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TM: Today is August 29, 2016. We are in the home of Jim and Jodi Wurgler in Williams, Arizona. This is Part II of an Oral History Program from the Grand Canyon Historical Society and my name is Tom Martin. At the end of Part I, Jim, you told us about working through residency, going into your post-grad work, working with Dr. Hewitt, and you'd mentioned that you wanted to "work rural" so let's try to pick that thread up.

JW: Okay. Well I'll get to that in a minute, but I wanted to make sort of a correction about my understanding about what I had been told about how my parents wound up in New Mexico having grown up in Indiana. I called my sister and checked some of my recollection. She corrected me to this point. I left the impression that both of my parents had gotten to Albuquerque by signing up with a private school there. I know one of them for sure was named Harwood Boys School because I've looked it up on the internet and it's there. There's even a sentence or two about an advertisement that was placed back in 1922, roughly—advertising for a male teacher who would double as a coach and a teaching capacity. I'm not sure what the teaching was. I think it was kind of general. I wouldn't be at all surprised if my dad didn't accept that because that's exactly the job that he described. He's the one that rode the motorcycle from Indianapolis to Albuquerque in 1922 when there were virtually no paved roads. In New Mexico the roads tended to follow the creeks and not just by the creeks, but in the creeks. He took the job in Albuquerque, according to my sister, and after a year he then went back to Indianapolis and I don't know what the arrangement was with my mom and dad—when they were going to get married, where they were going to get married. He apparently arranged for her to come with him to Albuquerque and that's where they then set up shop. My oldest sister was subsequently born in Silver City, New Mexico. After their stay in Albuquerque, he was assigned as a preacher to the First Methodist Church in Silver City, New Mexico. Moving on from that and correcting that horrible error.

Regarding the business of practicing in a rural environment, most of my formative years were spent in Marfa, Texas from age 10 to age 20. That was a community, when we moved there, of 4,000 roughly. There was an Army air base there where they trained multi-engine bomber pilots—Marfa Army Air Field it was called. Then, of course, the war ended in '45. They decommissioned all that. The population went down to about roughly 3,000. So I grew up in a community of roughly 3,000 and was comfortable with it. Didn't see anything wrong with that. I always felt comfortable in small communities and I was comfortable in rural environments. I got my medical training at Southwestern Medical School in Dallas and then went on to do my residency training in California—two years at Sacramento and then two years at Butte County Hospital in Oroville. We spent a lot of time exploring in California, Jodi and I. We got married in 1960 and I had graduated in '59. We got married while I was between my intern and residency in Sacramento and then we had our first child and moved to Oroville. I was always "car poor." I had bought a Volkswagen Bug when they were just the cat's meow back in the 1960s. They were just

really gaining momentum as a small car. I traded that in on the Austin-Healey--I think I mentioned that in Part I. The Austin-Healey was not a traveling kind of a car. I traded that in on a Porsche.

TM: You're really getting bigger here now, aren't you? The cars are getting a lot bigger.

JW: Yeah, right. So the Porsche was just a very basic Porsche, but it was still a Porsche and very different from the usual American car of 1960. We explored a lot and California is just made for exploration—with the old 49ers and the Gold Rush and so forth. Those towns along the foothills in California running like 500 miles from Downieville in the north to Oakhurst in the south, which is just south of Yosemite. There was a paved road virtually all the way during our time there. Those roads had been put in there because of access for the 49ers and the gold-seekers. They didn't pave them then, but ultimately as the towns grew...there was just this network of places to explore that was just fantastic. And trees.

TM: Twisty roads that a Porsche would be good for. I get it!

JW: Twisty roads. Yes. Matter of fact that was sort of my mental therapy when I was a resident and things were really getting out of hand. The foothills were far enough from Sacramento that there was a rural environment where a person could go wild in their car and usually not get stopped. I'd go out there by myself. I didn't take Jodi with me. I'd go and race around a few turns and have a great time.

Back to the rural environment and my pathway from my education process to finally ultimately winding up in the National Park arena. As we explored these communities that were primarily by this time focused on lumbering and the lumber industry. There was an occasional mine, but certainly nothing like the original 49er craziness that went along with that. Although we always found that intriguing to go to the museums and all the rest. As we lived in that environment, I began to realize that there was one particular little town—I won't mention the town because I'm being a little denigrating about it. It was a town that was 2,500 population. They were always advertising for a doctor. There were these advertisements for town who wanted doctors. Every month I'd look at the places that were advertising for a physician to come there. We went and visited it and then we visited a couple more. I began to realize that these communities were isolated, had focused on pretty much just one aspect of life. They weren't really interested in the other things in life that we began to feel comfortable with. Just having other people to talk to who had an education maybe beyond the eighth grade or certainly beyond high school. People to just associate with—socialize, have a social existence. We went back to the Panhandle of Texas for a little less than a year.

JoW: Nine months.

JW: Nine months. I was getting burned out on my residency programs. I'd done two years at Sacramento, two years at Oroville and I hadn't made up my mind what I wanted to do. One of my classmates who was an ex-Marine had gone to this little town in the Panhandle of Texas named Silverton. It was a town of probably 1,500. We had talked about going into practice together when we got ready to practice. I called him one day said, "Hey, do you still want to get together and practice together?" It turned out that he had a paper on his desk to sign saying he was going to do a residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation. He was a good guy and he said, "Sure, come on. We'll practice." So we moved our stuff to Silverton, Texas which is between Lubbock and Amarillo and in the vast wasteland. A farming area, flat, particularly up on what's called the Caprock. The Caprock is a geological area that runs from the... The Ogallala Aquifer runs underneath the Caprock all the way from

Nebraska. I mean it's such a huge monstrosity. They were already digging wells and irrigating and digging deeper wells. They were going to run out of water sooner or later. We stayed there for nine months and I realized that life was too short to spend the rest of it in the Panhandle of Texas.

JoW: In the mountains.

JW: Yeah. Okay. Time out.

TM: I got a question because I remember from Part I you had mentioned that you had been invited to come over to your head doctor's place for a little gathering. You'd showed up in cut-offs and a tee shirt. So that tells me that here's a guy that could fit in a rural environment and yet you found rural environments could be suffocating in their lack of...

JoW: Challenge. Intellectual challenges, really.

TM: Yeah.

JW: I'm trying not to sound like an elitist. But the fact is that...

TM: But you weren't an elitist. What I'm trying to get through is the fact that you were wearing cut-offs and a tee shirt to go hang out with people and talk about stuff. You weren't wearing your Oxfords and your sport coat and your tie. So I'm just trying to put this in perspective thinking about this.

JoW: It was almost the beginnings of the hippie movement. The hippies were intellectually interesting people, but they didn't care how they dressed.

JW: Yeah. When you think back, what were the 60s like? It was the late 50s and early 60s that Haight Ashbury really got going. "California Dreamin'" was my absolute theme song for the emotion that goes with The Mamas and The Papas and the music that they played. We were into The Beatles. One of the things that I had really learned to enjoy and appreciate is... One of the reasons we really enjoyed some aspects of California... I saw that I didn't want to live in a lumbering community where there was such a constricted focus on life in general and philosophy. I'm not a great philosopher, but I appreciate the things that other people bring to the table and have conversations about. At the same time I'm also a person who was raised in an environment where being a little too fancy kind of puts you in a category of being a snob. So I was always walking this line between being a snob and being a crude, rude sort of a person. I'm still chasing that. What do I want to be today?

JoW: He didn't go to finishing school.

JW: That's very true. I did not. So there was that big gap in my education and my training.

TM: So in Texas then...nine months.

JW: Nine months and we packed up and moved back to Oroville where they needed another doctor at this hospital. It was kind of an OJT residency in Butte County. It was a 30 bed hospital.

TM: Had you planned to spend just nine months in Texas?

JW: Oh, no.

TM: Why did you end up leaving Texas and coming back to California?

JW: Because I had decided that life was too short to spend it in the Panhandle of Texas or pretty much anywhere in Texas, really.

TM: Was it that same concept of “this is a small town and there’s just not going enough here intellectually for me” which was going on in California?

JW: No, not really. There were some interesting people. As a matter of fact, just to give you kind of a clue, one of the ranching families there was the McMurtry family. You know, Larry McMurtry who wrote *Lonesome Dove* and all those other books. He was their cousin. There’s something about Texas. If you’ve ever read *Giant* or even seen the movie to a certain degree, you get a feel for the dichotomy that exists between people who grew up living in dugouts. There were no trees so they couldn’t build a house with wood, so they would build it out of sod and what little wood they could drag out of the mountains. They became incredibly wealthy. They went right from being the world’s most ignoramuses to having incredible amount of power and authority and the “new rich”. We were in neither camp. I was not raised in a sod house and never became exceedingly wealthy. I always had a foot in one camp or the other and I was able to get along with both groups. That was one of the things that Yosemite taught me. I had never had to really deal with celebrities as patients. My patients were the people down the street. In Yosemite, Rock Hudson might show up at the window or the guy that played Richard Kiley. Even just dealing with people from Washington. There would be people from the Department of the Interior who would come by.

JoW: It wasn’t Richter?

JW: Richard Kiley.

JoW: No. The Richter Scale guy.

JW: Dr. Richter. Richter Scale? The earthquake guy. He liked to go backpacking and camping. He had a back problem. The back problem caught up with him up in high country of Yosemite. They brought him out probably by helicopter or horse or whatever. We had a hospital at that time. So this would have been sometime...1971, '72 because we closed the hospital after that. Dr. Richter became a patient of ours. Our janitor was a guy who had run a... He was engaged in providing a place. The Park Service gave him a tent where he could deal with young people on bad trips. 1970, okay? Late 60s.

JoW: It wasn’t Outward Bound type stuff?

JW: No. I’m talking John Calkins. It wasn’t Outward Bound. Outward Bound was a specific organization that took young people and took them out in the woods. He didn’t do that. They provided psychological support services for young people who needed whatever it was that they needed. Not just bad trips, but all kinds of support and somebody who’s younger than 35 or 40 to talk to. John Calkins was this really... He was very capable, had a lot of insight. He didn’t mind being a janitor. He wanted a job. He wanted to get paid. He became our janitor and handyman. He played chess. He would go back to Dr. Richter’s room and they would spend hours playing chess back there. Dr. Richter...

Time healed all things and he got better and was able to be discharged. You did not get that in the rural lumbering town.

JoW: Logging camps.

TM: Or Texas.

JoW: Texas came close. There were some well-educated people in that town.

JW: If we'd have stayed there for two years, we probably would have stayed forever. You get used to the atmosphere, the environment, the fact that there aren't any mountains. I had a book that was put out by Sunset Magazine. I still got it. It had to do with the Sierra and California in general. I would get that book out and look at the pictures and say, "Oh man wasn't it great when we did this and did that." See, the part of west Texas where I grew up was the only place in Texas that has any mountains. They're called the Davis Mountains. I had at least the exposure to the mountains. The other places we had lived had been Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. All of which were in some form or other related to the Rockies. The Davis Mountains are the tail end of the Rockies at lower elevations, but still mountainous terrain. That was another thing I really appreciated, having a difference in geology and geography. The geology course at Big Bend National Park and areas around there... Geologists come from all over the world to study the geology because it's so exposed. There's so much of it just at the road side. You want to see something from whatever era you're studying? Well here it is.

