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## Oral History: John Beckett - Vietnam War

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**Student Interviewer's Name:** Peter Simpson  
**Interviewee name:** John Beckett

**Time and Location of Interview:**

This interview was conducted in one session on Tuesday, October 11<sup>th</sup> of 2016 and lasted approximately 30 minutes. It was conducted in John Beckett's work office in Collegedale, TN. Only the interviewer and the interviewee were present.

**About John Beckett:**

John Beckett has been helping people cope with technology since before he can remember. His early career was spent in broadcast engineering. Beginning in 1968 he was chief engineer of three different radio stations. The U.S. Army intervened, placing him at Project Whitecoat in Maryland. He graduated from Southern with a major in communication (broadcasting) and a minor in computer science in 1975. John was asked to head the Information Services Department at Southern Adventist University. He was the IS leader at Southern for more than 20 years. He joined the faculty of the School of Computing in 2000. His doctorate is from Nova Southeastern University in Florida. John's favorite hobby has always been reading about history, religion, science, and business. When the weather is right, he can often be seen flying a radio-controlled airplane, perhaps with a camera on board. His wife, Barbara, works in the Records and Advisement office at Southern. They have two sons.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "John Beckett, D.B.A.," Southern.edu, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://www.southern.edu/academics/academic-sites/computing/faculty/johnbeckett.html>.

*Interviewer: Peter Simpson (PS)*

*Interviewee: John Beckett (JB)*

**PS:** I would like to start by talking about some of the events that may have occurred before you joined the military. Did you have any interaction at all with the Army, or were you involved in any war-related events before being in the military?

**JB:** The closest was when I was about 10 years old. I was getting a haircut about one mile into Mexico, or less, and I saw a big crowd of people outside, and I discovered later on after I walked home with no trouble at all, I discovered that that had been a demonstration by people against United States. Uh, this was in Mexico, and I when I walked back home in the United States I found out they had been demonstrating against us because we were taking too much water out of the Colorado River, and they couldn't survive on the water we left in the river (chuckles). Uh, but otherwise, really no other than stories from my dad from his army time.

**PS:** So, how did you become to be in the military? Was it voluntary?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Bibliography is attached for further reading.

**JB:** No, I remember watching television with my mother the nights that they picked the lottery where they would... where they had all the dates that you could be born out of all the days of the year, like, mine was September 5, and they drew September 5 on the 82nd ball that they drew, which meant when we calculated all out I would be drafted sometime in September of the next year.

**PS:** So you had an idea of at least which month it would be...

**JB:** That was one of the advantages of the lottery. Instead of living your life in total uncertainty, you would have a pretty good idea of if and when you were going to be drafted. If your ball was pulled out after number 300 you know you'd never be drafted. And, uh, so I knew mine would be sometime in September. And as time went on, we got more precise information. We knew exactly what week, and then of course I got the letter.

**PS:** Yeah, tell me about the day you were drafted. What went through your mind? Were you excited? Were you terrified?

**JB:** I got a letter telling me that I was going to be drafted for sure. And my first reaction was: well, I'll probably go to Vietnam, be killed, and never get to grow up (chuckles lightly), you know, I'll never be an adult, I'll never have a family or any of that. And then when I was drafted, I lived in Tracy, near Stockton, California at the time. We were taken to the Oakland reception center. Not reception center. The Oakland draft board center or whatever... for swearing in. And uh, then we were flown up to Fort Lewis, that's near Tacoma, Washington. And I remember we got there about three o'clock in the morning, and they had us all lined up, and we spent about three or four days there, and they issued us our fancy new clothes, and they took our hair away, and we got flu shots and learned how to do. K.P. and then the Seventh-day Adventists who declared conscientious objectors were separated from the others. The others were sent on to basic training at Fort Lewis. Actually, I forgot to mention one of those days we were there was Sabbath, and we were told that on Friday that we were supposed to report Sabbath morning to the parade ground for... for instruction in marching, and we were supposed to wear our green fatigues, and that morning a friend of mine and I, we knew that each other was an Adventist. And we didn't put our green clothes on. We... we put other clothes we found in our packs that they'd given us and that looked a bit more dressy, and so the sergeant came in, and he saw us wearing something else, and he didn't know what was going on and we said "well we're Seventh-day Adventists." He said, "You guys, you come with me fast!" and he hauled us out behind the barracks, get it? he wanted to get us away from the other guys so the other guys wouldn't see what was going on, and the Adventist chaplain was waiting there in a car, and he took us off base to church. But they didn't want the other guys to know that we were getting special treatment.

