

**Joseph Dziezic  
Narrator**

**Interviewed by the  
Herkimer Fulton County Historical Society  
Herkimer, New York**

**INT:** ...and whether you enlisted or were drafted, that kind of thing, and then we'll start talking about where you've been. Okay, ready?

**JD:** My name is Joe Dziezic. I was born in 1936 in New York Mills, and I was always nuts about airplanes so obviously the thing to do was to learn about airplanes. I went through high school in what they called at the time an aviation program, to learn how to be an airplane mechanic. Then I joined the Air Force in 1954, went to airplane mechanic school after basic training. My grades were good enough so I could stay there as an instructor, so I thought that would be something to do. That's what I did for the first three years, four months, whatever. I separated because of a drawdown during that period and decided I wanted to go back so I ended up in Whiteman Air Force Base in B-47s. The B-47 was actually the forerunner to all the modern jet airplanes that you see flying around now; it was the first really big jet airplane. It wasn't the best in the world but it did manage to do the job, to keep the Russians on their toes because from foreign bases you could be over Moscow in fifteen minutes. It was quite a machine. So where do we go from there?

**INT:** So you loved what you were doing really.

**JD:** Well, I was nuts about airplanes. I didn't have a choice [laughs].

**INT:** Okay, tell me about your military service then. It says you got married after high school. Tell me about life before you actually saw war.

**JD:** Well, it's kind of dull and boring to be honest with you. I was a classroom instructor in Amarillo, Texas. About the only thing that happened was we had a monthly parade. Amarillo, Texas is a big, flat space in the middle of nowhere, so you could see the town when you drive in from fifty miles away [laughs]...

**INT:** What was life basically like for people? I mean, what was their general population like, what were people doing around that time?

**JD:** Well, I don't know, just general public, just general living. There's nothing exciting going on in those days.

**INT:** Were there family oriented people at that time?

**JD:** I think probably so. I liked Amarillo, but there was so little to do there, it was just unbelievable. They had a little lake we could go to for recreation. It was fifty miles away in one direction. There was another one fifty miles in the other direction, so you kind of, if you wanted to go swimming you really had to travel.

**INT:** So life was simple...

**JD:** Well, you didn't make any money. You're talking about a hundred dollars a month, or even up to two hundred dollars a month. It was a lot cheaper, but still you didn't have any money so you were just pretty well limited to what your resources were, what you could come up with personally.

**INT:** So you were married at the time.

**JD:** Yep.

**INT:** And you had family? Kids?

**JD:** We waited until '59, '61, the two kids were born. That's one thing you could do very cheaply, but then again you gotta pay for them so it's different. It's very easy to have the children but you still have to feed them.

**INT:** So, not making a lot of money, life's a little bit boring, and you have how many children?

**JD:** Two.

**INT:** Two children, okay.

**JD:** I thought that was enough [laughs].

**INT:** Was your wife a homemaker at that time?

**JD:** Yeah, she didn't have to work at the time. We didn't have a lot of resources, but there was no reason for her to work because we didn't need a lot. It was a nice, comfortable existence. We had a little house trailer where we lived out at the end of the gate, and that was a nice place to be in. We had a good time there.

**INT:** Now, we're going to jump ahead here just a little bit. What happens? War breaks out or...

**JD:** Well, I came into it later on. Of course, career military, I enlisted in 1954. In '61, '62, '63 when Vietnam started cooking up, I was already almost ten years in the service, so you're kind of up between a rock and a hard place. I did know guys, when that war started up, they looked at it and said... one guy, he had fourteen years in the service. He packed it up and left. He said, 'I'm not going to do that.' He was in Korea and all that. So I got the whole Vietnam War, from 1961 all the way up to the 28<sup>th</sup> April 1975. The significance of that day, it is the day Saigon fell. I was harbored off the coast in a C-130, waiting to go in and pick up a load of refugees. When they shut the runway down, I guess Charlie [Viet Cong] must have blown it up, or the north did, because we turned around and went back home. It was the most nervous I was through the whole thing. But there you're talking about an almost ten-year period. All kinds of things happened in-between.

**INT:** Some things have to stand out in your mind. There have to be some really marked points along that road, you know. So let's say going into the war, the social climate, the political climate was very poor, very difficult. How did that affect you?