JoW: You missed your forest too.

JW: I did.

JoW: The trees.

JW: Yeah. The trees. That's for sure.

JoW: Panhandle is the plains. Hardly any trees unless you plant them. Cottonwoods I guess next to...

JW: I learned to fly, pilot, in Texas. My partner was kind enough to go along with me. I don't know how I got interested—oh I know how. Wayne McMurtry had an airplane. His buddy, the farmer, had an airplane. We'd have lunch with them and one of them would say, "Let's take a ride." There was a sod landing field at the edge of town. The four of us would clamber into one or the other of their airplanes and they'd take off and fly around. It was just wonderful.

JoW: What sort of airplanes did they have?

JW: Don't remember the names.

JoW: But they weren't your jets. Some were Cessnas.

JW: No. These were single engine. Both of them had low wings. I took Bob Muckleroy and went over to the airport in Plainview one day.

JoW: Bob Muckleroy was the doctor he was partners with there in Silverton.

JW: We went to the airport. We started talking airplanes and took a ride. Next thing you know, we had agreed to buy an airplane. Part of the purchase was that they would teach us to fly, teach us enough to take the test.

TM: So you were now co-owner of a plane?

JW: Yes. It was a Cessna 172.

JoW: It had a high wing, right?

JW: It had a high wing. It had virtually nothing in it. Those days the radios were just one step up from primitive. If you had a radio that you had to turn a crank to dial in a frequency, it was called a “coffee grinder.” They were just starting to get into the crystal mode where you could put a crystal in and just push a button and that crystal would be right on it. It did have a homing device. A good, modern, for that time, homing device so that you pretty much could always find/kind of figure out where you were just by virtue of the homing device.

JoW: Were they the ones that you’d always look for the omni stations? That was your point of reference?

JW: Exactly. We would go for a ride over lunch time. Muck and I would go back to work and they’d go back to their farming. Talking about why we liked it. The other thing about learning to fly in that area...there were 100,000 square miles of flat terrain that if something happened that you had to land somewhere...there’s always someplace to land—at least a controlled crash. So it was a great place to do that.

JoW: One other thing you said, “Did we plan to stay there long?” We did because we bought a house. We actually bought a house. We had great intentions. We had two children.

TM: You bought a house. You had a plane. You had two children and a practice.

JW: Yeah.

JoW: He missed his mountains and his trees and windy roads.

JW: I’ve been kind of an impulsive person.

JoW: With certain things.

JW: With certain things. Yeah. It’s not like I just up and did it. The decision for us to leave was after we’d lived there for a while. It wasn’t all beer and skittles. It wasn’t all going out and having an airplane ride. There were areas that I was dissatisfied with and wasn’t satisfied with. I won’t go into that. That’s getting into the weeds. We did decide and she’s right. It was the mountains, the trees. In the Panhandle of Texas you would get on a road and it would be a straight shot for 20 miles. No curves. Flat. No ups and downs.

TM: Kind of hard for the Porsche. [laughter]

JoW: To illustrate that, someone would be giving you directions to go west on the road out of town and they'd say, "It's past the hill out there." What hill? No hill. Sure enough there was just a little rise where you couldn't necessarily see the horizon, but just enough of a rise that that was the hill.

JW: That had stuck in both of our minds...is what they called a hill.

JoW: Yeah, when you come from a place like in California in the foothills. You know?

TM: So you were okay with picking up and going back to California, Jodi?

JoW: Yeah. Oh yeah. I was into raising a family and being the wife to the doctor. I still am. That's my personality. That was it. I was going to deal with whatever. While I was there I took oil painting classes. We had Bridge club. I think there was a book club. There were things to challenge the mind in between taking care of two little kids. They were three and one, something like that. Another interesting thing we remember about being there. We were living there when Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

JW: That may have been the straw that broke the camel's back in a way. The fact that the Texas environment was so hostile to the Kennedys and their approach to world issues and governments and the liberal side of things. This has been the one area that has been a real...that has required that I learn to deal with kind of multiple sides of a question. I really love the rural environment. If you look at the rural environment of the United States and which states are red and which states are blue. The blue states are almost universally, heavy duty up the coasts and everything in between practically is red. Even in the blue states, the rural environments in those blue states are very, I don't want to just throw the word "conservative" at it, but they have a certain approach to their concept of government and the social network. I'm a huge supporter of the social network regardless of the color, gender, sexual orientation, anything of that nature. And I grew up with that. That was my Methodist preacher father's mode. He was more of a social activist than he was a Methodist minister. So I was thoroughly brainwashed. Except that living and going to school in these communities with people who had a very conservative outlook...I got exposed to that. I wasn't really so engaged in activism that I would say, "Hey, I'm a liberal and you're a conservative and we need to fight this out." You just gather the pieces of your personality from the exposure that you have to a whole variety of people: your neighbors, the people you go to school with, your teachers, your friends' parents and on and on. I've always been kind of at odds with the ultra-right and I've also been at odds with the ultra-left. I remember I took one of those quizzes that you see in magazines. It turned out that I just bridged the middle. You couldn't call me a liberal. You couldn't call me a conservative. I was a "moderate liberal." You want to put a label on me that's probably what would fit pretty well. We've moved away from some of the stuff we wanted to talk about.

TM: When you decided to leave Texas, you and your schoolmate were running a practice. How did you disengage from that?

JW: I just told him one day, "This is not working." He agreed that it wasn't working. I had not gotten busy enough to be able to really support... He was subsidizing me—not completely. I was bringing in certain revenue. I'll make a confession here now to God and everybody. Living and working in Silverton, we were at the end of the road almost. I mean it was not a dead end. When you look at the towns where they had modern medical facilities, it was Lubbock and Amarillo. They both had sophisticated medical communities and they were cities, bona fide cities. Then you moved down one step from that

and it was the town of Plainview which was where Jimmy Dean Sausages got its start. Jimmy Dean himself was from Plainview. Plainview had a group of doctors in a medical group—a specialty group. Most of the people in Silverton, because they were always having trouble getting a doctor for a town that small, they would establish their relationships with the doctors in Plainview.

JoW: You mean before Muckleroy and you came.

JW: Long before we got there. So they kept onto them. We were going to have to work hard and for a long time to get these people to say, “Okay. Doc Wurgler and Doc Muckleroy, they’re good enough that we can trust our medical care to them.” We were getting there, but I was young and impetuous and in a hurry.

TM: Yeah, but so was Muckleroy, right?

JW: Not so much. He had four kids.

JoW: He was older.

JW: He had been in the Marines—not a doctor in the Marines. He had been a grunt Marine. I learned a lot from Muckleroy just about life and raising kids and so forth. He had four children and they were all in school at that point and we had a three year old and a one year old. So there was that age discrepancy. I found out that that opening at Physical Medicine Rehabilitation was still open so he was able to shut down the entire practice. When you look back at it you could say that I was being selfish in that regard. Basically, I came to the conclusion that it wasn’t working for me—us—so I had decided that I was going to go ahead and return to California. I didn’t really appreciate the fact that I was dumping everything back onto Muck, he was going to be the only doctor in town. It was like I was being selfish to a certain degree, taking care of my needs and our needs and not really paying that much attention to his needs.

TM: You could say that and yet, both of you could see that the community was going to a higher standard of care if you will.

JW: Yeah. Not only that, but we were the ones they would call in the middle of the night. If something had happened, a family was sick or whatever, we would get the phone call and the request for a house call. We still made house calls. It was disheartening to be considered you’re okay in an emergency, but for my routine care I’m going to go see Doctor Smith over in Plainview. That’s just the way it was.

TM: And then he closed the practice.

JW: And then he bowed out. After that I tried to keep track, is there anybody in Silverton? And for years they haven’t had. There’s just not enough of a population to support it. So many things have happened in rural America between mechanization, it was already mechanized then, but it gets more and more sophisticated as far as mechanization is concerned. They were all running out of water from being able to access it, et cetera. Anyway, we got to California and I spent two more years in this Butte County Hospital basically working as a hired physician. Basically doing the same stuff I did when I was a resident, but it meant doing surgery, delivering babies, taking care of pediatric patients, running an emergency room and clinics, et cetera. So I just got two more years of experience.

TM: Soup-to-nuts rural health care.

JW: Oh yeah. For sure. I also got to appreciate that fact that being able to provide the kind of broad-spectrum care...you could not do it alone. You can't do it by yourself. It has to be a team effort. You've got to have nurses, your lab techs, the people who clean the floors, and social workers. It's a combination of people working together as a team. I've been able to carry that with me to the other places I've gone because it was one of the characteristics of our practice in Yosemite and at Grand Canyon. Of course, we had a really good group here the few years that Tom and I shared that position here in town.

JoW: Go to...you were working with Dr. Cutner there at Butte County and he told you about Yosemite.

JW: During the time I did those two years after coming back from Texas, there was another doctor by the name of Larry Cutner. Larry had done some surgical residency and was basically doing general practice, also. We'd be standing over a hot operating table and he would be telling me, "Jim, you need to talk to those people down in Yosemite. They hire a doctor to work just for the summer time." Larry was the kind of a guy who was able to get his work done in the clinic in the morning. He would then run over to the lodge where there was a swimming pool and he and his family—

JoW: This is in Yosemite.

JW: Yes, this is Yosemite. Okay, let me back up. Larry would share that with me. That's what he did. He was an energetic guy, he and his wife both. Lot of physical action for them. To say nothing of raising several kids. I forget how many they had—three or four.

JoW: Those were the days of threes and fours.

JW: Larry used to tell me that he saw in me that I probably would really enjoy working in Yosemite.

JoW: We used to go camping.

JW: One of my classmates when I was an intern was a Chinese guy whose dad was a Chinese herbalist. Franklin Yee had gone to medical school and he was an intern at Sacramento County Hospital when I was there. They had a cabin in one of those in-holdings that existed at National Parks. There was a place called Wawona and there was a substantial area of in-holdings there. Franklin and his wife invited Jodi and me down during our internship here.

JoW: This is before we were married.

JW: Just at the end of our internship, like April, maybe May of '60. So I asked him. I had no clue there was anything in the valley. I had no idea what made up a National Park and what the operational aspects of it were. These were just beautiful places to be preserved and appreciated.

JoW: You go find yourself a campsite and pitch your tent or lay your tarp down and your bags. We had the Volkswagen bus then/the camper. I guess we drove it in and used it as a—

JW: We had one of the very first Volkswagen campers that existed. We bought it used. It had been well-used. The guy had put a lot of miles on it. He lived in Vacaville and commuted to San Francisco

every day so he put a lot of miles on it. This was the greatest little, what would you call it, a dollhouse on wheels?

JoW: It was a playhouse.

JW: It was more of a playhouse. Wasn't a dollhouse—it was a playhouse.

JoW: Cupboards. Water tank. How many gallons?

JW: 30 gallon water tank. Electric pump. Those Germans thought of everything.

JoW: Bunk beds in the front/the front seats. The bench made into bunk beds.

