys who were in those combat units there . . .

IH: What were those units again most of the blacks were in?

JP: All the troops over there were black, you know and so that is where you would have found, I think, most of your African American officers - would have been at those American units.

IH: Will you mention those units again? I did not have the tape recorder going. What units were those?

JP: The (inaudible)_____ was over there, the 9th Infantry Division was over there, Air Cavalry division was over there, the one that Lieutenant Calley was with.

IH: Yes.

JP: I do not remember exactly. I thought one of the Airborne units was over there. But I know the 173rd was over there.

IH: The 101 was there, too.

JP: 101, right. That is where you would, I think, get a wealth of information, from officers who were in those units.

IH: Yes, O.K. Anything would help. And you mentioned you were wounded during (inaudible)_____?

JP: Yes.

IH: Were you in the Battle of Hue?

JP: No, I was in the Delta.

IH: Oh, you were in the Mekong?

JP: I was in the Mekong Delta. I was a District Senior Advisor to a district chief. He was a military but he was holding a civilian position and he had about 40 platoons of regional popular forces. All they had was carbine. And so, the first time I went out on operation with him, all the noise was coming from the enemy side and all the explosions and [machine gun sound]. And on my side, all I was hearing was [phew]. So, I told my operations sergeant, they had a 5 person team, I said, "Tell that district chief over there to give you a duck and you kill that duck, save the blood and make me some VC flags." So, we made some VC flags, (inaudible)_____ with blood. I had heard about a place in Vin Long of an arms dealer. So, we took these flags down to Vin Long and I walked into this room. This guy had an office that was about 50 x 50 and he had weapons from floor to ceiling, all around the walls. And so, he said, “Well, what you got to trade?" I said, "We had a big fight with the VC the other day. We kicked their ass and took their flags and here is the flag." When he saw those flags, he said, “Take anything you want." So, I got M79s, grenade launchers, caliber 50 machine guns, M60 machine guns, Anti-tank weapons. So, after that when I went out on my units, we were making some noise, too. I did not come all the way over here to get killed by being overpowered by somebody.

IH: Did you get a CIB when you were over there or do you have to be infantry for that?

JP: Yes, I was infantry then. I did not branch transfer until 1971. When they sent me to the Pentagon to be in the Deputy Chief Staff Intelligence Office . . . and this is another thing - this guy I told you about, Bruce Merritt, you know, the only way you get to the Pentagon is for somebody to ask for you. You do not go to the Pentagon because you want to go. Somebody has to say, "We want him." And I was at Fort Leavenworth in class and somebody came and got me one day and said, "You have a telephone call." So, I answered the phone. He said, "This is Bruce Merrick. I am the Executive to the Deputy Chief Staff for Intelligence. You are coming to work for me." So, that was the second time I worked for him. If it had not been for him, I would not have gone to the Pentagon. And if you do not go to the Pentagon, your chances of getting promoted are slimmer than none. So, that was . . . I do not know why I told you that. That is the law. Every year, they would pass around a stack of records and they would say, "Here are some (inaudible)_____ college graduates. Tell us who we should select."

IH: O.K. That is great. I am going to have to call you back to get some more combat stories. That was fantastic. O.K., General, I will just email you. You have a great day.

JP: O.K., you, too.