**JD:** When I started traveling in the C-141s, I lost touch with everything because, well there's a little bit of a description of what it's kind of like, because you're traveling all the time. You go through five, six time zones, and the first thing that happens is you don't feel good. You feel ill all the time. Your body, biological clock will never catch up with where you're at and what you're doing. Now you wake up from sleeping and it's time for, you want to go eat some breakfast and it's dinner time. Everybody else is eating their lunch or dinner. Yeah, the thing about that, like I say, it's just your time zones keep your system all messed up. And we were working so much, back and forth all the time, that like I say, you read the Stars and Stripes but that's about as far as you got, and you know it was canned (?) information, it's always been that way.

**INT:** So you were a flier, you went from one place to the other. Tell us what was going on with that.

**JD:** Well, just take a picture of this great big airplane, a four engine jet cargo plane loaded with cargo, loaded with fuel. You're sitting at the end of the runway in the middle of the night. We always took off right after midnight, or triple zero one [00:01] was our actual start rolling time. I think it starts a new month, or a new day, or a new week, or something, whatever. The throttles go up against the firewall and it's as exciting as could be until you'd have to do it for the 150,000<sup>th</sup> time [laughs]. So charging down the runway, and then all of a sudden it's time to go. There was a go speed, a rotate speed, the pilot [unclear] and off you go into the sky. We would take off out of Dover, Delaware first and then McGuire, New Jersey, fly up to Anchorage, Alaska. The crew rests there and the next shift would go on to Yokota, Japan and then from Yokota in and out of Vietnam or sometimes the Philippines or even Thailand—used to go into Bangkok every once in a while—and back to Japan. Later on we'd go into Okinawa. Okinawa's a really beautiful little island, but it's gone back to Japanese territory now. From there we'd go back to Elmendorf, Alaska and back home. It was forty hours' flying time. You could do that in about five days. Like I say, your biological clock was a big mess all the time because of stuff like that.

**INT:** How did you deal with that?

**JD:** Career military, what are you going to do [laughs]? Give up? Quit [laughs]? I had a family to think about. You have to admit it's got to be one of the most exciting ways to live, especially if you're a person who's nuts about airplanes. One time I took my, my father-in-law come down to visit us down there when we were in New Jersey. I had to go out flying on a local mission; it was just a pilot training thing. We went out, I went out to fly. I took him with me, took him right on the airplane, set him down in the cockpit and put a headset on him and let him listen to [unclear] on pre-flights and all this. [Unclear] procedure takes almost an hour, and now it's unheard of. You couldn't do that anymore, with all these fences (?) and clearances and whatever.

**INT:** Life has changed.

**JD:** Continually.

**INT:** Tell me about some of the things that actually went on in battle at that time. You were at war and that's a lot different than what your military career had been.

**JD:** Well, you know, personally I never really got too involved in that. When I went to Vietnam in a C-123, I was a little closer to it. Some of the things that I can remember, during November 1970 we lost three airplanes. One of them was a mechanical failure. The flap bracket broke on one side, dumped the flaps and the airplane tipped, tilted over, caught a wing tip in the water and spun it to the bay out there, Cam Ranh Bay. I had a good friend on that one. He was a... I guess our job, the first thing to do was to unhook your seatbelt. That was the last thing you needed to do, and it threw him around the airplane, broke every bone in his body. That was just a mechanical failure. Then we lost two more of them, well, flying in weather conditions we shouldn't have been in, and they ran right into a mountain. All those people around the black stone down there in Washington. Other times, sometimes it was really hilarious. We had this donut looking thing; it was a five thousand gallon container, well, maybe a five hundred gallon container to be more accurate. It looked like a big wheel. It was soft, and it had a chain on this palate in the airplane. When you got to the point where you want to unload this thing, you'd break the chains loose and give it a shove. It would roll right off the back of the airplane. So here comes this little Vietnamese guy; he puts his hands up like this here [JD demonstrates by raising both arms up in the air], he wants to stop it, right? Rolled right over him—didn't hurt him a bit [chuckles]. It was funnier than hell [laughs]. Then there's other times, you know, sadness (?). We used to haul everything in the whole world in those airplanes: water buffaloes—they didn't like flying. They would [laughs], they would make a donation to the airplane when the throttles went up. Then we'd have to wash it out afterwards—something that kind of upset me. There was another time they were hauling pigs—pig broke out of the box, running around the airplane inside the... loadmaster, he's the one who controlled the back end of the airplane. He'd go back there and open up the cargo door. Well this pig saw the daylight when the door opened up and headed for it. Of course we were ten thousand feet. So the pig went out the door [laughs], and I wonder how high he bounced when he hit the ground. That's my bombing experience [laughs].