JW: I could lie flat from the tailgate to the back of the front seat stretched out.

TM: How tall are you?

JW: 6'4".

TM: Thank you.

JoW: The original was wall-to-wall mattress when you laid the table down and filled it in with the backs of the rear seats. That made it all the way back. It didn't have that gap like the new Westphalias when they came out. They always had that gap. It was great.

JW: We did a lot of camping.

TM: Were you flying or had you left the plane back in Texas?

JW: As a matter of fact, I really would have liked to have got that plane, but Muck and I couldn't work out an agreement and I didn't have any money. I rented for a while. There was a little airport there in Oroville. Several times I rented an airplane and we would go do a variety of things, occasionally.

JoW: Did we fly down to The Nut Tree that time in Vacaville?

JW: A couple of times. There was a place called The Nut Tree in Vacaville. It was an upscale "fly in, drive in". They had a train that wandered around through the orchards. One of our friends, he didn't like The Nut Tree because he thought it was so outrageous they charged \$5 for a hamburger. And for the time it was.

TM: In 1962?

JW: You could get a hamburger at McDonald's for \$0.15.

JoW: Probably the mid-60s by then.

JW: He didn't like it there, but we liked it because they maintained an aviary as part of the restaurant. You would sit down, there were these birds and the kids just loved it.

JoW: The food was really well done. They made one of the first that we were aware of in California, fresh fruit plate you wouldn't believe. It's something like you'd make in your own home. And we're talking mid-60s. A lot of places did not have that access to the pineapple, the mangoes, papaya, and watermelon. They'd be nicely done on this plate. Just amazing. Just down the road a piece from the University California Davis. That's sort of the area that you're in, too.

JW: She was going to school at UC Davis.

JoW: We didn't know The Nut Tree at that time. It wasn't until after we were married.

JW: That's true.

TM: What were you studying, Jodi?

JoW: Home Economics.

JW: But it was Home Economics that included...not Home Ec like they teach it in high school. Home Ec like they teach it in college. She had to engage in chemistry.

JoW: Chemistry, Biology, Psychology, Child Development, Nutrition, Food Technology. The chemistry was part of it. There's some Physiology in there. A little bit of Math...no I had already gotten past that. Design, Clothing Design, Textile Design, Home Design. It's the jack of all trades for Home Economics just like a GP knows about everything—or should—a little of everything. So the Home Economist is supposed to teach home economy. Oh, and there was Economics, too, by the way of course.

JW: UC Davis was the equivalent of what was Texas A&M. They had a veterinary school. The agriculture aspect of it, with California being the agriculture state that it is, it was huge. Huge. They used to have an open house day for the veterinary school and I loved going to see those guys. They'd have these long pipes that looked like they were water hoses that they would put into horses as the esophageal—

JoW: Was that their intubation?

JW: The intubation. Yeah. It looked just like a human intubation as far as the pieces and parts except the scale was monstrous. The table that they had was a hydraulic table.

TM: Up and down.

JW: Where they'd give the horse injections. Then they could use the table to put them down or change positions.

JoW: Strap them in and tip it and all. Yeah.

JW: Anyway, that was fun times. Larry said that he thought I would really enjoy working there for a while and I would enjoy working with the guys who operated the medical facility. Dr. Sturm...

TM: Had he worked there already, Larry?

JW: Yeah. He had spent a summer there before he came to Oroville. He was just getting a little more education under his belt but also looking around for where he really wanted to land. He landed in Washington State, a town called Puyallup which was relatively rural, but very close to an urban setting and really close to Mount Rainier. We went down, independent of anything Larry told us.

JoW: It was Memorial Day. We had vacation time, didn't we? Or a big long weekend? We put the three kids and your pregnant wife, at the time, with our fourth—

JW: And it snowed, in Yosemite.

JoW: But we were in our Volkswagen van so it didn't matter.

TM: On Memorial Day?

JoW: Oh, of course. It snows here on Memorial Day sometimes.

JW: Since I didn't have anything to do I decided "Oh, I'll go see what the clinic is like." I had three days growth of beard—whiskers not beard. My camping clothes. I wasn't dressed to go in and do an interview. I just wanted to say hello to the guys and chat with them. They were not busy. It was a Saturday afternoon. They happened to both be there. I knocked on the door. They said "Come on in." We sat down and had a cup of coffee and talked for about a half an hour.

JoW: He had driven his family up to the parking lot of the clinic. He says, "I'll be back."

JW: I forgot that part.

JoW: We were sitting out there. I was entertaining the kids and doing whatever I had to do with the kids. I said, "Dad went in to talk to some doctors."

JW: I came out with the job. They hadn't hired their summer doctor yet and they needed somebody.

JoW: You'd probably gone in saying you knew Larry Cutner. Saying "Hi" from Larry.

JW: Yeah. "Larry said come by and say hello." I walked in the door, just as a casual social thing to do, and I walked out with the job.

TM: They must've looked outside and said, "He's got the wife and the kiddies here in the van. They're camping here. This is just our doctor."

JoW: You probably said we'd been camping.

JW: Oh sure.

TM: Who were the doctors that you visited with?

JW: Avery Sturm. He'd been there since 1935.

JoW: With time out for World War II and then came back.

JW: He got drafted in World War II in the Air Force. And Roger Hendrickson he had come in 1950-something, the mid-50s. You'll find this interesting, I think. They also hired a medical student for the summer because the medical student could do all the scut work. Nothing was automated. If you wanted a white blood count, you stuck somebody's needle, you drew blood and mixed it up, and put it in the pipette. We did all this for ourselves. In the summertime that was a lot of wasted time when there were 15 patients waiting to be seen. So they hired a medical student. Their usual medical student came from the University of California in San Francisco, UCSF, that's where Ave Sturm went to school. He was really highly respected by the folks in San Francisco and at Stanford. He was a really capable, extraordinary person in terms of his abilities, his smartness.

JoW: He was really good with orthopedics too. He was known for that.

JW: He was so good at his orthopedics that the Orthopedic Society offered him an honorary credential as an orthopedist, but in order for them to do that he had to give up delivering babies. We were a hospital in Yosemite and hospitals deliver babies so he didn't accept that. Anyway, the person who was the summer medical student that year was Ansel Adams' son, Michael. You wouldn't be paying attention to this, but Michael is an internist now. He's retired. He's been in Arizona two or three times. He was down in Phoenix last year.

TM: He went to the Wasatch Academy.

JoW: Yes. You're right.

JW: How did you know that?

TM: From another interview. One of the kids, I want to say Sam Turner, but it's possibly not Sam. Maybe it was Sam because he was up in Wasatch and he was back for the summer and somebody came in. He was at the little store where they sell cigarettes and film and that kind of stuff in the El Tovar, at the little store there. This guy came in and said "I need this or that." He gave him his stuff and said "So you know such and such?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "Oh, well that's good" and he turned around and walked out. Because it was Ansel's son and that was Ansel who had come in and was making a purchase there.

JW: That would have been a long time ago.

JoW: Sam Turner. Was he the son of a ranger or concessionaire?

TM: Sam Turner was the son of Sam Turner. This was Sam Turner, Jr. or the III, who was the depot master for the Santa Fe.

JW: Is that right? It would have been a while back.

TM: This would have been in the 40s.

JW: Ok. Makes sense. Half of the kids in Yosemite went to Wasatch Academy.

JoW: That's why I asked rangers or concessionaires?

TM: And half the kids at Grand Canyon went there as well. Because school stopped and the train had to keep going.

JW: That's right. So we kind of were outliers in a way because the doctors' kids before...I don't know if any of them went to Wasatch?

JoW: Yeah. I think Avery's kids went there.

JW: The girl? But also...what was the boy's name? Ave's kid. He went to the school with the winemakers.

JoW: He went to the Catholic School in San Francisco, Bishop Brody...something with a "B".

JW: It was not in San Francisco per se, the city. It was out in Livermore. The school was in Livermore and the winemakers from that area had their kids going to that school, too.

JoW: Danny. Danny Sturm.

JW: Good for you! So anyway where were we?

TM: You had come in an interviewed with these guys and you walked out and been offered a job.

JW: I worked for the summer and Jodi—

TM: So you walked out with a job. You had a summer job. What were you going to do in the winter? Were you just going to take off?

JW: We would get to that when the time arrived. We'd figure it out.

JoW: Working for County Hospital you were pretty well free to give them notice and leave within a certain amount of time.

JW: Or even come back. Possibly.

JoW: Or come back if they had an opening.

JW: If it was the right time of year. Because people graduate in June and then all the new jobs start in July for any of the programs that hire people fresh out of medical school, or fresh out of a training program, or still working in a training program. That's the way it used to be. Still is to a certain degree.

TM: So it would be September and you would be looking for a job?

JW: Say again.

TM: It would be September then, when you would close down shop with those guys.

JW: Ordinarily that would be the case. But, we had a good summer, three of us working. I was able to generate enough revenue so that they were happy to keep me for a while. She was due in October.

JoW: End of October I had the fourth child.

JW: We came to an agreement that they would keep me on until she had her baby and a reasonable period of time passed and then we'd go away. We'd move back to Oroville, basically. And during that time, I had also been talking to guys in Oroville and there were two fellows who had a practice and they were looking for a third. We had talked about practicing together. When I left Yosemite I already had an agreement with these two folks in Oroville to go into practice with them. So she had Robbie.

JoW: Robert Ansel his name is.

JW: We really admired Ansel.

JoW: The first child born, from us, in Yosemite. Our first child born in Yosemite.

JW: We have two kids that were born in Yosemite. He was our fourth child, but he was the first of our children born in Yosemite. Two weeks after she had Robbie, we packed up and were off to Oroville. Meanwhile, we actually moved into that house that we bought there?

JoW: Where? On Beverly Drive? No, we rented a house on Highland Drive in Oroville.

TM: What year was this?

JoW: That would be '66 when Robert was born.

JW: So in 1966 we moved back to Oroville.

TM: So that was your first summer there in Yosemite. What were your thoughts as you were heading back to Oroville after the first summer in Yosemite? "Well that was nice. I don't ever want to go back again or...?"

JW: Oh no. I thought that this was a good place to be and there were multiple reasons.

JoW: What was a good place to be?

JW: Yosemite. I was sorry to have to be leaving. If they had offered me a job at the time I probably would have gone ahead. Don't you think we would have stayed?

JoW: Yeah. We were in a state of flux at the time anyway.

JW: Yosemite turned out to have many of the things that were missing from other rural communities. It had a really sophisticated group of people. Multiple PhDs working for the Park Service. There were like 300 Park Service people running all the way from people who just did landscaping work and road jobs right on up to people who were in biology. You know, typical kind of stuff that the Grand Canyon had.

JoW: The concessionaire people they all had...

JW: The concessionaire people also had folks. There was a strong tie forever between Stanford and Yosemite. The people who were the very earliest concessioners there, people by the name of Tresidder's. The Curry family were the original people and they were not...

JoW: A Tresidder married one of the Curry girls.