**PS:** You actually went to church that day...

**JB:** We went to church that day. And uh, so that afternoon we were on a boat cruising around in Puget Sound while the other guys were learning how to march. Now we both knew how to march. I had learned in Pathfinders and other Adventist things, and he had

**been the champ... my friend had been the champion marcher among the Medical Cadet Corps people that previous year, and the day before they'd been showing us a little bit about marching, and we were sitting on bleachers I remember, and this guy's name is Mickey. He said, "Oh sarge we know all that stuff! and the Sergeant, you know, it was like he was inflated. He just stood up, you could tell he was getting really mad. He said, "Okay you get out here." And he started giving him marching orders, and my friend just did it like a robot. I mean he was absolutely perfect and precise. So the Sergeant tried a few orders that they don't do anymore in the Army, like of oblique right and things like that, and the guy did them perfectly. Finally, the sergeant said "Okay guys. That's how you learn how to march." So we didn't really need that day of instruction for Sabbath. But then they uh... they gathered at Fort Lewis that week about seven or eight Adventists. And other conscientious objectors at that time about half the people who were conscientious objectors that were coming into the Army were Seventh-day Adventist the others were just random people who had chosen that option, and they gathered us together, and the guy had a stack of airplane tickets, and he said, "Okay who's the leader?" and we all looked at each other and then he looked at me and he said, "Okay you're the leader!"**

**PS:** You just look like a leader.

**JB:** I don't know why I didn't think I was more of a leader than anybody else, he said "Okay you get these guys to Fort Sam Houston", and so I made sure everybody got on the airplane and nobody got lost and that kind of stuff and we got down to Fort Sam Houston the next day or so, and then on we go to basic training.

**PS:** Okay, so do you think you would have joined the military voluntarily if you hadn't been drafted?

**JB:** Absolutely not. Absolutely not. Because I did not think that a conscientious objector was a particularly good deal for the military. Since they chose to draft me out, I planned to do the best I could for my country, but I didn't think that a conscientious objector was a good match for the military. And I still feel that.

**PS:** Okay so from there, you went to Basic Training.

**JB:** Yeah, we were in Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio Texas.

**PS:** And then you went to Advanced Training.

**JB:** Which was also at Fort Sam Houston, but it was a different part.

**PS:** Can you tell me about the differences of those two trainings? What were they like? Which one did you like better?

**JB:** In Basic Training we were simply learning to be a person who was a member of the Army. Okay, we learned what the different kinds of stripes mean for rank, when you salute, how you salute, how you march, how to cut potatoes in the kitchen (chuckles) and

the general duties. We even did guard duty. They gave us a sawed off baseball bat for a weapon. And they said, "Be careful don't hurt anybody" and, well, not really. But anyway, we did pull guard duty, and you know we did go through all the routines of the Army, we learned how to read maps. Unfortunately, I had K.P. that day so I didn't learn how to read maps, and when they actually sent us out into the field, I got lost. K.P. that's Kitchen Patrol. That's when you're flunky in the kitchen. You're cleaning floors... uh, one time when I was on K.P. I cracked hundreds of eggs into a great big bowl and stirred them up so they could have scrambled eggs that day. Usually on K.P. which I did, what, five or six times swallowing through training, usually I would choose to wash dishes. I mean not dishes but wash the pots and pans because that was the one job where you were guaranteed nobody would yell at you.