**INT:** Pig [laughs].

**JD:** Pig. Well, it's kind of unique when you do these things, you know. Sometimes you just don't know how to react to situations. Yeah, you come up with something to keep yourself out of trouble.

**INT:** One of the things I think a lot of us think about is the difficulty for some Vietnam vets with the homecoming. That's always been an issue, the homecoming for Vietnam vets. Tell me about your homecoming.

**JD:** I don't know. I went back and forth so many times I couldn't pinpoint a homecoming. If I wrote a letter and dropped it in the mail, I got there before the letters did. As a matter of fact, there are some that came after I was already home. That's how that thing reacted (?). The one thing that sticks in my mind is when I got home, nobody was there nationally. You would think someone would be there to greet me, so I start walking (?) around with a television set. It had one of those old electric antennas that

would turn around. My wife got kind of scared. She thought they'd know what's going on. When she finally realized that I was home, the scream that she came up with is burned into my brain forever. That is significant.

**INT:** Because...

**JD:** Well, too many guys didn't come home. She realized I'd made it home safely. After the whole year over there, I was in and out of everything, you know. Not so much in Vietnam. We went into Cambodia one time, took a bunch of troops in there when they did this Cambodian incursion. Everybody's complaining about we're not supposed to be going to Cambodia, blah, blah, blah. But after we went in, cleaned out all their materials and supplies and all that stuff, we didn't have any more rocket attacks. All their fighting ability was done for, and it lasted until way after I left. They had to haul a whole bunch more stuff down.

**INT:** When you think about the wartime effort, or when someone asks you, if I start asking you about this, what's your first reaction?

**JD:** To the Vietnam War? It was a mistake, but then again it wasn't a mistake. Later on I heard somebody, Berkeley, the people at Berkeley were complaining about the war, protesting and all this nonsense. Someone there who was a big protester realized that if they'd have kept their mouth shut, the war would have been over in about two years. Most of this stuff that happened wouldn't have. They misguided, like these Vietnamese, the all-knowing, the all-seeing and all-powerful. [Laughs] I can't come up with a word for it. They really didn't know what they were doing. They knew how to win the war. When you say win, okay, let's qualify that. They won the war, but what did they win? About a million people killed? I wouldn't call that a success. The country sprayed all over with Agent Orange? I wouldn't call that a success. You ought to see the carpet bombing the B-52 makes when it drops a string of 750 pound bombs. Everybody got their own personal swimming pool. They're about so big [JD outstretches his arms]. The country's decorated with all those little holes. So what did they really win, you know? If they'd have just stopped fighting and we would have left. They could have had it without the fight. Well anyway, that's part of my opinion, of course. Now you're talking about my opinion.

**INT:** That goes with it. I mean that's a whole part of it. You were right in the thick of it, so you have an understanding.

**JD:** Yeah, well, when you're in a military installation in a place like that, you don't really integrate with the population hardly at all because, why I don't know, we can go downtown and buy charcoal for barbecuing and stuff like that, but there wasn't any real communication between the local population and us.

**INT:** How has that changed, as far as acceptance and that kind of thing for you?

**JD:** Personally, I don't know. I was never really injured by any of those people so I really don't have anything to hate. I tried to avoid it as much as I could because I didn't want to wear that kind of baggage all the days of my life. There's a lot of guys that still, even from World War II, are carrying... One of the guys in our VFW post is, was a top tier gunner of a B-17. He had to shoot a German plane, killed the pilot, and you can see the

pain in his face today—after all those years—that he had to do that. But you have to do these things. I'm very confident that if I had to take out my gun and shoot somebody, I would have done it, but I'm very happy that I didn't have to.

**INT:** How was life different after the war? How long did you stay in after the war, you were right through because you'd been career military obviously?