JW: Ok. That was it. Stanford practically thought they owned Yosemite because of the connection. And they did almost. They had some very strong connections. Mostly that worked to the advantage of both sides. It was a "win/win" situation. It wasn't Stanford per se as a school, it was the people who...

JoW: Palo Alto?

JW: Palo Alto, but also it was Stanford professors and people who were part of the faculty. It wasn't an official school function is the point I'm trying to make.

JoW: That was when the Park Service accepted...there wasn't the insinuation that the Park Service was in bed with the concessionaire like it is now. There, they scratched each other's back and just got along fine.

TM: It almost sounds like it was the Stanford community was bought. Bought is not right, but definitely had the strong connection to the Valley.

JW: You're correct. That's a better term: the Stanford community. Anyway, they had half a dozen restaurants running all the way from a cafeteria to the elegant surroundings of the Ahwahnee Hotel which exceeded El Tovar's gourmet pretensions. We as residents of the community got discounts at these places so that made it...

JoW: Stores and restaurants and gift shops. Then there was also the Best Studios which eventually became Ansel Adams Studio. Ansel married a Best girl. That's why it was called Best Studios. As years went on it got changed over to Ansel Adams Studio.

JW: Because nobody knew who Best was, but they all knew who Ansel Adams was.

JoW: So then you had that art as well. You had that art influence there. At Christmas time they had what was called the Bracebridge Dinner. But Ansel Adams was a concert pianist. That's what he started out being and photography was just a hobby.

TM: Is that right?

JoW: Yeah. But he was an artist in making his photographs as well, or burning them and making them really look good. Burning the negative, the print. His wife was into music also.

JW: Virginia.

JoW: Virginia Best Adams. And into also singing. This Bracebridge Dinner was something that Ansel Adams was part of and he would get people. Were they from Stanford that would come up, the singers?

JW: Yeah. The choir.

JoW: The singers. The opera singers.

JW: It was a big production. You might want to Google Bracebridge Dinner. It's a Longfellow reference I think, isn't it?

JoW: I don't know if it's Longfellow. It's the old manor house in Elizabethan England—definitely before Edwardian.

JW: It was a costume thing.

JoW: All sorts of pomp and circumstance between different courses.

TM: That was in the fall that they do the dinner?

JoW: No, Christmas.

TM: Oh Christmas. But you guys had gone by then. So you came back?

JoW: No. Oh no. Well, oh well...

JW: We knew about it.

JoW: He had been doing it before we were there and it continued on while we were there, too.

TM: But the first year you guys were there, you packed up in October and headed back to Oroville. But you knew it was going to happen.

JW: Did we get to go back that year to Bracebridge?

JoW: I don't remember that part.

JW: I think we did and the way it happened was that you had to know somebody to be able to get tickets, even at that time. So we knew somebody. Through them we were able to get tickets just for the two of us. We were able to go back and the clinic had an empty house by that time because we were gone. They still had some space. We could throw our sleeping back out on the floor.

JoW: I don't remember that, but however it makes sense. What did we do with the children? I think we may have brought them along and got a babysitter. There were plenty of teenagers in the community to do babysitting.

JW: There was a school, except it was small. It was only K through 8 in Yosemite, whereas Grand Canyon was...

TM: Grand Canyon was K to 8 for a long time until it became K through 12. It's the exact same structure.

JoW: That why I say “those who could” sent their kids to Wasatch.

JW: And the Mariposa schools were not necessarily admired that much.

JoW: Even though there was a high school down there.

JW: So where were we?

TM: Back to Oroville for the winter. Then you must’ve known there was another Yosemite summer coming up possibly. But this time you’ve got a lot of options.

JoW: But you’d already started a practice with John Clay and Dean Seaman. They had promised to include him as a partner.

JW: As soon as I got back we rented a house. I was working in the office and I was working at the hospital there in Oroville. In about March or thereabouts...

JoW: In the meantime, we had bought that house on Beverly Drive.

JW: We were in the process. We made the deal to purchase the house. These things are kind of unimportant. The point is we were in Oroville for about six months and I got a call from the guys in Yosemite saying, “We’ve decided that we can afford to have a third doctor year-round. Do you want to come back?” We had to do the “pros and cons”, but it wasn’t that hard to figure it out. We went back in 1967. It was our first year where we were thought, “Okay. We’re here now. This is where we’re going to settle. This is going to be our home. We’ll spend the rest of our medical career in Yosemite.”

JoW: They had a house assigned to us. Of course when we were there as a summer doctor we had a two bedroom place.

JW: As a person coming from the National Park environment you are well aware of the turmoil created by housing and housing issues.

TM: And that was true in ’67?

JW: Oh sure. It’s always been true. You had to have pretty high credentials or some level of status to be eligible for housing. An awful lot of people were eligible for housing as long as it didn’t have a bath and it was one room.

JoW: A dormitory of some sort.

TM: And looked like a tent.

JW: It was a tent.

JoW: That’s true. There were. Boy’s Town in the summer was just a tent on a platform.

JW: The fact that they were able to assign us a house was really good. I'm about to get into the rest of the story.

TM: Before you go there, let's back up just a little bit unless the rest of the story includes the decision matrix you went through—Yosemite or Oroville.

JoW: Our pros and cons?

TM: Yeah. The one thing that comes to my mind is: Oroville, if I'm looking to be a practitioner in a practice and I'm looking at a steady income; I have a population that's steady throughout the year. And then look at Yosemite. Wow! The place is great and it's really got all these really good things going for it and yet the population crashes in the winter. How are we going to make it financially with three physicians and accompanying staff?

JW: Here's the answer to that. The bottom line issue was the fact that even in that short time I was in Oroville, I had learned that I had to be up and out of bed and in my car to go to the hospital to make rounds or do whatever other things were on my plate before the kids woke up. I was gone all day. Didn't have any home contact. Most of the time got home in the evening after they'd gone to bed. That was the clincher. The practice issue and the population issue, I'll go into that in a minute as to how we would support ourselves. The ability to live in a house where I could come home for lunch. The kids would be up and gone to school. Most of the time I had to be up and go down to the clinic. Could walk to the clinic.

JoW: Well, that was in later years.

JW: After the first year. Yeah. Mostly I drove, but I was six blocks. I even rode a bicycle for a while. In determining why we chose to go to Yosemite there were a lot of positives. It still happens today. When I worked in Grand Canyon and I would talk to people from all over the state or even out of state. They'd say "Where do you live?" "Grand Canyon." "Grand Canyon?" "Now, where do you live now?" "Williams".

JoW: Oh, you mean Winslow? Oh, you mean the one out there towards Albuquerque?

TM: "Oh, you live in Williams. Ha, ha, ha".

JoW: One of those "W" towns.

JW: There was a certain prestige. The same thing was true in California. Whenever I went to any kind of a meeting or anywhere and my tag said Yosemite or they asked and it was Yosemite. I had immediate acceptance. I didn't have to prove anything. I didn't have to prove that I wasn't a robber or a thief or an ignoramus or anything else.

JoW: A quack.

JW: I had the prestige of being a doctor in Yosemite and ultimately took over the contract. By the time Ave Sturm...Ave Sturm bless his—

JoW: You're getting ahead of yourself.

JW: Here's the next phase. We went back to Yosemite. We set up shop. Went to work. Fell back into the routine. On one fine July morning, we had only been there like two months—something like that—here's a letter in the mail from the US Department of Defense. I opened it up, pulled the letter out and it says "Greetings. You have been selected—"

TM: 1967?

JW: Yes. 1967 and four kids. "You have been selected to—"

JoW: 35 years of age.

JW: 35 years of age. The gist of it was that I was being drafted. The second paragraph said "You are being offered an opportunity. If you wish to do this you can volunteer"—because you can't be drafted as an officer. If you get drafted, you don't get drafted as an officer. Every officer is a volunteer. You have the opportunity to volunteer if you like and if you choose to you will be taken in the Corps as a Captain.

JoW: Because of his education and so-called years of practice, et cetera.

JW: So you got credit, technically speaking, as being in the military for the time that I practiced medicine. Theoretically I should have gone in as a Lieutenant Colonel I found out later. I had enough years. I had 12 years of military service. I wasn't looking for grade at that time. I was looking for some way to get out of it.

TM: That's a little disingenuous right from the start.

JoW: Hello? The government?

JW: The bottom line is, the die was cast.

JoW: He was against the Vietnam War at that time, obviously. He considered going in as a Private just to show them.

JW: That was the option. If I didn't want to volunteer then I needed to report to the inductee station at Oakland and "We will provide your transportation. You can pick up the bus in Merced."

TM: So Jodi, what were your thoughts when Jim came in and said "Read this."

JoW: I guess I read it. But, I've got tell you, until he went off to Vietnam I was crying and could hardly eat. I was very upset because of course my vision was that he was going to be killed. He's going to be out there in the paddies or wherever and be killed. There wasn't anything I could do about it.

TM: What did your partners think?

JW: They were very perturbed. Both of them had been in the military so that they knew that there was no... One of the ironic things is when I got this thing and I knew, "Okay, I'm going to have to go," ...too late to volunteer for the Navy or the Air Force and they were already full of doctors anyway. I called the

Pentagon and there was some kind of liaison guy, sounded like he was probably 50 or 60 years old. I told him my sad story that I was...

TM: 35 year old, four children, a physician.

JW: "What's the likelihood that I'll be going to Vietnam?" He said, "Oh, well we try and take care of you older fellows." Basically implied that I would almost certainly not have to go to Vietnam. I laugh about it now, but man, I tell you it was... They kind of reassured me. It was like "Okay, probably I won't have to go."

JoW: But even one or two people in the Yosemite community wrote letters. I don't know where they wrote them to.

JW: To the Congressman.

JoW: Was it to the Congressman? Saying this is one of three doctors in our community where the nearest doctor is an hour away, et cetera. Of course it fell on deaf ears. I know that one reason you chose to accept the officer choice was, first of all, we couldn't afford to live on a Private's pay. Besides that you might have a little better life than being a Private thumping along in the rice paddies.

JW: Knowing what we know now, there was no way that they were going to make me a Private. They might well have inducted me as a Private, but immediately the paperwork would have gone out and said now we're going to assign you as a doctor at this hospital. Let the paperwork catch up later on. But we didn't have any clue about that.

JoW: The thing is you, probably would have never necessarily been an infantryman, but possibly been a Corpsman. That type of thing.

JW: Who knows? Because they give all those tests and a variety of things, looking at people's experiences and training. It would have thrown a monkey wrench into their plans to certain degree. It would've been kind of fun.

TM: Well they would have assumed, "Oh, he didn't understand the letter. So we'll put him through Basic and he'll get nice and strong, if he isn't already, and then we'll move him out."

JW: I probably would've fought.

JoW: He would've fought with his glasses and he's got flat feet.

JW: I'm legally blind. I'm 2400. That's "legally blind." Well now, I've had my cataracts out. They put a lens in that allows me some better improved vision.

TM: You wouldn't have passed your physical.

JW: As a Private I wouldn't or as just a grunt. It turns out that the rule of thumb for the military in general: If you are physically capable of practicing medicine in private life, you are capable of practicing medicine in the military.

TM: Makes sense.

JW: Much as we would like to deny that and say, "Wait a minute! I have flat feet."