PS: So you had a little bit of flexibility as in what to choose...

JB: They would give you choices sometimes. You know the other guys would look for jobs where they didn't have to work as hard, but those guys got yelled at, and didn't like that I'd rather work than get yelled at. But then after the six weeks which as I mentioned mine did not include the rifle training. Everybody else had eight weeks, but two of those weeks were rifle training. They would learn how to shoot accurately; they would learn how to disassemble the weapon put it back together. You know take proper care of it because a weapon you haven't taken care of, you know, you can get hurt. It can explode in your face that... that could be bad. Anyway, we didn't get any of that training and, anyway, after the six weeks we were transferred to the medical training area. Where we learned to be combat medics. And a combat medic M.O.S Medical. I mean, Military Occupational Specialty. I forget the numeric classification of it. I do remember what infantryman is, that's 11B. Eleven-Bravo. Which means mainly you're target for the enemy to shoot at. But um, at least that's my joke. But I had a combat medic M.O.S, and you have really two things they're training you in, and one is how to handle people in the field. You know, how to get them on a stretcher, things like that. And how to stabilize them, how to make the decision about whether to give them morphine or not. Because for instance, if you give a person morphine then they quit hurting you know if they've been shot and they're hurt. Once they quit hurting. That's fine except that now you have to carry them. So, if this guy's going to have to walk, you can't give him morphine. If you know he's been shot in the arm, you can't give him morphine, I don't care how much he complains he's hurting. We learned a lot of things like that and of course since Vietnam was the big news at the time it was all about what life was like in Vietnam and like if we were sitting in the field and five of us were together, Sergeant would probably walk by and say, "Boom! The Vietnam, the Viet Cong just killed five of you instead of just one. Separate out guys! Don't stand! Don't sit together!" (Chuckles) Anyway, we learned a lot of things about how to how to live in the field. We also learned how to be a corpsman in the hospital. You'd be changing beds doing all the dirty work, and it was a ten-week course, and you know, just being an Adventist I already knew so much about medical things and stuff like that. I called it a six-week course crammed into ten weeks because most of it we seemed to know already. But it was an amazing, this is back in 1969 I think it was. Anyway, they... they used video extensively for our training back then, and they were very creative about it. We had one hour in which we were supposedly being taught how to find the major organs in the body, and uh, the wife of

**the officer who'd made it was a nice looking young lady, and they dressed her in a bikini and they had painted the outlines of the liver and the lungs and things like that on her and so while she was dancing they were telling us about where the different parts of the body were. I don't know how that worked. I guarantee nobody slept. But they were very creative.**

**PS:** Okay so when you are done with the medical training, what happens? Where do you go? Where do they take you?

**JB:** While I was in medical training the recruiters from Project Whitecoat up in the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases. Hey I got it out without breathing! They came down, they were looking for experimental subjects, guinea pigs. And they liked Adventists because having a pretty consistent diet across the country they knew exactly what we were like. And we also knew a fair amount about medical things and being Adventists we were very good at following orders, and so they liked us for that, and uh...

**PS:** Did you have to apply for that or they just selected you?

**JB:** Yes, you had to apply.

**PS:** Were you hoping to be selected?

**JB:** I was. I was, because I didn't want to go to Vietnam. I figured they'd be giving me, they would be giving me diseases of some sort but at least they would be friends, and I would be in a hospital where they could probably cure me. So that was my reasoning for that. No. No pride or patriotism here.

**PS:** So if you had not been selected, and you would have had to go to Viet...

**JB:** No. Well... that that story comes a little later. I was selected, I was on the official list to go. It turns out that the various people, the various doctors were doing experiments in the lab. They had created job descriptions of the people that they wanted because when you were not an experimental subject you would have a job to do, and one of the job descriptions matched my resume almost exactly. They wanted... they wanted somebody who'd had some experience with electronics, was not afraid of animals, and you know just a list of other things, and I'd actually had a year or so of physics and also some computer programming by then. And so they matched me up and said, "Okay you're the guy." And so I went up there. Well after all this happened, we got our orders about where we were supposed to go, and they lined us all up that morning. I remember well, it was a Thursday and the officer said, "Well gentlemen, for the first time in three years I'm not going to have to say anybody is going to Vietnam. At ease." And we relaxed, and the majority of the guys went to Korea. Some went to Germany, a few went to Japan, and some went to stateside appointments.

