John E. Fedyszyn
Veteran

Michael Russert
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Interviewers

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I: This is an interview at the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo, New York, the 26th of October 2006 at approximately 9AM. Interviewers are Mike Russert and Wayne Clarke. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?
JEF: John Fedyszyn. Date of birth is June 14, 1949. Born in Dunkirk, New York.

I: What was your educational background prior to entering service?
JEF: I graduated from Industrial High School which is a vocational high school located in Dunkirk, NY.

I: Did you enlist or were you drafted?
JEF: I enlisted.

I: Why?
JEF: I enlisted because I wanted to be a Marine and I wanted to help the people [unclear] and then after I attended boot camp, I was interested in saving Marines. I just cared about the people.

I: Why did you select the Marine Corps?
JEF: I selected the Marine Corps because it was the best, it is the best.

I: Where did you go for your basic?
JEF: Parris Island, South Carolina. Buffalo, my graduation day, I took the train out of Buffalo to Parris Island, South Carolina.

I: Was this the first time you were away from home?
JEF: Very first time.

I: How did you feel?
JEF: I was excited and then it was a different world. We were taking a train in South Carolina and I witnessed my first chain gang, prisoners working along the

tracks and it was a different part of the country. It was just another world; it was just another world.

I: How long were you at Parris Island?
JEF: We were at Parris Island for a little over eight weeks. They had cut it short. As a matter of fact, I went in on a six-year enlistment and the day before my graduation, the recruit rank called me and said, "You're going tomorrow." I said, "No." I said, "I'm on a delayed program until September." He said, "No, they need Marines now, you're going tomorrow. But what I will do is I'll get you a two-year enlistment, but you will go to Vietnam." So that started my journey there. When we got to boot camp, we were told that it was going to be cut short because they needed Marines in 'Nam as soon as they could get them there.

I: So, you went in in May of '67?
JEF: I enlisted in May, but I actually went to boot camp June 25, 1967.

I: Did you get any additional training at all?
JEF: Went through regular infantry training at Camp LeJeune and then communication training at Pendleton, but as I stated, June 25th I was in Parris Island; December 17th I was calling in artillery out of a place called Alpha 3. From graduation to the DMZ, I believe it's a little over maybe five months.

I: Do you think, looking back at it, you were trained adequately?
JEF: Well, I was trained as a communications expert, and when I got to Camp Carroll, I had asked for the Com Tent and the Sergeant looked around and he said, "There's no Com Tent here, there's no [unclear], you're going to be a forward observer radio man." And I had thought to myself, knowing the guys in California, that radio school's eight weeks long, so I said to him, "Good, I get to go to school for eight weeks?" He said, "No, you get to go to school now." I said, "How long is it going to take?" He said, "Probably about an hour." He said, "Here training's an hour." And that's what it was. We went to the radio and I was on my way.

I: You went over as a replacement?
JEF: I went over as a replacement.

I: How did you - you flew over?
JEF: I left from Camp Pendleton, they took us to Oakland, from Oakland we flew Continental Airlines. I believe we stopped at Wake Island to Okinawa, from Okinawa to Da Nang, from Da Nang by chopper to Camp Carroll.

I: What was it like when you first got off the plane in Da Nang?
JEF: When I first got off the plane in Da Nang, there were twelve of us communications guys, and the first thing we saw was the Stars and Stripes

newspaper and in it was talking about the battle hills of Khe Sanh and Hill 881 North and South. As we got in our group, the Sergeant says, "We're going to take you by pairs and drop you off at different locations. Whoever wants to stay here, can stay. I want two guys to stay here, but as we go along the line, we're going to need two people in each place." So, I looked at my buddy – this was Da Nang – and I said, "Looking at Da Nang, no way am I staying here. This place is bad." So, we got choppered out to a place called Đông Hà. And when we landed there, I said, "Tommy, this place is worse." From Đông Hà it went to Ca Lu, which was worse, then it went to Camp Carroll. I said, "Tom, we're getting off here because this is not good." The stop after Camp Carroll was down the road at a place called Rock Pile where the last two ended up, but that's how I ended up at Carroll. It was actually – you just decided which one you wanted to stop at, but as the chopper was going down the line it was getting worse and worse. But Camp Carroll, it was home.