TM: Get back to work!

JoW: Think of the guys who are chefs. They don't get to be chefs in the Army. So I wondered if they'd gone ahead and used...

JW: If they needed a chef, then they would have had a chef. The military does some really what seem like stupid things, but they're not totally inept. What they decide to do doesn't always necessarily fit the individual's needs or desires, but it meets the Army's needs. They figure out how to meet their needs.

JoW: And you're saying that they needed doctors.

JW: Always. Sure.

JoW: Tell him the reason you did get drafted. Because of your Draft Board.

JW: I had registered like everybody used to have to do.

TM: You did that when you were 18 or 19, wasn't it?

JW: 18. In Texas. This was a rural type place and didn't produce many doctors. When the big buildup occurred in Vietnam which they kept really quiet... I've hated Lyndon Johnson really badly for a long time because I felt that he had so misled the public both in terms of this whole business of North Vietnamese attacking our boats which he used as the so-called "Pearl Harbor" excuse to go into war in the first place, to him saying that "I want no wider war" that was one of his pet phrases. There was not a hint in the press, the people you sort of depend on to keep the public informed, that the Pentagon was building up their forces prior to the election, even before the election, of the year that he was elected. Which would have been '64, remember? He became President because Kennedy was shot in '63. Then he won the election in '64. Shortly after that is when they started doing the buildup. Ultimately having 500,000 troops in Vietnam. I was part of that buildup, but it was kept really quiet. I'm much more sympathetic towards Lyndon. I watch a lot of the Smithsonian Channel and you get a different perspective on people and things. I have matured.

JoW: The thing is, his Draft Board in Texas he never changed his Draft Board to California. If he'd have done that it would have made a difference.

JW: The Draft Board was given a number. Here's the number of doctors you have to provide from your Draft Board to go into the military. There were two of us who were right at 35: my ex-roommate, who also grew up in Marfa, and me. We both got drafted. They were scraping the bottom of the barrel because they didn't have any younger doctors that they could say, "Oh okay, well we've got a bunch of new graduates." In larger Draft Boards it was always the guys just coming out of their training programs who were the one who got selected.

JoW: And if he had been 36 then he would have been beyond being called.

TM: Too old. Yeah.

JoW: He hadn't quite made it.

JW: So that's how I wound up in the military.

TM: So then what happened?

JoW: Then we had to pack up and leave Yosemite.

TM: You were told to report where?

JW: To San Antonio.

JoW: Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for learning how to be an officer. Learning how to...

JW: How to salute? How to fill out the forms?

JoW: Also, medical stuff too.

TM: That lasted how long?

JW: A month. Was it six weeks? It was just a month, wasn't it? Four weeks?

JoW: Maybe it was six.

TM: What medical training did they give you there?

JW: Mostly administrative and logistical. No actual...let's back up a minute. When I found out that I was going to have to go, one of my patients and friends in Yosemite was the helicopter pilot. Like the helicopter pilot at Grand Canyon. He was ex-military and he was in one day and he said, "Hey, Doc. Why don't you volunteer to be a flight surgeon?" I said "This is the Army, not the Air Force." He said, "No, no. The Army has to have thousands of flight surgeons because of the helicopter fleet that they had accumulated for a long time." As it turns out my partner, Roger Hendrickson, had been in the military in Germany back in the 50s. His commanding officer was a fellow who had become a Bird Colonel. He was not the Bird Colonel when Roger was there. Roger was there as a Captain. Wally may have been a Light Colonel perhaps or maybe a Major. At the beginning of the Vietnam War he was promoted to be a Bird Colonel and he was assigned to San Antonio. He was the person in charge of procuring medical officers to go to the School of Aviation Medicine and he and Roger had maintained a close friendship all those years. Roger got in touch with Wally and said, "Can you put his name in or do something to help him out?" Wally said, "I'll do what I can." Once we got down there, Wally and his wife had us over for dinner and we got to talk. As it turns out, of course, there are certain medical requirements to get certified as a third-class air person even in the Army. The Army has regulations that go completely...you know? AR-15 is the medical regulations. There is the medical regulation that says you can't be over a certain height. You can't be too short. You can't be too heavy. You have to have certain visual ability including not being color blind. And especially for then just being able to see things.

JoW: He doesn't quite meet any of those.

JW: He said, "I'm going to have to put in for a waiver." Several waivers. As it turns out, of course, usually they go through this whole drill of getting doctors, once again, at the end of the training year. The end of June is when the military gets a big flood of medical people because they either volunteer or they catch them in a Draft--this is when the Draft was still going on.

TM: Let's back up just a minute. Roger Hendrickson, had he been in the Korean Conflict?

JW: He had not been in Korea. He may well have been...

JoW: You suppose during that time, even though he was stationed in Germany?

JW: I think that he dodged the bullet on that. He's deceased now so I can't ask him.

JoW: He wasn't a medical person in Germany, was he?

JW: Mmm hmm.

JoW: He was. Oh, so had already gotten his doctorate.

JW: Yeah. He was a GMO.

TM: Why did the helicopter pilot think you would like to be in the Air Corps?

JW: You mean to be a flight surgeon? Just because I was really active with the...

JoW: Search and Rescue guys. It's like hanging out with fire engines, he likes to hang out with helicopter guys and their search and rescue type stuff. When they would bring somebody in on the helicopter who'd been injured in the high country, the docs would meet up with these...

JW: There was a really tight relationship between the hospital and the law enforcement/search and rescue category of rangers. You've been around long enough to know there's the "tree hugger" rangers, the maintenance people, and then there's the rangers who do law enforcement, firefighting, search and rescue, protection.

JoW: We're still really good friends with one of the... Butch lives down in Tucson, one of those original search and rescue guys from Yosemite.

JW: They knew that I had an affinity for the kind of things that they did.

TM: would they put you on the helicopter and take you out?

JW: Before I got drafted, I hardly had any time. I was there for one summer and then...

JoW: I thought during that summer. You don't remember meeting them in the meadow to help transport them up?

JW: I don't remember doing any of that during that period of time. There may have been some, but I don't remember it. I got that draft notice in July, but I didn't have to actually go to San Antonio until January. So we continued to live in Yosemite and I continued to practice through August, September, October, and November. We left in December and went to live in the house in Oroville which we were still in the process of buying. It stood empty. While she and I went down to San Antonio and spent a month or six weeks down there getting acquainted with the Army rules and regulations: "What's a battalion? What's a brigade? What's a company? What's a platoon? What's a division?" All that stuff.

JoW: But the kids, they stayed in the Oroville house and my parents came up and took care of them while I was with him in San Antonio.

JW: When did the girls go to stay with my parents? Wasn't that the same time?

JoW: Yeah, they stayed with the boys and then the girls stayed with your parents in Las Cruces, New Mexico.

JW: Her parents had two boys in Oroville and my parents had two girls in New Mexico, in Las Cruces for that time.

TM: You had five kids?

JoW: No. Not then.

TM: The fifth one hadn't shown up yet.

JoW: That's right.

TM: Alright. So San Antonio for officer training.

JW: Yep. How to be an officer, and dos and don'ts, and try not to embarrass the Army.

JoW: While you were there, that's when you received your orders for Vietnam, wasn't it?

JW: I got the orders and it didn't say "Vietnam". It just said basically that you were given an APO. The truth of the matter is that there's a possibility that my getting into aviation medicine may have spoiled the...I never thought about this. There's a possibility that if I had just gone through the regular routine and taken a job as a GMO somewhere they might have found someplace in the US or in Germany. There are 200 military installations around the world and—

TM: That have hospitals with doctors.

JW: And hospitals with lab doctors. GPs have more places to go, but they have fewer hospitals to go to because they want specialists at the hospitals. There's a possibility if I hadn't gone into aviation medicine, I might not have—

JoW: Now he tells me!

JW: Had I actually gotten approval for getting the aviation medicine school?

JoW: Wait a minute...they sent you on to Fort Rucker.

JW: That's correct.

JoW: Right. You didn't come home.

JW: And you went home.

JoW: Yeah. I drove the car home and he went on to Fort Rucker. I picked up the girls in New Mexico.

JW: After our Fort Sam Houston/San Antonio experience, she went home and I went on as an individual to the School of Aviation Medicine which is in Fort Rucker, Alabama. I was there for a month. That's when I actually got some medical training. It really was awful because it focused on eye, ear, nose and throat. You know...aviation, going up and down, and elevation, issues with people having ears that are giving them trouble, sinuses that are giving them trouble. One of my main jobs was doing physicals, flight physicals, because they were always having to recruit new people. Even in the field in Vietnam practically every helicopter that flew had a crew of four: a pilot, copilot and two door gunners. A door gunner on each side. Where did they get their door gunners? They didn't get them from recruiting them in the United States. They would go out into the field and let it be known that if a grunt was interested and qualified, he could volunteer to be a gunner, but he had to pass a flight physical in order to do that. Some of the other chores that I got to do: I got to learn how to inspect mess halls, how to inspect grease pits—one of the most foul smelling things existing in the world, inspect latrines. Make sure that the local help, the Vietnamese guys that they hired to do the burnout... That's what the latrines were, they were called burnout latrines. They would have a barrel, a half-cut 50 gallon drum underneath a hole. The typical outhouse maneuver. Every day the local Vietnamese laboring force would pull the things out, throw diesel fuel in and burn out the latrine and shove it back under.

JoW: It must've smelled horrible.

JW: I had to make sure that the water supply that we had was properly treated. If somebody got sick from the water I was going to get the blame. We spread toxic insecticides around all of the hooches. Dioxin. The time that I spent in Fort Rucker actually did help. The other thing that helped...I got lessons of daily living. I was assigned to an aviation unit. I was not assigned to a hospital. I did not have barracks full of other doctors that I associated with, slept with, ate with, worked with, and so forth. I was the battalion surgeon. I had another doctor under me. We were the medical treatment people doing a lot of the administrative stuff—the flight physicals, daily sick call. We had corpsmen. A sergeant who was in charge and he had guys working for him. Learning how to exist and work with and have a collegial relationship with people who were totally outside my sphere, other than the fact that I outranked them and I had a whole lot of other benefits. The fact was we all lived in the same camp and lived together, worked together, took showers together, the officers did, ate together. Not only that, I had to also deal with the people above me. This is one of the things that really scares doctors when you start talking about being a military doctor. The stories that they used to tell and that had most of us really running scared was the idea that a higher ranking officer, no medical training, no authority from having an education and having training in the field, having only one reason why they could order us to do something is because they outranked us. It was hard for me to accept. It was one of the reasons why a lot of people would never have considered being a military doctor. My ex-partner, Muckleroy, he

told me on a couple of different occasions that he seriously considered going in to the military, putting in his 20 years, and working as a physician. He didn't find military life that obnoxious.

JoW: Because he had been a Marine.

TM: That's right.