**JD:** Well, we still got an episode of C-130s five years to flop around with [laughs]. There wasn't a whole lot significant with the 123s, probably [unclear]. A couple of times we were up in the middle of nowhere. One time we blew a tire in a little dinky operation and almost got to stay with these guys who were living in a hole in the ground. They had some kind of a fortified bunker. Luckily we got the tire changed and got out of there. There were other times, getting ready to leave somewhere and there's a boom over there and you get the hell out of there in a hurry. Then we got into the 130 phase of it. That was another five years of war, so from 1970. I came back from Vietnam. We went to Hill Air Base in Utah, kind of a really nice place out there, especially if you're a Mormon. I'm not a Mormon, but I enjoyed it anyway [laughs]. The backdrop is the Wasatch mountain range. It's part of the Rocky Mountains; it's absolutely beautiful. We had a playground there for a while. We would go on the weekends up in the mountains and go fishing—just had a great time there. Then I got orders to go again. This time, well we started out going, went to write a specialty knowledge test while we're there doing that. My wife and I, kids and I went there together. I got orders to go to a place called Ching Chuan Kang, which is Taiwan. It's a C-130 outfit over there flying in and out of Vietnam, and that was their main function. It was to transport, the roads weren't safe so you had to fly, move everything by air. So we'd go over there, back and forth, had a forward operating location. The guys would fly in and stay there for a week or so, then travel around the county, do different things like passenger runs. One time I even got to distribute the payday money. That was kind of a fun thing to watch—a footlocker full of GI scrip [military payment currency] for in the county. There was security police and guard dogs to keep the money safe [laughs]. Klong Hopper Airlines, they used to call that. Klong is like a, I don't know what you call it, like a toilet dish. Like we have septic, that's a klong. Place to place to place, we'd fly all day long to different bases in Thailand. For the most part, I was just delivering cargo or hauling people.

**INT:** When you'd do this, you'd be delivering, because you're just hauling people and things and the whole thing. Your stopovers in these places were extremely short because it was just delivery and then you were off again.

**JD:** Yeah, you had usually a five sortie mission. You'd take off one place. We used to go to Bangkok and get a can full of peanut brittle and eat that all day long [laughs], which is something just to break the monotony. Then you'd go to some other place, change cargo and people, then another place. Sooner or later you'd finish up and back at your home station.

**INT:** You were doing transport. Were you ever transporting wounded soldiers? Did you do a lot of that?

**JD:** Yeah, C-141 aerovac, there was one particular mission. The guys got hit by friendly fire, and they were beat up pretty bad. The leg that I picked them up on was from Elmendorf, Alaska to... We used to go to Scott Air Base in Illinois—sometimes other places where the medical sectors are to take these guys who were wounded. One guy, well we crossed the US-Canada border, and I thought perhaps it would be a nice idea to let these guys know that we just got back. You could hear the roar, the cheers, even with the noisy airplane you could hear the cheers in Illinois. This one guy, he was really bad, I guess, really, really shot up bad. He wanted to know when we crossed the border... sorry... and then he died.

**INT:** He just needed to know.

**JD:** The life force was so strong in him—just to keep him alive until he crossed the border. But there were a lot of guys in the plane many, many times, even other times we brought the KIAs back and stacked them four, four, four, ten pallets. How many guys is that? I don't even know. I didn't want to know.

**INT:** Those had to be some of the worst days.

**JD:** Well that wasn't really pleasant. I hated to see those guys get killed over there.

**INT:** How long did you do that? You did that for a long time, taking them back...

**JD:** Five years.

**INT:** Five years you did that.

**JD:** Yeah. Yep, five years, but some of the missions were not unpleasant, you know. I did get on one attaché tour. The attachés in Washington would take a tour of the US installations. We took off out of Andrews and went to Florida somewhere, then to Puerto Rico, crossed through the Canal Zone, up to Hawaii, up to Alaska, or maybe the other way around, and end up in Las Vegas, so it was a good, fun trip.

**INT:** Do you get more angry or more sad when you think of people that died, friends that were, the people, you know...?

**JD:** I don't associate with angry or sad. It's just a fact of life and something we had to live with. I don't like the whole concept, you know, but there's nothing I can do about it. I think perhaps to distance yourself from this, to keep it from hurting you too bad is probably the wise thing to do. I don't know.

**INT:** Do you think that was your strength, your life force?

**JD:** Well, they had a memorial service for the one guy I know who got all his bones busted. I didn't go to it. Of course the coffin was closed anyway. I told you the rest of this story: The airplane went into Cam Ranh Bay. His first reaction was to unhook his seatbelt, and when it started going around it threw him all over the plane and busted every bone in his body. No [JD shakes head], those kinds of things I tried to avoid as much as I could.

**INT:** Those are things that will never leave you.

**JD:** No, here it is twenty-five years later and it's as vivid as can be. Most of this stuff is in the little sketch I wrote.

**INT:** It also says here that you saw all your friends whose names are on the black wall. Tell me about visiting them.

**JD:** I didn't feel anything. I don't understand that. I took a picture where his name was, and my reflection was there in the picture and it didn't affect me. There's a reflection of, a painting somebody made of a guy with his hand on the wall. The image is of his friends on the other side. That's very emotional for me.