**PS:** Because they had already stopped sending people to Vietnam.

**JB: They had stopped sending people to Vietnam. Nobody went from my particular group that was drafted.**

PS: But if you would have had to go. Hypothetically. Do you think you would have been prepared to go because of the training you received? Did you feel mentally and physically prepared to go?

**JB: I think the preparation was excellent. I think I would have been able to do a good job. The only one thing... well, two things that I would not really have liked about Vietnam, number one, it's hot. Number two, water was harder to get than beer or sort of was harder to get than beer at least. You know, it was not really healthy food but you know, they... they give you food and vegetarians didn't have a real problem because everybody else was wanting the meat. So there was plenty of vegetables available for us so that was okay. But then I was sent up to project Whitecoat and somehow I arranged to stop by Southern on the way there and visited the campus. And I remember a girl that I'd known in academy, high school.**

PS: How old were you back then?

**JB: I was like nineteen or so. So she, she saw me going by and she said, "John what are you doing here? I'm here in Tennessee", because she was from Arizona, and I said, "Well, take a look at my clothes." (Chuckles) "Oh you got drafted! I'm sorry."**

PS: So since you didn't go to Vietnam, you stayed here as a lab assistant. What were your duties and responsibilities there?

**JB: Well in terms of time I'd say the major part of my time was spent taking care of animals. Our little group there was a group of three or four enlisted men, and two officers, and it went to one officer as time went on. We uh, we used experimental animals to major the effects of pharmacology on the velocity of the left ventricular muscle, I mean, very narrow area of research here, and I can tell you the mathematics if you want but look up some of it okay. And we started out with dogs, and dogs worked really well for us, we were going with large dogs. And I became convinced that those dogs had previously been pets. I mean the stories of you know pets being hijacked and taken to a laboratory I think are absolutely true, because those dogs if you told them to sit they knew how to sit. They don't learn that on the streets. And they were comfortable around people, and things like that. I think they were very domestic dogs. And then we moved on to monkeys who are not tame animals, and I got along with the monkeys well. We were measuring actual pressure inside the heart, and to do that you have to put a device inside there. Most medical people know about catheters where they run a device up into your artery, I forget which one it is, and they run it into the heart, you know, so they can measure how your heart is doing. We didn't do that. We just poke a hole in the side of the heart and stick it in there. We carefully timed this between the beats and sewed around it real quick. We wouldn't even stop the heart. And then we'd have the wire coming out the animal, out its back, and I was in charge of the electronic instrumentation dealing with that kind of stuff which these days would be pretty primitive stuff, but back then was pretty much leading edge stuff, and they**

**didn't need a competent technician for that. They hadn't had one and I think I was able to straighten out the calibration procedures, and stuff like that. So, we were getting actual useful data out of them. And then one day, I noticed the guys were actually measuring points on a graph coming out of my graph recorder, and writing down numbers. And then they were using some numerical stuff to get information about that I found out they were doing a least square regression against a line on the graph that was appearing there, and I said, "You ought to use a computer for that", and they said, "Well, we don't know anybody who can write programs", and then I found out there was a terminal connected to mainframe computer system, and I wrote a program, and we started doing the calculations, and that made the stuff come out better. Which was a problem because the computer was very busy during the day time. If you hit return it took half hour to forty-five minutes for it to get back with any response at all. So I started working in the evenings, when you hit return, and it comes back in one second or less. And I could get a lot more done. So I got to do some computer programming, and when we were doing the surgery putting these things in the animals, I mean, literally my first day there they said, "Oh John you're doing anesthesia" and I said "What?" they said, "that thing over there, you see that dial? We need you to go three clicks clockwise. Click, click, click. Back one." And so that was my introduction to anesthesia.**

PS: Your very first time?