JW: He had been a Marine and understood how things worked. He had the ability to put common sense to work. You were always leery of catching some idiot like they have in the movies, the British pompous asshole who would run roughshod over his lower ranking colleagues and people who were in his command. Having a commanding officer who was not a medical person was one of those sticking points that I got over. It really helped me with my relationships. Then going back and working in the Park Service. It turns out, in the Park Service there are people in charge who outrank me. I went through a particular event that was one of the Zen moments of my life in terms of being able to appreciate and work with a person who technically had more authority than I did. Technically I had to ask for authorization from that person to put into effect a medical procedure. That sounds bad, doesn't it? What happened was that when I got back from the military and went back to Yosemite, the day that we got back was like the first of January. They were celebrating New Year's Day which was the day that we got back and that was the day that Dr. Sturm announced his retirement. I was already kind of having some, "Do I really want to work in Parks for the rest of my medical career?" The die was cast. It was like, "Okay, I know I'm here for a while. Let's see how this works."

JoW: They had saved the job for him. They didn't have to. We were gone for two years. They saved the position.

JW: The Zen event occurred because of the changes that were brought to bear in all aspects of the field of emergency medicine. The whole business of the EMTs. What year would you say was the year that you got exposed to the way medicine works—working around people, working around nurses and doctors and EMS people?

TM: Would have been the early 90s.

JW: Twenty years before that is when this was all going on. Prior to 1970 the ambulance in Yosemite was a station wagon. You should at least be aware, just from seeing old movies, the ambulance was a hearse. They had a red light and they had a place in the back where they could put a stretcher.

TM: And a siren.

JW: And a siren.

JoW: We got the siren.

JW: We have the siren in my garage.

JoW: From the old station wagon. Did you keep the light?

JW: No. The light got away from me.

JoW: A green Chevy station wagon.

JW: A green Chevy station wagon. It was used mostly for running errands, to go to the store and laundry for our custodian. He went to get the mail from clinic to clinic. It all went to one box. He'd go by and pick up the mail. Go fill the list that cook had made for food for the hospital.

TM: So it was a glorified delivery truck.

JW: It was indeed.

TM: When it was on the road picking up the pizza and someone needed an ambulance what would they do?

JW: They'd put the pizza on the passenger's seat and go get the guy. The rangers would be there. They had nothing beyond what you might consider basic First Aid. It was the Vietnam War, really, that brought to the table the whole notion of being able to pick people up from the point where they were injured and get them to advanced medical care within the Golden Hour. The whole business of training people as Corpsmen and giving them more responsibility... I had to fight the guys off in my clinic in Vietnam, Chu Lai, because the Corpsmen wanted any little wound that came in. Somebody cut themselves out there somewhere and they'd come in and they'd need some sutures. The Corpsmen would be up there doing the sutures before I ever had a chance at it. The whole business of bringing medical care out to the field and not just totally dependent on the ability to get them to a level above your own proficiency. The rangers approached me in about 1972 to ask me if I would teach an EMT class. I had to go to the junior college and get my credentials to be an official teacher.

TM: An official crediting.

JW: Yes, right. For several years I taught two EMT classes a year. Going back to the ambulance...I used to tell people how it was. It used to be, the idea of giving somebody an IV in the field, nobody ever considered it. IVs were kind of sacred. Only a doctor... Even the nurses when I went to medical school, if they needed an IV started they called a medical student. This was in 1955, '56, '57, '58. As time went on then they started having IV teams. We had to draw the bloods, the medical students did, for all the lab work that was done for the ward that we were assigned to. There was this progressive movement to allowing people at a lesser level of training to provide care in the field, under supervision. As that went on, then the whole notion of helicopters being used out in the civilian population... You started seeing the hospitals like Good Samaritan. Every hospital worth its salt developed a helicopter response category.

TM: In the 1970s?

JW: Yes. In the early 1970s, and from then on, there would be a helicopter service located in Modesto and one located in Fresno which were kind of on a triangle with Yosemite. The Park ship could be used in a pinch to transport people, but the services that were...but then they'd have to fly down into the valley and then they would fly back home. Whereas if we called the helicopter from Fresno, they would fly in but they had to land in the meadow. It's a big valley and there's a big meadow that's got a lot of room and space, but it's right in the middle of everything. There are roads going by and traffic and crowds of people. The Park Service got really apprehensive, they needed to pay attention to crowd control and also to have a fire engine down there when the helicopter landed. They had to have the

thing set up kind of in a professional way. And just as a reminder, you would also probably be aware of this: the National Park Service jealously guards their ability to determine who gets to land on their Park. It's really a big issue. You don't put your wheels down on Park Service ground unless you have permission to do so. This is where finally the Chief Ranger, who was a friend... His daughters went to school with our daughters and they played together. But Bill Wendt basically was telling me we're going to have to change the method of how we make arrangements to have a helicopter come in. If we wanted ground transportation, no problem, they didn't want any control over that. We would call the ambulance service and say, "We need an ambulance. Get here as quick as you can," or "You don't need to get here, it's just transportation." We did all of the communicating out of the clinic or the hospital, which was a 15 bed hospital, until 1972 when we shut down the hospital. He said, "You're going to have to go through dispatch to get a helicopter to be brought into Yosemite." I bristled at that. I felt, hey, wait a minute. I'm the doctor and if I say 'I need a helicopter' I'm not going to argue with somebody. I feel a sense of not having my hands in control of it. I'm not in charge of making sure that this patient gets the kind of things...

I had to go down to Modesto at one point...sidebar here. Technically speaking, the helicopter service was provided for all of that northern and middle California Region. All of that area. Anybody who was picked up by the Modesto Hospital Flight Service was brought into the hospital and the doctor who was on call got the patient for that particular service. I was not happy with that because I had this notion that once I get my hands on the patient, it's my responsibility to see to it that they get the care that I think is the best for them. And in the hands of the people who I have checked out, I know who they are and I have faith in their ability and I'm willing to stand behind them. The docs down in Modesto got out of sorts about that. They felt that I should not have anything to say. There was always this conflict between the doctors down in Modesto. The group that I was particularly fond of may not be the ones on call, but they're the ones who got the call from the hospital. Because I would specify. I would have called the doctor and said, "I've got this patient and here's the problem."

TM: They're coming to you.

JW: Yes. "They're coming to you." We had that arrangement, that agreement. The other docs got unhappy about that. I went down to Modesto one day and had breakfast in a conference room and basically shared my philosophy with these guys. We were reasonably the same age. I was, what 40? Young guy. My take on it was that it was almost a religious God-given right for a doctor to have the authority to say to who I was going to send my patient to. Now things have really changed. It's not that way so much anymore. But those guys understood what I was talking about. I never heard anything about it after I went down and had a sort of a "come to Jesus" kind of a talk.

TM: It was a totally unique situation. You must have been the only physician...or were you? In those rural communities there must have been physicians everywhere that were flying people into their shop.

JW: Yep. And the docs down there, and the hospital to a certain degree, were using this to make sure that their patient load was always at maximum benefit for them. Here I was having this talk with Bill Wendt, who was the Chief Ranger. I was starting to get a little heated in my defense and he sort of responded in kind. Suddenly, I stopped and I thought about it for a moment. I realized, nobody's going to deny me the right to get a helicopter to come in here. If there was something that was unsafe or there was a really bad weather problem or whatever was putting everything at risk then no problem. The pilot is the one who has the ultimate choice. If he says, "I can't land."

TM: "I won't fly."

JW: They can't land. Yeah. Anyway, I had this Zen moment talking with Bill. I realized I had already known that to live with the Park Service happily, working together, there had to be a certain amount of give and take. They *did* have the authority to say they run the Park—they're in charge of whatever goes on in the Park. That requires that anybody who wants to live there or work there—you live by their rules. I had been pretty well accepting of that except when it came down to this one issue of who's in charge of the patient?

TM: I was thinking about your service in Fort Rucker where you would have learned there is someone above me who can tell me to jump and how high. They may be less educated and younger than me, but that's going to be my place in the military. In the Park Service, when the Chief Ranger says, jump and this high, you do that because above them is the Deputy and then the Superintendent. There's a structure there that you fit into.

JW: I didn't equate the rigidity of the military.

JoW: Plus, he didn't belong to the Park Service. That would be the difference, wouldn't it?

TM: I don't know that Jim belonged to the military either. He was a physician and he ended up there. I may be way out of line here.

JW: You are. When you're in the military you wear the uniform. You wear the insignia.

TM: I see your point. As a contractor for the Concession. As a contractor for the Park Service you basically are in their structure. You are, but you aren't.

JW: You're right. You are, but you aren't. That's exactly correct. They can kind of pick and choose what areas they feel they have to impose what they consider to be their position. They have to insist on a compliance with that position.

TM: Right. So I guess when he was saying, "You're going to have to contact dispatch to see if they can allow that ship to land," it is within that framework of checking in with your superiors, if you will, to make that happen. I can understand that construct.

JW: The way it worked for me, and was to my benefit, was that I had most of the people's respect—the people in the Park Service. So it wasn't a question that they thought I was going to abuse it or whatever. I had already established the fact that I played well with other people. They made the decision that they had to have the ability to control who landed in the meadow. I had this Zen moment and realized that when I call dispatch and say I would like to have a helicopter, they're not going to say no. Ever.

TM: Because it might be their kid that you need the helicopter for.

JW: Kid or not, that's part of the whole Park responsibility is health, safety and welfare. The mantra is "Health, Safety and Welfare." Anyway, I overdid it. Whenever I needed a helicopter, I would call dispatch and say, "This is Dr. Wurgler. I'd like to have permission to have a helicopter come in and land." They finally said, "You don't have to do that. Just call and tell us that you needed to have a helicopter so that we can set things up." That they have the time.

TM: So, tell them the ship's coming.

JW: No. I never told them the ship's coming.

JoW: So that the rangers can go down there...traffic control.

TM: You were always asking for permission.

JW: I always gave them the opportunity, in essence, to either ask questions...

JoW: Even though they said you didn't have to. You still went ahead and followed the...

JW: I did. The rest of the staff didn't. Not so much. They got used to fact that they had to notify dispatch in advance. You couldn't just call—the aircraft is in the air and halfway there--and say "there's a ship coming in." The call went to dispatch to let them know that we are... "We need to call a helicopter, and I want to clear it with you and make sure you're aware". However they handled it.

TM: Let's go back to Fort Rucker because we've digressed a little bit and it was an interesting journey. It was an important journey.

JW: Well it made my life easy for the rest of my career with the Park Service. I never had another...the Park Service people...the word got around that I would comply with whatever their needs were. I would not be a thorn in their side. I would not be a blister under their saddle. I would work with them in whatever capacity was required. I would do it in a congenial way. It wasn't that I was just putting up with them. It was part of the working relationship that I had with the Park Service all the time after that. Both in Yosemite and at Grand Canyon except for Sherry Collins, but that's another story.

TM: That's another story. I'll write that down. So, from Fort Rucker, where did you go?

JW: I got a month off to get prepared to go to Vietnam.

TM: Did you know you were going?

JW: Oh yeah. We got the orders when were in San Antonio. I lost 24 lbs. I was out running a mile or so every evening and the nervous energy and so forth...I actually lost 24 lbs. before I went to Fort Rucker.

JoW: I don't remember that. Maybe you lost it down in Fort Rucker.

JW: You were not eating.

TM: You lost 24 lbs., too.