**INT:** At the time you tried to keep your distance, though, not make too many friends?

**JD:** Well, you've got to have some, you know. You can't one hundred percent avoid it. The way you worked, we were over here, they were over there, do your job, come back, and that was the end of that for the day. They kept us rotating, so we didn't really get too close to anybody, which is good in a way.

**INT:** You said that you were diagnosed with lung cancer.

**JD:** Presumptive Agent Orange, Vietnam veteran. There's been enough occasions, occurrences of it where they presume that if you were in Vietnam, on the ground, you got, when they were spraying Agent Orange that the lung cancer came from Agent Orange. It's in remission right now. They treated it with radiation and chemotherapy, so hopefully I'll stick around for a little while longer.

**INT:** Is that a surprise, or did you...

**JD:** Well, no, I got an Agent Orange [unclear] years ago when I found out that this could happen, so I sort of thought perhaps I should be prepared. When it showed up, I was not really surprised. I knew it could be coming.

**INT:** Have you met a lot of guys or made friends with a lot of guys who are in that position?

**JD:** Not really. Vietnam veterans are scattered all over. There's a local chapter here 827, but it spreads over most of Upstate New York I guess—very few involved in it.

**INT:** You only got shot at a couple times?

**JD:** Well shot at, I'm sure every time we got in that plane and took off somebody was shooting at us. If you want a graphic illustration of what happens when you get shot at, get you a copy of the movie *Air America* and watch that. When it starts, right at the beginning, the airplane, a C-123 is flying overhead and a guy takes a pot shot at it from a rice field, you know. Next thing you know it's crashing on the runway in the airport. I'm certain that every time we took off, they shot at us—only got hit twice. It's really strange in a way as we were coming back to Phan Rang, which is the base where I was stationed at, the runway was zero four and when you come in like this, swing in base. Right there where you swing in the base—the pilot's driving the plane, the co-pilot's tuning the radio, and I was the only one who saw the doggone stuff. A whole bunch of tracers came up at us [laughs]: "Hey! Did you see that?" Little man (?) said, "I ain't seen nothin'." We landed and he went back there looking. There's the tail end of the airplane that was peppered up with holes. Something like that happens so quickly, you really don't have

time to react to it. Well, it's over and done with and that's it. I got a little certificate that says 'Punctured Provider'. It's really cute, typical aerospace dumb. You never know when the wheels go up if you're ever going to come back down again, so the hell with it: Let's go [laughs]!

**INT:** But you did come back.

**JD:** You know, I had a friend of mine who was going to Bosnia or somewhere. He was very concerned about going into the war zone and the shooting and all that. I said you know, not everybody dies in a war. That's kind of helped that person through, and after I realized that I was going to come back, well, I am going to get out of here.

**INT:** Did you have a lot of your own will or strategy or do you think you were lucky?

**JD:** Oh, there is ration of luck. If you're involved in *Air & Space*, I subscribe to their magazine. They had an article about guys flying a C-46, a two engine cargo plane. The engine catches fire and five minutes later the wing falls off, so it's kind of scary [laughs]. It's a thing you live with, but they were flying this airplane and I don't know how they got so low, but they landed, went into a jungle canopy of some kind or another—and the way the terrain is there, it's big cliffs all over the place. They went through this jungle, crashed right into it and came right out the other side, got flying speed up again and they kept on going. To me, that's a small miracle. That's what I call ration of luck. After a while, your luck runs out though. Lots of them guys, most of them got killed at some point in time. That's kind my idea about...

**INT:** Obviously your wife was really thrilled. I think your story about her reaction is wonderful.

**JD:** Well that's true. These kinds of things are burned into your brain and they don't ever go away. It's faded somewhat now. I'm not as brilliant or sharp as I was when it first...of course it's been twenty-five years ago. I was happy to come home.

**INT:** Since coming home, what are you doing now?

**JD:** All kinds of fun things. But you missed out on the end of Cambodia in early 1975.

**INT:** Well we can scoot to Cambodia, that's fine. Let's go back to the end of Cambodia. Give me the end there of Cambodia.