I: Could you describe daily life there, what it was like, your duties and so on?
JEF: Well Camp Carroll, basically it was a gun battery of 105 howitzers and it had regular tents – maybe ten tents and two wooden buildings – little huts built by the Seabees. We would get incoming from day one I got there, probably within the first hour we had incoming. Probably ten-twelve times a day. It was just a common thing. People there, when they came in, it was just nothing to get excited about. Rounds came out of a place called Đông Hà Ma, they called it, and it was just harassment rounds.

I: Were they rocket or mortar?
JEF: Some were rocket, some were mortar. They would fire one at us, and we'd fire probably 500 back. That's the way it was for probably… I was only there for about three weeks before I actually got sent up. My duties were to work in what was called the FDC bunker and what we did there was we received radio transmissions from forward observers in the field for fire missions. We would receive them, give them to the FDC Officer and then the fire mission was called on out of Camp Carroll. It was continual duty. Fire missions probably around the clock.

I: You mentioned here you carried the radio.
JEF: Yes. My duties were to call in 105 artillery in support of grunt units or friendlies, or if we were getting in to a firefight or an ambush. I was teamed up with an FO; he would be the guy that determined exactly where the rounds would come in. My job was to call them in and then adjust them after they came in.

I: So, did you have to do any of the plotting, or did he do all the …
JEF: At times I would do the adjusting if he got into a, let's say there were three or four things going on at once, say if we were getting overrun or say there was a firefight, we were in a firefight and our company was spread out and they were in

a firefight, he would call in the mission and every now and then he'd say, "Just keep adjusting, as needed." Which was add five-zero, drop five-zero, etc., etc. But the FO basically did the determination of what the rounds were going to come in. All the commanding officers would tell us what rounds, what missions, he'd want. A lot of times before we'd go on patrol, we'd have predetermined grids that we'd call in before we walked into the area. It would be common to call in a fire mission which was one gun, one round. One gun, one round would be six rounds of high explosives times six. That would be 36 rounds within a three- or four-minute period depending on what we needed and what it was for. That was just day to day, day to day work. We were in what's called a free fire zone. That made things a lot easier. We didn't have to worry about who we could fire at; our main concern was where we were, where our friendlies were. That was the bottom line. But if anybody had been in the free fire zone, there was never any questions as to taking them up. Now I myself could not – if I saw some of these fire missions, my FO could, if he saw two NVA walking down, he could make the determination, but the radio man wouldn't unless the FO was gone. It was a day to day thing, because that's what it was.

I: Was there ever any problem with short rounds?
JEF: We had some short rounds now and then. It would be hard to determine if it was the wrong grid or if it was the wrong charge in the gun. I didn't see it quite a bit, but on occasion, yes, we did. It just happens, it does happen. A lot of times in a fire mission as we were firing, they would be firing, so a lot of times you didn't determine… You'd hear the pops, you would know where ours were coming from by the direction of the pops, and they would join in with us, so it would be hard to determine what round came where. It would be confusing because as they were dropping them close to us, our CO would say, "Hey, cease fire," and we knew where ours were going but we had to make sure. It would be a taken area one week. Leave it. They would have the grid on it. We'd come back into it the next week and they'd know exactly where to drop it. Only knew in the direction that the rounds were coming. The rounds were coming out of Camp Carroll, they were coming out of the Rock Pile, they were coming out of Khe Sanh, they were coming out of Gio Linh. Naval gunfire had its own sound and then we had air. Air, you knew exactly where it was coming from.