JoW: Well yeah, just about. I can't afford to lose 24.

JW: After I left Fort Rucker, I had my orders and it was to...

JoW: Basically you were supposed to report to Travis Air Force Base to be flown out.

JW: For deployment. The night I got to Travis Air Force Base was March 31. You know what the next day is? First of April. April Fools Day. I was standing in the waiting area at Travis and the TV was on and it was March 31, late March 31. The President is up there announcing the fact that he would not run for re-election. I felt "What a perfect April Fools gift."

JoW: It was true. Johnson/LBJ was saying that.

JW: That's when he submitted basically that he wasn't going to run for another term. I felt that, this is kind of a vengeful attitude, saying "You sorry rascal. You got yours for making me..."

TM: But there you are getting ready to get on the plane and fly.

JW: Yeah. You never quite know what to expect. Turns out that going to Vietnam, right off the bat, was one of the best things that could have happened to me. First off, once I got over there I was assigned to a base called Chu Lai. There were more doctors on that base—there were two hospitals on the base--there were more doctors... There were something like 12,000 troops on Chu Lai which made it three times the size of the community that I grew up in. It was a small city. We had the Chu Lai Medical Society. I've got a plaque or something that belonged to the Chu Lai Medical Society. It was like, okay, I'm not getting shot at every day and I'm not wallowing around in the rice paddies and possibly stepping on something or in something or really at risk. The other thing was that as an aviation medicine guy I was assigned to one unit. I was the battalion surgeon for a battalion which consisted of three Huey companies, a Piper (they used these airplanes for spotters, did in Vietnam). I was the flight surgeon for that group. And for a Chinook company, the twin rotor guys. I was their medical officer for these different people. One of the helicopter companies had been split so part was up in Chu Lai, the other part was in Quảng Ngãi which was about a 30 minute flight, 60 miles South of Chu Lai. More isolated, more close to the action.

JoW: Chu Lai was up by Da Nang—somewhere in the north part of Vietnam.

JW: Right on the beach. I slept in a bed with sheets virtually every night that I was there. Life was not that tough. And, I did not feel that sense of really being in a dangerous environment, a dangerous situation.

JoW: He was still on his guard though. Because someone could possibly get into the compound with a satchel of explosives and throw it into one of the huts or something like that.

JW: There was always the potential for something like that to happen. I just did not have that fear that went with not knowing what's going to happen. To further go into that, the guys who didn't get deployed right off the bat—the docs...

JoW: To Vietnam.

JW: To Vietnam in particular. If they were sent to Korea or Japan or Germany—no problem. The docs who did not get deployed to Vietnam spent the rest of their time in the military sweating bullets that tomorrow there might be an envelope in their mailbox and new orders—orders to Vietnam. This was really a stressful situation for a lot of docs. They would go to the mailbox and break out in a sweat and turn pale. This also meant that they felt that they had to really be sure that they didn't annoy anybody

because the military had always had the ultimate retribution. "You've just annoyed me too much, buddy. You're going to Vietnam." I didn't have to worry about that. I was totally off the hook. There was no sense that they could do anything further to hurt me. I had gotten to Vietnam. Got back alive. Everything was copacetic.

JoW: You didn't say where you went after that.

JW: One of the things in the military is, theoretically, you get to, at least, express a choice for where you would like to go. The doctors—you can look at a list of wherever there's a place that has your particular specialty and I would need to go someplace where I could continue to be a flight surgeon because it meant extra pay.

JoW: And you were only in Vietnam for a year. See, that's the point.

TM: Okay, because it was two years of service.

JW: Two years of service, but only one year in Vietnam. As it turns out, I got out in 11 months. They started cutting back on the 500,000 people that were there. That's when the reduction kind of started, mid-'68, '69.

TM: In those 11 months then, were you in Chu Lai for the entire time?

JW: Yeah.

TM: As a battalion surgeon your job was to basically oversee all the flight surgeons that were working.

JW: No, I only had one other flight surgeon working under me. The two of us were the flight surgeons that were in charge of the aviation medicine aspect. There were hospitals and if somebody needed surgery you would send them up to the hospital. If somebody had any particular specialty issue that had to be dealt with...

TM: So, you were doing flight physicals? Would you do any of the stuff they trained you for? The sanitation/observation kind of stuff?

JW: That was part of my daily routine. Not daily but...

TM: That was in Chu Lai?

JW: That was in Chu Lai.

TM: And the water treatment plant?

JW: The water treatment plant was centrally located and they had a whole environmental unit that was in charge of that.

TM: They must've been doing flocculation and chlorination and all the normal stuff that normal water treatment plants get.

JW: And adding chlorine.

TM: Yeah. Chlorination. You bet.

JW: They did all that. I had to be aware of what was going on. I was not required because it was so well-developed. It was not a haphazard..."Gee, we'll get some water over here and put some chlorine over here." It was a regular treatment facility and I just had to make sure that I knew what was going on. I didn't have to actually do any testing specifically. Same way with the mess hall. If I went in and checked the mess hall and I could see that they were not complying with certain regulations... All the vegetables, for example, anything that was leafy had to be treated in a chlorine water bath. The local population did that kind of work. It's even more so now. All that stuff gets contracted out. Back to Fort Rucker. Are we done with Fort Rucker?

TM: I think so. Yeah. So Fort Rucker, you go to Travis. You end up in Chu Lai. You're there for 11 months. What do you remember about that? What are the events that are outstanding there?

JW: The fact that periodically they would fire in some mortars or some rockets and keep us awake. There was always a little adrenaline when that happened, but it wasn't like we were out and really exposed. I would tend to fly places that the Commanding Officer went. If the Commanding Officer and the Executive Officer went anywhere, they wanted me with them. So, I did fly and occasionally they would have to go land at some base where there was protection. We had some ships that were shot down. We had aircraft accidents. I used to have a little formula: for every ten mishaps that occurred, five of them would be accidental and not the result of hostile action. Five out of ten. Accidents were pretty high on the list of things. Eliminate the five. One of the remaining five, there would be a death. That would be hostile action. There were sometimes some accidents. There was one event where a Chinook was coming out of a landing zone and a gunship was coming in and they collided. Chinooks don't fly very well even if they do have their rotors. This would knock out all their rotors. We became part of the search process. The Commanding Officer's ship took part in trying to find... It was in a jungle setting, so we participated in the search, looking for bodies. As far as being shot at... The Commanding Officer liked to fly at about 5,000 feet so we were not what you would call "contouring" very much.

JoW: One thing, to keep your status as an aviation person, you had to fly so much a month, didn't you?

JW: Right. Certain number of hours had to be spent flying. Yeah.

TM: But you weren't trained in rotor craft. Hang on, I'm misunderstanding. You had a private pilot's license.

JW: Didn't have to have that. All I had to do was to fly as a flight surgeon.

JoW: Just to be on board.

TM: So much time in an aircraft?

JW: Right. Observing, watching what the guys do, listening to the intercom conversations, the radio. I spent a lot of time at the operations office at the battalion which is where the radio communications, with all the different companies we were involved with. So I would sit down there and chat with the non-enlisted guy who was running the radios and of course they would have it on speaker. I was able to

keep track of what was going on. I really got in the habit of doing that. When I got out of the Army and went back to Yosemite, Yosemite had a dispatch. We had a radio at the clinic because we were the medical control for the field operations in Yosemite. I had a radio that I took home, a scanner. If I really wanted to know if something had happened out in the high country, or automobile accident, or somebody fell, or they were rescuing somebody, I kept tabs on what was going on and when I might need to show up down at the hospital.

TM: So, going into the service and not being a real fan of the conflict in Vietnam. In Vietnam, listening to the conflict happening on-site. Did that change your vision of the conflict or your understanding of our country and the need for the conflict? How did you sort that out?

JW: I still had pretty strong feelings that we were involved in a civil war and there was no way that we could win it. You don't win civil wars from the outside. I had an Executive Officer, his name was Jack Todd. Jack was open enough in his thinking that he and I would sit in the airplane, flying around, and argue with each other. He would try and convince me, "If you were in a paper sack and people were punching you and punching you. Sooner or later, if you're in that paper sack, you're going to get punched out to the point where you can't continue to punch back." This was during the time of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the resupply from China and the uncanny ability for them to get stuff done. Incidentally, my time when I was sent to Vietnam, there was a turning point in the war that was called the Tet Offensive of 1968. February of 1968. The Tet Offensive had really changed the dynamics. After all the bombs that had been dropped, and the B52s doing their thing, and the defoliation of the jungles, and the use of napalm, and on, and on, and on, those guys were still fighting and fighting hard and kind of winning. They didn't really "win" Tet, but they sent a message with the Tet Offensive that didn't get lost entirely. Cronkite did his thing where he said, "This is a lost cause." LBJ said, "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost the people." And that was correct. I continued to feel that we were not the "good guys". The South Vietnamese government was corrupt. Did you ever see *Apocalypse Now*? I can't get Jodi to see it because it's pretty terrifying.

TM: I'm with her. I've seen clips of it. I understand the...

JW: It's like, I don't think I want to... The other one was *The Deer Hunter*.

JoW: I've seen *Apocalypse Now*.

JW: The whole thing?

JoW: Maybe not the whole thing, but, with the Valkyrie and all the rest of it.

JW: Clips. "Nothing like the smell of napalm in the morning."

JoW: But no, *The Deer Hunter* I have not seen.

JW: *The Deer Hunter* was much more emotional and you didn't go see *Platoon* either. Wendy went to see *Platoon* with me and all three of those were emotionally troubling for me. You were there when we got the award up at the Canyon at Shoshone Point. I made the point to say to the folks that I had been really opposed to the Vietnam War. Thought we shouldn't have been there. If I had the courage of my convictions, I would have either gone to Canada or enlisted as a conscientious objector. Yet I came away, later on...it's taken a number of years...I feel a sense of having been a good citizen for serving my

country. Basically I served my country and I've been able to put down the emotions of feeling like I've betrayed my honor, if you will, by accepting the fact that I feel a sense that I would not want to do it again.

TM: It's very difficult. The line between political stupidity or political injustice and when you see that and service to society. When these two things collide, that's where it gets difficult.

JW: It does. And there's something special. I can focus on the fact that I relate to veterans who served in Vietnam. That's a narrow group of people out of the total number of veterans in the world. I have a sense of camaraderie/comradeship, if you will. It's kind of hard to explain.

JoW: It's just like the guys from World War II. They knew what it was like during their war. They had common experiences and understanding. So Vietnam, the same thing. Korea may be the same thing.

JW: It's kind of the sort of thing that only the people who have done that specific thing, that the other people understand the emotion that goes with just having a conversation and feeling a sense of comradeship.

TM: When you got back on the plane and flew home, flew back to the States, what were you thinking? What were your thoughts?

JW: That was an interesting event. First off, I got sent home a month earlier than I thought I was going to. The CO or somebody approached me one day and said, "Hey Doc. Want to go home early?" I thought about it for one millisecond and said, "How do we make that work?" They were drawing down the force and they let me get on the list.

JoW: Were they getting rid of your battalion? Was your battalion going home?