**JD:** We didn't do much there; we were just prepositioned. We were going to evacuate the capital when it fell in our 130s. We went in position at a little runway right next door to it. The way it worked out, they evacuated with helicopters, so we just went there, we sat around for a while and went back home. Then the other one was the end of Saigon, when it fell. We were, during the early 1975 period, the Russians were saving a bunch of BX goods for the government, the base exchange, and then towards the last end of April, that early part, the north started blowing up the place pretty heavy. I went in the one time, we picked up from sixty-nine refugees and took them, they were originally going to be taken to Thailand, but the Thai government refused so they ended up taking them to the Philippines. Then we turned around and went in a second time and got a hundred and thirteen or so on board, or a hundred and sixteen. They had this really cute seating arrangement where they put a little panel on the floor and put a tie down strap across

everybody so far apart. You could put twenty people on one pallet, then five pallets and you could pack them in like sardines. You could move a lot of people that way. It wasn't comfortable. I mean, there's no cushion [laughs], but it did do the job and got a lot of people out. And the third time, we were going in to, like I told you before, we were harboring off the coast waiting for our... The way they stacked it up, they had one guy on the ground, one guy ten thousand feet above the runway, one more out off the coast ready to go do the sequence—this guy leaves, next guy moves in. The last, as far as we got was just harboring off the coast the third time. That's when Charlie blew it up and that was the end of it. We lost a C-130 there. They had one of those great big bombs—the ten thousand pound bomb that they talk about—and somebody found out about it evidently because they blew up the airplane and the crew got out of it and was very fortunate, but they were right in the middle of all of us. The other one, they started shooting up the planes I guess and they figured out they couldn't get on them. They wanted a ride out. This guy who came back had bullet holes in his fuel tanks, but they didn't get a hold, they didn't nail us at all. One time coming back from Cambodia, on return we were flying along and there was some lights in the sky out in front of us. Everybody said, "What?" Everybody started getting nervous, saying "What is this here?!" We came to find out it was just another C-130 in front of us [laughs]. But that pretty much closed off the end of Vietnam. The day after that, it became Ho Chi Minh City.

**INT:** If you had to define, what was the greatest moment of that point of the Vietnam War when you were in it? What was the highlight for you of a victory we'll say?

**JD:** Victory? When they said, "Turn around and go back!" [laughs]. I was really nervous about that whole thing because they were shooting holes in our planes and they were blowing them up. I just didn't feel comfortable going in there again and getting more refugees. It was very sad while America was evacuating, the Marines were hauling people out in helicopters. There was no more runway and we can't operate without something like that.

**INT:** Getting refugees out, that's really something [unclear].

**JD:** Very happy, I'm sure those people were all happy to get out of there, as many of them as we did take out. There was another time that we got refugees. That was during the six-day war in Israel. In a 141, we went into North Africa, Libya, and they were evacuating Americans and we picked up an airplane full of them. Looked like a hundred and thirteen people on board, I think, but there were like a hundred kids. You know what these little metallic can openers are? They call it a P38 which you use to open a can. It worked pretty nicely, just a little folding can opener. For the in-flight lunch there was a box of cans with these little can openers. I spent the whole trip showing little kids how to open up these cans [laughs]. I thought that was really cute [laughs].

**INT:** It's good to have some of those moments, those times.

**JD:** Well, successfully rescuing people is always a good feeling. And that's probably one of the most significant things about airlifts.

**INT:** What do you think that young people should know about war, about military service? What should young people know today?

**JD:** Military service is a noble profession.

**INT:** Do your children ask you questions? What kinds of questions do they ask?

**JD:** [JD shakes head] Not really. They were there in the middle of it some. It kind of bothers me at times when all the war protesting was going on while I was in Vietnam, you know. I sometimes wonder how it affected them, but I can't really tell. I can't, but I don't know, maybe somebody else does.

**INT:** So they've never spoken of that either?

**JD:** [JD shakes head 'no']

**INT:** Do you ever tell them some of the stories today of what had gone on?

**JD:** I don't know. We don't sit down and talk much. It was a different time. I had to deal with day to day survival and stuff like that. Sometimes, when you distance yourself... One of the most precious things in the whole world is a hug from a little kid, and you have to look at that and say, I don't want to hurt this little child. Today I hug little kids [laughs].

**INT:** You do it every day.

**JD:** I do, every time I get a chance.

**INT:** I love your hat [INT reads inscription]: Vietnam vet and proud of it.

**JD:** You like this cute little hat here with the little pin on it [pin is an American and Polish flag]? For nothing else, this is Polish American. Of course, I'm an American first, but I came with the baggage from the old country, and I don't mind a bit.