I: What was it like the first time you encountered the enemy out in the field?
JEF: The first time I saw the enemy, it was at Camp Carroll the first day, where rounds came in and this guy received shrapnel on his neck and it was red-hot. That was the first time I experienced it. The very first time out of the wire was the 50 caliber when we ran into an ambush. I was with this colored Marine, we'd just met, a good friend of mine. He took a round in the leg – actually ripped his leg open. I don't know how good this statement's going to be. I was just out of high school. This was December '67 and the rounds were zinging over our heads and I had seen him get hit and he seemed to be okay; his leg was ripped open,

and I said to him, "What do we do?" He said, "Just sit down and have a smoke and relax". I said, "I don't smoke." He handed me a marijuana cigarette and he said, "You do now." Somehow it just seemed like everything just quieted down. Then the firefight ended. They medevacked him and it was like, that's the way it's supposed to be. Everybody got up and just continued on like it was a stop, but that was my very first experience.

I: Do you know what happened to him?
JEF: Last I'd seen of him, his leg actually ripped open and they medevacked him. I don't know anymore. You never really… FO teams were sent with different units and they were placed with a patrol or a company just to support them. At the end of that patrol or operation, they would go on another. There may have been in each company six FO teams. The way it was laid out where I was at – we were assigned, my company, 33 out of outfit 3. Two FO teams in the battery. One FO team stayed with the commanding officers' group. The other FO team was the one I was on, went on patrol or point. The point FO team would be the first one out with the point. Had they hit an ambush or something, they would start calling artilleries or the grunts. At times, we were given certain targets to take out, knowing where we were going. We were going out for a specific thing, we were going out for known bunkers, we were going out for possible enemy weapons, known NVA, possibly various targets. Where the other FO team may stay back at Alpha 3 or Khe Sanh with the CO, and determine different fire missions that they may think the enemy through intelligence are going out on a company patrol where the CO does go out, that FO team stays in there, and the other team goes with the point. So that is how the FO teams work. The younger FO team went on fine, which I was, so.

I: Were the radios reliable?
JEF: Yes, I would say yes, at the time. I'd call in a fire mission and in most cases within a minute, you'd have it. Very seldom would you see a 25 go down.

I: What do you mean by a 25?
JEF: That was a style of radio. I think it was called a PRC 25.

I: How heavy was that?
JEF: I'd say the whole thing would go around 40 pounds. I carried that, I carried two batteries, I carried two antennas, I carried two handsets, a 45, and probably 25 rounds of 45. That was it. That picture [holds up photo of man in camouflage, holding a rifle in a rice paddy) was taken out of a place called Camp [unclear]. It was an operation called Operation Rice. The other FO that was in our unit – this was, I believe his name was T.J. McManus, it was so hot, he was junior to me, he couldn't carry the M16 because the handles were so hot. So, I carried it. I had the 45 and I was carrying his… FOs really didn't have to do a lot of firing themselves. Our main mission was to call in artillery. The 45 basically

was if you were going to; if they were coming right at you, you would use it. And you carried a gas mask, a flak jacket.

I: Did you ever have to use the gas mask?
JEF: I used the gas mask one time and it was when our gas launcher died – took shrapnel – and our own gas was used on us, only one time.

I: Did you wear a flak jacket all the time?
JEF: All the time. Wore a flak jacket in Alpha 3, all the time. Never go without it. Never.

I: Was that a common problem – that the guns became so hot from the heat that…
JEF: Yes, because you would walk through elephant grass, you would walk through, it was just so hot, in June and July, I mean the thing was, you couldn't touch it.