JW: No. I wasn't questioning it. What in the world are you thinking? To leave you have to go through a certain process. You get your things together and...

JoW: You had to go down to Saigon or that base that was down by Saigon.

JW: I had to package up everything and that was picked up and shipped home. Then I had to get on an airplane. It wasn't a helicopter, it was a fixed wing of some kind, but it was a military airplane, and flew down to Tan Son Nhut which was a military base and that was where civilian flights came in. It was *the* major aviation center just on the outskirts of Saigon. One of my worst nights was spending the night in a barracks waiting overnight to get onto the plane. I got down there then I had to go to a place where I was assigned to bunk and the Vietnamese village—there was a fence and the Vietnamese population. I had been well-separated from them during my entire existence there, so I was a little apprehensive about that. We were assigned to an airplane, a ticket and all the rest of it. It was a 707, I think. Four jets. We pulled into the line to take off and there was a Phantom F4 in front of us, off to the side a little bit. We didn't want to be right behind him because of the jet blast. He pushed the throttle and kicked in the afterburner taking off and it was like...I had gotten used to it to a certain degree because my hooch where I lived in Chu Lai was at the end of the runway that the Marines used. So there were F4s flying over all the time screeching and making all kinds of noise. This time it was just sort of bigger and better. Our plane was really quiet. Guys not talking. Got in line. Sat there. Push the throttle forward, go back in the seat. They rotate and you know you're off the ground. There was this crazy roar from

everybody. Breaking ground from Tan Son Nhut was the ultimate—the climax, if you will. We were all one voice—all of one voice. Real happy to be out of there.

TM: Yeah.

JW: I was going to tell you that I wasn't subjected to the ugliness. There was a certain amount of that. One of my duties was to keep track of any member of our battalion who was in the hospital. I would go to the hospital and visit with them. I was supposed to report back to the Commanding Officer the next day at our regular routine meeting. You know, "What's the status these different guys?" particularly if they were pilots. I was in and out and up and down. One pilot in particular got everybody's attention in a way. We had these flak vests, not just your typical. I don't think we even had Kevlar back then. They were a thick thing that would stop the average bullet, but it wouldn't stop a .50 caliber bullet. I don't know if this guy was a gunship pilot or just a slick Huey transport type. He had flown into a situation and made turn so that... Usually if you're flying flat and they're shooting at you from this, you get it from the bottom. They would sit on them. We would all sit on flak vests. He had made a turn and somebody out here coming this way came into the cockpit, the bullet did, and hit him right here. The bullet went through his vest, his chest protector, and still had enough energy going to go ahead kill him. One of the jobs as a flight surgeon... Technically speaking anybody who gets killed is supposed to have a special write-up that they do. It's not really an autopsy, but it's an evaluation of all the aspects of what went into the event. One of the things that I did was I was able to actually reach into that wound, the guy was dead, he was lying on a stretcher. The hole was obvious through the chest protector on into his chest. I realized, "That's the bullet." I removed the bullet. I never was quite sure what they wanted me to do with that. Part of the protocol is to identify the cause of death and if you have access to what did cause the death, that's part of putting together the information about that death. So that one stuck in my mind. You had asked a question. I was telling you that I didn't have that much exposure to the gore and the ugliness that gets to be so gruesome that it is a source of long term difficulties. PTSD things and just the long term effects of being exposed to really disturbing events and sights. And I'm perfectly normal.

TM: It's not just that. It's as you say, it's a matter of seeing a policy of political stance and a policy that makes no sense. Being a part of that policy on the ground, you're not necessarily being shot at, you're not necessarily trying to keep people alive who are dying in front of you and yet you can see the system "working" which most folks at home do not see. Their vision is Walter Cronkite. That's as close as they're going to get. Maybe they're reading the New York Times or reading the newspaper or listening to the local...looking at the magazines or whatever, trying to get the news however.

JoW: That's always through reporters.

TM: There's a filter. You get a little blinders off here—

JW: I made peace with myself. A long time ago, to a certain degree, and over the years I've been able to accept it even more and I shared a little bit of that up at our meeting. But I will say this and it's almost like a litany that I recite: If I had the courage of my convictions I would have found a way to say, "No, I'm not going to lend my body, my physical self, my capabilities, to something I consider to be the wrong thing to do." But since I didn't have that, then I owed it to the people I was working with or for to say, "Okay, I don't like what we're doing. I think it's the wrong thing, but I have agreed to a certain set of rules and regulations and behavior patterns and I will do that to the best of my ability." So, like I say, I made peace with myself.

TM: No, it makes sense. It was a difficult decision that a lot of young men, at a very formative age, had to make. I think as we're older, longer of tooth, our rearview mirror of life is much bigger. It's a little easier to make these decisions now and say, "Yes or no and here's why."

JW: Absolutely correct. Since I was, at that time, 35 years old, I'm not sure what I would have done when I was 25. I do know that I tried to volunteer when I was an intern which would have been '59 or '60. I went down to the recruiting station in Sacramento and said, "I've been thinking about going ahead and volunteering, just getting it over with." The guys didn't know what to do with me. I didn't pursue it. I'm sort of glad that I didn't.

JoW: They also said it's not likely, because they were assuming he was part of that Draft Board. They said, "It's not likely that you're going to get called anywhere."

JW: My "chances", I would have played the odds and lost.

JoW: He would have been 26 by then. There's all these 18 year olds they still have access to.

TM: They were assuming as well that a much larger population base, your chances of getting called are small and so it's not a big deal. Did you find any of the younger crew that you worked with, looked to you as an elder? You were 35-36 during that time. Not quite their father's age, but certainly closer than anybody else around.

JoW: Sort of like a big brother, maybe?

JW: I think to a certain degree, that's correct. I never quite figured out is it because I have Captain's bars or is it because I'm 35 years old?

JoW: Or a doctor.

JW: Or a doctor. Yeah. I had a troubling event just after I got to my battalion aid station in Chu Lai. I had about 15 or 16 guys assigned. They were the Corpsmen and this and that and other things. One of the jobs of one of the guys was to be in charge of the medicine that needed to be locked up. He was a Pharma Tech. Just as I got there about 1,000 amphetamine pills disappeared out of the safe. Obviously it occurred in the time when the guy preceding me had left and I was just getting there. There was another doc there. He was a younger guy. He resisted every foot of the way. He was so anti-military. He had gone to a military school and hated it. He was always in trouble. He wouldn't get a haircut. He wouldn't wear his hat. Kid stuff. The kind of stuff that maybe if I'd have been his age and full of piss and vinegar I might've done that. Oh, I don't think so.

JoW: What was he about ten years younger than you, you think? Just basically got his degree?

JW: Yeah. He technically should have been keeping an eye on the shop. He never got into any trouble. I had a serious conversation with my staff, they weren't technically my staff. They would have been called my troops. I tried to make it clear to them that as far as I was concerned, I was a doctor and they were my coworkers and I expected them to behave in a manner appropriate for people who are responsible for other people's lives and to not be stealing medicines. I was kind of full of myself, I guess, to give that kind of speech. Nobody threw any rocks at me and we didn't lose any more amphetamines. It was such a weird place.

TM: Where do you think they went?

JW: They got sold. The market for anything was really good.

TM: How do think that happened? Would it have been the Pharma Tech would have had access or the doctor would have had access?

JW: I think one of my guys opened the safe and probably was involved somehow. Once again, corruption is so easy to find in situations where there's, "What's the worst thing you can do to somebody? Let's kill them." Anything less than that, well that's just "What can you get by with?" That's kind of how I would encapsulate certain attitudes. Here's another funny thing. The Officers Club was not like the Officers Club on M*A*S*H. The Officers Club was for officers. We would all go to the Officers Club and sit around and drink beer and drink a variety of alcohol and have all the things that happen to people who drink alcohol. This was a common accepted behavior, but don't ever let anybody touch marijuana. We had some educational talks from some Psych guys on marijuana. At that time I didn't have any personal experience with marijuana. I had never tried it at that point. I had real misgivings. I saw it as being something that had all kinds of negative results and behaviors associated with it. These two young Psych guys came and gave a talk to our Medical Society and went through quite a litany of how long marijuana had been available to the human race for over 5,000 years. There had been multiple papers written and basically it was really not the worst kind of thing that a person could do. The reality of this was that the enlisted guys had their own club. The only legal thing they had access to was alcohol. What does alcohol do to young guys who are 18, 19, and 20 years old? It makes them aggressive. It makes them stupid. It makes them want to be physically in people's face. They want to fight. We would regularly, I would get reports. I even had a phone installed in my hooch. I had a sense that I'm the doctor, I need to be in touch if they need me for anything. I don't know that I ever got a call on that thing. I would learn that there had been a fight at the enlisted men's club. Usually there would be some either cuts or somebody would be bleeding from somewhere. And they would then wind up either having to be court martialed or put in the brig or whatever they called it. It was just trouble. The guys who smoked marijuana, we never heard a peep out of them. They were just mellow. No fights. I know for a fact that I turned at least one blind eye. My hoochmate was the Captain of the company. What they called the Head and Head Company—has to do with administrative structure. They knew that this one guy—they were reasonably certain—they even caught him. They caught him on guard duty smoking marijuana. They brought him to me. They wanted me to, in essence, examine him and declare that he was under the influence of marijuana. I've always been against that kind of a relationship between doctors and patients. The Army didn't always take kindly to that. I got the guy into my examining area. They were all standing around outside. He was sitting there. You've had people look in your eyes with ophthalmoscopes—you get right up there, you're nose to nose. I got right up there and I whispered to him. I said, "Can you hear me?" And I said, "Don't say a word." In essence I told him, "Don't admit anything. Don't say anything." I don't know what happened to him. My hoochmate never braced me about it so I don't know if they knew what I did or not.

JoW: Your hoochmate was not a doctor. He was not a medical guy at all.

JW: No. He was the Captain. He was the company commander.

TM: The patient you were looking at with the scope got the message you were trying to tell him?

JW: I don't know. Basically I just told them, "Well I can't tell." I didn't give any indication to the people standing around waiting for a verdict.

TM: Was he in earshot while you said you couldn't tell?

JW: The other guy? No.

TM: Ok.

JW: As far as I was aware, the only person who could possibly hear me was the guy I was looking at with the ophthalmoscope.

TM: No, no, no. Once you'd done your evaluation, was the person you evaluated in earshot of you giving your report saying, "I don't know?"

JW: Yeah.

TM: Okay, so he was able to pick up on that and say, "Well, in that case, I don't know either."

JW: Have you had enough for today? We never got out of Yosemite.

TM: It's been wonderful. Thank you so very much. This is a step by step journey so we'll pick up again when you get off the plane.

JoW: Go back. Move on to the next place.

TM: Does that sound right?

JW: Sure.

TM: The question is...is there anything else that you'd like to say about your service?

JW: About Vietnam? No.

TM: Ponder that, because there might be by the time we show up again.

JW: I guess I'll let you think whatever you want to think and I'll try and respond.

TM: That's good. Thank you. Appreciate it. Thank you both so very much.

JoW: Yes.

JW: You're more than welcome. Thanks for your interest.

TM: And with that, we'll push this button here.