**JB: That was my very first day.**

PS: So, can you describe to me one typical day, one average day as a Whitecoat. What would you do? What time would you get up? What kind of food would they give you?

**JB: Pretty much like I've lived before and since. I get up at six, shower and dress, go to the main hall at seven o'clock for breakfast. Uh, they... they would... you could order any kind of eggs you wanted, and they would come out scrambled and they wouldn't apologize. (laughs) It was funny because they had orders from above. You are to allow them to get whatever they want. And you could ask for any kind of eggs you want, but the orders didn't make it to the actual execution. So, I learned to like scrambled eggs a lot. By eight o'clock we were at work, and you know first thing we were doing was taking care of whatever happened overnight with the animals, and making sure they were fed and watered, and the excretions were taken care of, things like that. And then during the day we'd be doing whatever other things that I've described. We might have surgery that day or we might have an experiment. I remember one day we had the dogs on a treadmill and, we were looking to see what speed made the heart go how much faster, and things like that.**

PS: Did you ever move up the rankings? Did they put you in charge of other people or something similar?

**JB: I think I made Private First Class somewhere around, somewhere soon after I got... I know I made what they called Specialist, shortly before I got out of the Army.**

PS: So how long were you in total in the Army?

**JB: I was in total in the Army only about eighteen months. When we were drafted it was supposed to be a six-year commitment of which the first two years would be active military, and the last four years would be in the reserves so they could call us back. The idea being if something happened, and they needed us back at least they would know where we were, and they wouldn't have to retrain us. And so I had four years after that, that I was still in reserves but I was only in eighteen months because, you know, after I'd been in for a year or so, Nixon and his people managed to start shutting down the war. Because they could see how really useless that war was, and so they started shutting down. They quit, and they weren't sending people over there, and you know, why should we have an army of millions or however many it is of the people who were there for no purpose whatsoever. So they started reducing it. And so I got out in about April instead of September of my second year.**

PS: So in those almost two years, what would you say was the most interesting thing that happened to you, or that you saw?

**JB: Well it was fascinating working with monkeys. I found I could communicate with them well. I discovered that their communication is largely uh, it's verbalized sometimes, but it largely has to do with how they move their arms and hands, almost the sign language. But I think the most interesting time was when I took a dog out for a walk about my second day I was up there, and as we are walking along a bird took off from the bushes, and the dog pointed. And I'd never seen a dog point like that before, and it was a hunting dog. And I just couldn't imagine that happening there.**

PS: Did you ever feel like you couldn't bear the Army anymore, like it was too much for you and you felt like you just wanted to go home, and not have to be there anymore?

**JB: No. Absolutely not. I felt this is what God wanted me to do, this is where I am, so I should do the best I could of it. I was concerned about the time they decided to start letting people out early. I was concerned that we were really wasting tax, taxpayer money. And I was hoping that they'd do that, and they did do the sensible thing I was glad of that of course, once they decided I was ready to leave this afternoon. (chuckles)**

PS: How would you communicate with your family?

**JB: Well I'd go to a payphone and pick it up, and put something in there or something. We had quick access to it. It was domestic, we were in the United States. It was like I was anywhere else. Except for one time, my parents had an anniversary, and I had forgotten to send them an anniversary card. So here I was, it was their anniversary, and I look at my watch, and it's the date. I think, "What I am going to do?" And I walked over to the base communications office, and they had a Western Union thing there, not only did they handle the Army communication but they also would handle personal telegrams for people, apparently this is something they did as a part of their Army thing. Anywhere you were you could send a telegram back home, and that probably dated back to World War Two. And they are still doing it. I thought, "Okay I'll just send them a telegram" because nobody in my family ever sent a telegram before. So the guy on a bicycle comes up to the house in**

**California with this telegram in hand. Handing it to my folks. Now think of it from my parents' viewpoint. Your son has been in the military. He's being experimented on, and somebody hands you a telegram. Of course, he's dead! (laughs). I scared the daylights out of them. They told me never send a telegram again unless somebody had died.**

PS: Did you ever fear for your life at any point while you were there?