I: What was your camp life like when you weren't out on patrol?
JEF: FO teams, we had no, and I'm only speaking for my team, we had nobody telling us what to do. If we were going on patrol at 0400, we were there, we went, we did our job, nobody messed with us. Nobody said, "When are you coming? You're going to do this." Sometimes you'd go on two- or three-day patrols and come back and sleep. Sometimes we would just do what we wanted. Because we didn't know when we were going out again. So, it wasn't like the other grunts that would come in after patrol and they got to sandbag. We were basically left alone. After contacting my CO years later, because there are many books written about our company and the FO's job was an officer's job. My FO was an E-4 and I was an E-3. So, I had the authority to… There was nobody saying you can or you can't do this. One time we got called to go to Đông Hà, my FO and myself and the 12th Marine regiment, and we were called in and we were talking to the Executive Officer. He pointed out to us, he said, "You know these rounds are $175 a piece," and he said, "Do you realize the cost of them?" My FO said, "Are you telling us you don't want us to call them?" He said, "Absolutely not, absolutely not. We just wanted to point out what they were." That was it. We walked out of there and twenty-five minutes later, we're calling in thirty-six rounds times three. It was, I don't know. If you looked at some of the combat action reports of the batteries on the DMZ, we were averaging 30,000 rounds a month, 30,000 - 35,000 high explosive rounds. That's one battery, that's six cuts. So, you're talking 5,000 per gun per month. A fire machine could go to 100 rounds, I mean on a patrol.

I: What's the longest time that you were out on patrol?
JEF: The longest time, probably on one patrol, I think probably was like twelve or fifteen days without stopping, without going anywhere. A lot of times you

would move a thousand yards a day, which is ten football fields. It was a chess game we played on the DMZ. Our main goal was trying to catch the enemy coming in from the north. So, we would do a lot of patrols [unclear] the operation and maybe go five miles, but it would be a zig-zag type deal, stop here, wait for the night, hopefully they wouldn't infiltrate from the north.

I: If you were out for ten or fifteen days, how were you resupplied?
JEF: Chopper. Chopper come and first thing would be ammo, second thing would be water, third would be food, fourth would be whatever. They would just drop off a water buffalo for water, actually bags sometimes, but ammo came in first. Ammo was destroyed every day where I was at. You would turn your ammo in at night and they would destroy it, because they had so many problems with it out there. This is not Alpha 3 DMZ area. Back at the other places I have no idea.

I: What kind of problems?
JEF: Jamming, weather, mud, laying in a rice paddy, firefight–everything's all full of water. So, a lot of times you bring in new ammo and you replace what you got. You'd put it on the pile and they would just blow it up.

I: Would you get fresh magazines or just the ammo itself?
JEF: We would get fresh magazines. There would be magazines. Like I said, I carried a 45 so I wasn't in the ammo changing every day, but I would have batteries coming every day when a chopper came in with the ammo. They would always have extra headsets. They would always bring in maps, cigarettes, Coca Cola, Falstaff beer. You would trade the pop for the beer. A lot of the guys that didn't drink, they would trade you six beers for one can of pop. Pretty good game if you drank – but it was hot.

I: What did you think of the 45 as a weapon?
JEF: The 45 is a very inaccurate weapon. I had a chance to use it on one occasion. Using it in a right-away type deal, it's not very accurate. It's not very accurate. But it was better than carrying the M16.

I: Did any of the other guys carry AKs or any other type of weaponry?
JEF: The gunnies would carry assault shotguns. You would see the snipers would carry, I believe they went back to the M14, it wasn't the M16. And when the snipers, I know their ammo because our unit stayed with the snipers, we stayed with the dogs and we stayed with the Kit Carson scouts, the NVA that turned friendly. That was our little group. We all worked together. But the snipers were carrying the M14 because I think back then it was more accurate than the M16 or that was the way they were trained.

I: How reliable were the Kit Carsons?

JEF: The Kit Carson scouts, some guys would get along with them and some guys just didn't trust them. They didn't say much, but you had to go by what they said. I didn't deal directly with them, but I was near them, but I never had the opportunity to get involved with anything. I never saw any problem with the Marines and them, but I knew of some guys that just would not trust them. But a lot of guys didn't trust anybody.

I: What were race relations like within your unit?
JEF: Back then, they were good. They were very good. I believe, because I went from outfit to outfit, but I believe that there were some people that didn't want to be there. As for me, my consideration towards race, going from different outfits, and you would talk to different guys and a lot of guys would say, "Yeah, why here? Why in the hell would I want to..?" Then you would run into this group that would say, "I hate it here. I want out of here. I hate it." "Well, why are you here?" "Well, it was either jail or here." And what I had found out through my – I, to this day and I believe and I could be totally wrong – but most of the guys in the 9th Marines were the guys that were put there because they had no choice. They had to either go to jail or they had trouble at home with their wife or for some reason because most of those guys in that outfit did not want to be there. And you could tell the difference when you went on at night. You could tell the professionalism. I'm not saying the 9th Marines weren't professional, they just were a different group leading off the wire. Once you leave that wire everything changes. I believe that, I think the Marine Corps called them shit birds, but I think those guys were put in through one outfit and they were given the not-so-pleasant patrols, the known patrols. Because we'd go out on patrol, we know that we are going out for a certain target, talking to the point and say, "You know up ahead, there could be [unclear]." "How do you know?" "Intelligence, no, no one told us", and you'd say, "Wow, why didn't that guy know this?" But they were not... That's just my opinion and then after I had come home, I had picked up this anti-war poster on the DMZ and I went to the website and I had read this whole website – and someday you may want to, it's kind of interesting [unclear] – where the NVA had told the blacks, "We'll help you in a firefight, we'll take care of you," but I never noticed any minorities or blacks ever give up. They were always 100%; they fought like anybody else.

I: Now what poster is this here?
JEF: Well this is the NLF – I don't know if you're familiar with that, the National Liberation Front, which is the Viet Cong – had dropped posters along the DMZ for us and I had picked this one up back in '68 and the guy had published it on the website and it ended up somewhere in Washington. I had turned it into the regiment and anyway, it ended up there. On this website, if you ever go to it, it tells about how they give rewards to anybody with information on the 101st cavalry, and why are you fighting this war, and you know. I really got into this website maybe four or five years ago. It's amazing – had people known

of that before, that may give you a different attitude. I don't know if you ever heard of it or not.

I: Now you found this particular poster. Could you hold it up?
JEF: Well, here's the story [hands paper to interviewer]. This is the website that it was at. It was a piece of paper; they were all over the DMZ But I just happened that one time to pick this one up.

I: Now is that the actual one?
JEF: This is the actual copy, but you guys can have it.

I: If you could hold that up again, so Wayne can focus on it.
JEF: But I don't want to be tied to anti-war.

I: Okay. But it's something you found, though?
JEF: Yes, I picked it up. But I don't want to say. I was never anti-war.

I: But it's something you found though out there?
JEF: The NLF [holds up poster] is the organization that…

I: You won't be portrayed that way, believe me.
JEF: I guess this was just one of the things that, but if you ever did go to that site, it's quite a long website and it's got thirty or forty different things on the war and I didn't realize that the NLF [unclear] Viet Cong. The Viet Cong [unclear]. But, going back to your story, no, I never saw were they were intentionally discriminated on or didn't [unclear]. I think more colored guys lost their life or were wounded than anywhere. Everyone that I was with was 100%.

I: Now you mentioned on the form you filled out about an operation along the McNamara Line of relocating a group of people.
JEF: Yes, in '68 what they were doing is there were a couple of villages that they had to get the people out. They had made, according to what I was told, a free fire zone from the DMZ back three miles. Anybody that was in that zone, you could take out, no questions asked. No questions asked. No questions asked. As a matter of fact, if you saw something you were to take it out. Well, the people that lived there had to be relocated back to a place called Cam Lo or Ca Lu. What the government did is they made different villages for the relocated people. Once they took the people there, some wanted to go back to where they lived. They just went back and as they were back there, we would have to go back knowing that there were families that were going back and get them out of there. When they were in a free fire zone, the NVA might take them out because they were relocated by us. The problems that I ran across were, sometimes there would be twenty or thirty in a group, and we put the kids on first and if there were eight kids and fifteen grown-ups, the eight kids went and just two grown-ups, knowing

that they may never see each other again. Just the look in their eyes, it was a sad thing, but it had to be done. That was part of our job on the DMZ, just if there were friendlies to try to get them out of there. It wasn't the place to be.