**JB: No. No. I would not say so. No more than in any other thing that I do in the United States. I didn't think it was risky, and the experiments they were using us for were not really risky things, they were being very careful. There had been some issues back in the 1950s. There are stories of people actually being permanently disabled or damaged, you know, they couldn't walk as well or something like that. I don't know of anybody having died doing that kind of service. And actually I was never used in any experiment and I suspect this is because I was the only guy who could do the kind of stuff I was doing in the lab, and so my superior officer probably sent a note over to the experiment management people saying hey, don't ask him because we can't afford to not have him. In fact, towards the end of my time, one thing they asked me to do was research in the Army documentation, that's what the military occupational specialty would do because they didn't have whitecoats coming anymore because the draft had quit. So I had to get an Army person specification for what it would take to do what I was doing and when I looked at it, I realized I was going to need a master's degree and I didn't even have an associate at the time so I told him that and walked out of the place. I was glad to be gone. I had other things in life, other plans. There was a young lady involved, etc.**

PS: So most of this people in the Whitecoat project were Adventist?

**JB: They were all Adventist. The Whitecoat project was specifically an arrangement between the United States Army and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They came to the Adventist Church with a proposal because they were afraid some Adventist would feel there was an ethical problem with this. And so the Adventist Church got some of their best theological minds together and listened to what they said, and they said oh, this is a good thing. I am not as convinced now as I was then that it was a good thing. I think they were actually used to calibrate the effects of nuclear weapons which were never used thankfully. But uh, I think that the information they got especially in the early days from the experiments was at least as useful for offensive Army work as it would be for defensive, and we were told it was purely defensive.**

PS: Since you were in a group with other Adventist people, were you able to practice your faith freely?

**JB: We had no problems with faith, they fully understood. In fact, starting with training where there was... you know, as I went into training in Basic, half of us were Adventist. Now, when we got into Advanced training that wasn't so many more, it was only more like ten percent or so. But they told us first day, "okay, you've got to decide whether you're Adventist or whether you're a C.O.," because that's what they called people who were not**

**Adventist. Because they said you guys get Saturdays off and the other guys get Sundays off and you can't change back and forth every week so you can get both days off.**

PS: So you did not have to work on the Sabbath.

**JB: I did not have to work on the Sabbath at all. During the training we didn't have any training on the Sabbath, or any mandatory things to do. Now, when I got into Project Whitecoat, bear in mind we're taking care of animals. You can't put them into suspended animation Friday afternoon. I'm sorry, okay, somebody has to come in to make sure they're fed and watered and properly taken care of, and Adventists didn't have any problems doing that. If we had a long term experiment going on where you had to come in and collect a piece of data or two, that didn't bother us because that's something that could not be moved outside the... you know, out of the Sabbath. And I had no issues with that, but we were allowed to help plan the experiments, so that we would move all the unnecessary work out of the Sabbath. So we had a lot of say in how it worked out. But no, I didn't have any problems with Sabbath in the Army. My father did, briefly, but usually what happened back in World War II was after an initial conflict of some sort, where some sergeant or officer would get mad and stuff. Once they discovered that he was a solid guy and he was willing to pick up the slack for somebody else's differences of some other kind. Adventists made it pretty well there in the military. But no, we never had... we never got any boots thrown at us or anything like that.**

PS: So at the end of those two years, when you were finally able to go back home. Did you know exactly the day that you would go back home?

**JB: Oh yeah! Everybody had a calendar on the wall showing how many more days it is, and we're marking them off as we go. Oh yeah.**

PS: Can you tell me about the day you went back home. What was it like?

**JB: Well, by that time I was living in an apartment and I was going to the Army during the daytime. Well not an apartment, I was... I was staying at the Adventist Servants Center in Tacoma Park, which was kind of like an apartment. So I wasn't even sleeping there anymore, I was sleeping at an Adventist facility that was provided for us. And so the only difference in my life was that I didn't have uh, I didn't have any more work to do there. You know, I didn't have to report to the base anymore. I don't remember any excitement or anything happening there because I actually stayed in the area for another year. I had met a young lady. I'd had no success with the girls, and one day a guy that I knew, as I was walking by he said "Hey John, we found your wife!" and I said "really? I got to meet her." You know, fix me up! So they set us up on a blind date for April Fool's Day. And I thought, Yeah right. (chuckles) And actually the joke's on them because we're still married and they're not.**

PS: Wow, so that is your wife!?

**JB: Yeah that was my wife, we met on April Fool's Day.**

PS: Did you make any other friends in the Army that you still talk to?

**JB: Well actually there's one guy I knew before the Army but we got closer together in the Army and yeah we still email back and forth from time to time, and sometimes we'll see each other.**

PS: Can you tell me what was the biggest lesson you learned while in the Army?

**JB: Well, the biggest lesson I learned was that, you know, if you do... if you do good work and you relate well to people, they will respect your beliefs in most cases. Yeah you'll find some weirdos that, you know, if you have some belief they think it's strange, they'll think you're a strange person, but they get used to the idea and you'll do OK. We had one case for instance, where a couple of us were walking back from class in Advance Training, walking back to the barracks just alone, and they always marched us in a group to the classes but at the end of class we could go back on our own because, hey maybe we wanted to go to the P.X., that's the Post Exchange, where you can buy stuff, or you wanted to go eat or something. Anyway, so we were walking back on Friday afternoon and there was a shooting range that I didn't even know existed, it was just a another building, and we walked by it and just then a couple officers who'd been shooting, you know, practicing their shooting Friday afternoon, had left. And the sergeant had a bunch of weapons that needed to be cleaned, and so he was going to grab us and he said "come on guys, I need help cleaning this stuff up!" and we said well, we haven't been trained on proper weapon cleaning and it's also sunset and our religion says that we can't work after sunset and it's going to be sunset in a few minutes. And the sergeant just said oh boy, what weird stuff I am having to go through now. Okay, get out of here, I've got to find somebody else! And on our way I wish I'd been able to help him because it might have encouraged the guy. But, you know, you could get along with people.**

PS: Did the military make a big impact on your life? Do you think there is a before and after?

**JB: Well I had more exposure to people who were not Seventh-day Adventist in the military and that was that big difference, yeah. You know, I was not required to be an Adventist, so I had to make up my own mind and that was important. You know it's easy if you have rules that you have to do this and you do that or they're going to count how many times you did worship or whatever, to just go along with it and it not be a part of you. And since I wasn't required to do that, I could behave any way I wanted. Well, within Army regulations of course. So I was making my own choices, and my choice to walk past the beer vending machine and not put a quarter in and get a can of beer was my own choice, it wasn't because somebody didn't have the beer for sale in the vending machine. So I was making my own choices. I think it's good to make your own choices.**

PS: Do you think it helped you mature?

**JB: It provided an opportunity for me to mature. It's kind of funny, they let us get into the P.X. where we could get beer in Basic Training one night, but they didn't tell us that the**

**first thing on the agenda the next morning was a physical training test. We were going to get to run a mile. And, I'm about halfway through the mile, and some other guys who were "Adventists" and had indulged in a bit of beer the night before were rolling in the grass on the side...(chuckles) because they didn't know how to handle it. But, um, some people learn it harder than others.**

PS: Is there anything else that you would like to add that we didn't cover?

**JB: No, I think you've asked plenty of questions. That's good. Well I did mention I was a second generation Conscientious Objector. So I'd hear the stories from my father.**

PS: Okay, well thank you for your time and for your willingness to share your story.

**JB: You're welcome.**

PS: Well, I think that's it. Thank you so much.

**JB: Thanks for bringing back some memories.**

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