I: And you mentioned here also, which we've had others talk about – beehive rounds.
JEF: A beehive round is an artillery round that has arrows in it. Little fishhook arrows. And the beehive round is a round that you would use if you had many NVA open, you were getting overrun – it was like a last resort, very, very – it's not an instant death-type deal. It rips people apart. We actually had to get regimental okay to call them in, but we had called in that round on a couple of cases. There are a couple of books written by different commanding officers – they had talked about the beehive round and in their books, they stated you had to have the okay of the President, but we never had the okay, we had regimental okay. It did take a while to get the okay to call them in, but on some reports, you could see whether we had [unclear] and none of them was a firecracker round. It was a round that you just didn't call in like the high explosives.

I: How was that different than a beehive?
JEF: The firecracker round was a round that had like seven or eight grenades in it and as this round would come in, these grenades would come out, and then this first explosion would happen, and then all these other explosions would happen. You wouldn't use it to support our troops, our guys, because you don't know where these things are going. Basically, it's a round that you have no really control to control exactly what its going to take up when it comes in, where with a high explosive round you have an idea of like its going to cover this area, it's going to throw shrapnel eighty, ninety yards and that's okay. This other thing is once it came in, it just went all over. It was called in, not a lot, but it was called in.

I: Could you describe and talk about your wounding?
JEF: My wounding was in Operation Rice. It was at a place called Wunder Beach.

I: Where was that?
JEF: Wunder Beach was a village where the NVA… We were going in to get weapons that the NVA were storing along with the food, but as we got there the village was controlled by the NVA and I just took that sixty-round mortar in the middle of the night in a firefight.

I: And when did this happen?
JEF: This was in May of 1968. The unit we were with was Delta 126. There's not a lot out there on Operation Rice, there's not a lot when you go into the history of the operations, the military operations, it doesn't say very much. It probably was

a cover-up-type operation, because years later I contacted my commanding officer, who I located, he didn't hear of it, but its on my combat operations page and if you go to look for Operation Rice, it doesn't say a lot. It just says, Operation Rice. There were a lot of civilians, or friendlies, killed on that night.

I: How badly were you wounded?
JEF: I took some shrapnel in the leg and I lost some hearing. I ended up on the Sanctuary I believe, the next day, USS Sanctuary.

I: Did you ever return?
JEF: I returned about ten days later. I went back to Đông Hà and from Đông Hà I went right back out to Cua Viet River.

I: Now you did mention, I don't know if you want to get into your friend, T.J. McManus?
JEF: T. J. McManus was a junior radio man to me, he was, believe it or not, younger than me. He was a well-liked, well-liked kid, loved the Marine Corps, had special permission to join. We were at a place called Jones' Creek, 3rd battalion, 3rd Marines and we were going in to relieve 19, and it was a routine patrol, and for some reason T.J. had walked off the main path and he stepped on a mine and it blew him apart. The only thing found was part of his license, and that's the day I had his weapon, and part of his scalp and just part of his handset. We lost him and since then I tried to locate his family. There were three books written about T.J. McManus' death. Two are accurate and one is a total fabrication, and they were all written by the people that were in that outfit. One was in a book called, Your War My War, another one was DMZ Diaries, and another one was No Shining Armor. On the Wall, on the email ten years ago, all I had typed down was – under his name there was nothing – I typed down "I was with T.J. the day he was killed," and I put my name down. So, I get a call from some [unclear] "You were with T.J. McManus?" I said, "Yes, I was." He said, "Would you mind talking to his mother?" I said, "Yes, I've been trying to locate her. He was from Mansfield, Ohio." He said, "Oh, no, she lives in North Carolina now. She's quite up there in age and she would like to know about how T.J. died." I said, "Didn't anybody tell her?" He said, "No, nothing." So, I had made it a point to contact her and when I walked in the house and saw his picture, she said, "Did he suffer?" I said, "No, he was gone in two seconds." I said, "Don't you know?" "Well," she said, "As a matter of fact what had happened was, two Marines came to my house and said that T.J. was killed and they can't find his body." And she said, "That's all that I was ever told. Killed in action, body not found." She said, "I wrote the Marine Corps a couple of times and got no answer," and she said, "Nothing until you had contacted me." She was quite elderly and it was just sad. That's how he was gone. But, like I said, reading these stories, even one of the guys that wrote one of the books said he had contacted T.J.'s mother and then T.J.'s mother wrote him back. She said, "That's

a total… Why do people do this?" It's quite sad. I think what we find out now is that the first thirty years after the war, everything was quiet, and I think after the government declassifies a lot of this stuff you get more and more out, and people are starting to realize what happened there. So that was it.

I: Which of the books was the inaccurate one?
JEF: Your War My War by Myers, his last name is. He was a clerk in the office at [unclear] Camp Carroll. He must have gotten the actual reports. He wrote a book and in it he had it with him on a convoy getting attacked by an NVA boat out on [unclear] which never happened. And there's another sergeant that knew this guy and said that he never even left Camp Carroll. Because Camp Carroll was the [unclear] there was no incident or anything. This guy just wrote that he was with him. The thing that caught the eye was that T.J. got killed June 5th; he claims that he wrote his mother, and in his book, he goes, "July 2nd," he said, "I got a letter back from T.J.'s mother." Well, that never happened. You wrote home in 'Nam in June, you wouldn't get a reply for seven-eight weeks, easy. The turnover wasn't that fast. The report from the 3rd Marines said he stepped on a land mine. I was with Benny [unclear] when we lost [unclear]. We could have sworn it was a 152-rocket coming in. But the report of the Light 33 stated it was a mine. It was a mine. I've got to believe that he stepped on a mine. Because incoming was common, it was there. It just was common. It wasn't like a bomb came in and we stopped, we just kept going.

I: Are there any other things you want to add?
JEF: No, at least people talk about the war and that, and it was kept quiet for all these years and it was okay. It was okay to keep it quiet. We came back and the VFW and the old veterans of WWII didn't accept us as veterans because they figured that this was a war that wasn't won, and you got in trouble going to the VFW and that, and then you went back with your friends and they thought of you as being different. The old people thought of you as being different. It was a different life. You'd go to the VA hospital and the guys would say, "Don't talk about the war if you're got any problems because they'll take you upstairs and they'll drug you up and they'll put you in a strait jacket. You'll never find a job, you'll never see your wife. Just keep it quiet." That's the way it was back then, you didn't talk about it. You talked about it by yourself and finally it just faded away.

I: Were you aware of the anti-war movement at all?
JEF: Not at all. Not at all. As a matter of act, I came back and I didn't do a lot of research on the war until maybe ten years ago, and then I finally read where I was and I was more scared after reading where we were and what happened because I had thought that everybody was in, and I'm not saying that the other guys weren't in… Everybody was doing what we were doing. It was the same the whole country, and the firefights, and the medivacs, and the fire machines, it was done

everywhere all the time, but you read some of these books on [unclear] and all that and it will talk about how many troops were out there and they were interviewing this North Vietnamese General [unclear] a few years back and he was talking about Camp Carroll and Khe Sanh in December of '67. They said, "Did you have 20,000 NVA?" He said no, "I had 70,000." Within three or four miles of us, but their orders were not to engage, but they were there. It's just amazing.

I: When did you leave Vietnam?
JEF: I left there January '69. Left January '69, came right back home, got to San Francisco Airport. My flight back to Buffalo, the first thing the girl said to me, she said, "Sir, you have to take your uniform off." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "It's good not to fly in your uniform because it causes so much trouble, so much dissent. If you take your uniform off, we can get you back to Buffalo on the next flight. If you want to fly in your uniform, you're going to have to take the red-eye." Which was like nine hours later. I said, "You've got to be kidding me." She said, "No." I thought it was kind of demoralizing at the time. And I thought to myself, "They are the ones that took me to 'Nam," and then the government sends me to Hong Kong, which was in China and as we're going to Hong Kong, my buddy said, "Look at that, them bastards… We're getting hit with their mortars, Chinese made mortars and rockets, and we're going there now." It was kind of weird. It was a different world back then. The you come home and the airlines that take you there say, "We don't want you flying in uniform." That was the only thing that was odd.

I: Did you change?
JEF: Yes, I took it off and I had a set of dress blues that are at the Dunkirk Historical Light House that were worn one day, one time, that's it. Never been worn since. But that was the way it was back then. You came home and more or less, you just didn't talk about it. Nobody wanted to talk about it.

I: Do you read much about Vietnam now?
JEF: I only read about things that happened in the DMZ, and some of the stories they'll write about how wrong it was and it's easy to say how wrong it was now, but the Khe Sanh… How McNamara knew before Khe Sanh was even, prior to December '67, had plans to move out of Khe Sanh because it had no value, and then he had to let the siege go on for 77 days. You read about that and you start wondering, "How did they operate? What was their intent?" You know. They trained you to be an offense and most of the time you were on defense, trying to save your butt. You'd take a kill and then you'd give it away. So, why take it? But that was just part of the game.

I: Did you ever watch any of the movies?

JEF: I watched some movies. A lot of them, you start watching and you'd say, "Well that's not the way it was." If any movies I can relate back to 'Nam, it may be a part of The Green Berets – I believe that camp reminded me a lot of Con Thien. That movie showed Army; but maybe Platoon – parts of it would be how it actually was. No rules, no rules where I was at, there was this, I mean you just didn't go crazy get drunk and all that all the time, but there was no one shining your shoes or getting you up in formation, and you had the authority. You had all kinds of authority. If you wanted to call in an air strike off the Intrepid, you'd get sent one. If you wanted six guns, six rounds of high explosives, you got it. If you wanted [unclear], you got it. There was no one there that said, "No, what?" and then you'd come back here, and then you'd get a job at the Red Barn or at McDonald's or something, and you'd say, "What's going on here? Five months ago, I'm calling in high explosive rounds and now it's a different world."

I: Did you ever make use of the GI bill?
JEF: I had some education just to use it, but not very much of it.

I: Did you join any veterans' organizations at all?
JEF: I joined the VFW right when I got out. My Dad was a big member there, so I joined them and that was about it.

I: Are you active at all?
JEF: I help out at the museum in Dunkirk because my Dad was an [unclear] sailor. They have a small museum in Dunkirk. And other than that, that's it. You know, the Vietnam vet really is starting to come out, starting to come out, a little bit late maybe, but better late than never.

I: Did you stay in contact with anyone that was in service with you?
JEF: I have this one guy up in Seattle, Washington, but since 'Nam he never really worked at anything or did anything. I would call him a couple of years after and I'd say, "Where's Tommy?" and his wife would say, "He's gone." I said, "When's he coming back?" "I don't know." "What do you mean you don't know? "He's gone." "How long's he been gone?" "About four weeks now." "Where is he?" "I think he's up in the mountains." "And you don't know when he's coming home?" "No, he'll come home when he wants to." That's what he wants. The war got to him bad, really bad.

I: How did you think the war changed or had an effect on your life or your time in the service?
JEF: It's tough because, what you did there, and then you have a family, and over there you did something and it was okay. Now if the kids do it, it's not okay, but for you to say you can't do it, it's weird, it's different. What is bad to me. It's bad going through a stop sign, it's bad compared to… Once you got that in your system, you can't get out of it, you can't get Vietnam out of it. You did things

there that you did, and now it's hard for you to really think that going through stop signs is a bad thing. You just can't picture, or not doing this or having to do this. You do what has to be done. A lot of times I'll do things, and my wife will say, "How did it go?" "No, I'll do it till it's done." It's just that one year stayed with you forever. That's just me. As far as the… I did what I had to do. I'm proud of what we did. And we did some good. We did save a lot of people, but whether they're still alive today I don't know. But if there's any forty-year old people around the DMZ right now, that's because of the 3rd Marine Division. The women and children had zero value, none, absolutely none. They had no value. So that's all I can say.

I: Thank you very much. That was really good interview.