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Oral History: James Cruz- Medic During Vietnam

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Student Interviewers Name: Britani Brown

Interviewee Name: James Cruz

Time and Location of Interview: The interview was conducted in one session on October 30, 2016 and lasted approximately an hour and a half. It was conducted in a local home where I could borrow a landline to speak with Mr. Cruz which is found at 4303 Cele Court Collegedale, TN 37315. Only the interviewer was present talking to the interviewee over the phone.

About James Cruz:

James Cruz was born in Fajardo, Puerto Rico, to Salvador and Laura Cruz, in 1948. His birth name was Jaime Cruz, (no middle name) He was known as Jaime throughout his life, although since he was bullied, because it was perceived of as a girly name, most of his high school friends called him James. His parents moved their family (which was his mother, father, his older brother and older sister and himself) to California when James was 3 years old. He attended San Fernando Seventh Day Academy 1st through 4th grade. Then went and spent time with his grandparents in Puerto Rico for 5th and 6th grade in a public school. Returning to California for 7th. From that point forward he was in public school. However, many of his SDA church buddies were at the same school, and they hung around together at school and church. He graduated from San Fernando High school in 1967, and was working at a machine shop when he was sent a greetings card from Uncle Sam.

Requesting his presence to serve in the Armed Forces. James reported to Uncle Sam in Los Angeles, California and entered the U S Army on his 20th birthday. From there he was bused to Fort Ord, where he received his medic training orders, then was flown to Fort Sam Houston, TX, where he spent 4 months, 6 weeks of basic training, then 10 weeks of medical training. After a short leave, James was to report to Fort Lewis, Washington (which was a staging area for deportation for the military) where he met up with thousands of other military personnel getting deployed to Vietnam. He arrived in Vietnam August 1968. His Purple Heart injury took place on Thanksgiving Day 1968.

While in Vietnam James was granted what, the military calls an R&R (rest and relaxation) after his injuries. Another medic and James went to Singapore. Once healed and returning to Vietnam, he completed his year tour and left there in August 1969. Returning to the United States. Here in the USA James finished his two-year obligation to the US Army. After exiting the military, he worked at a hospital as an LPN until he met a patient who owned a VW Dealership that offered him a service writers job at the dealership, where he then went to VW schooling, and that was the beginning of going back to the automotive technical world. James married a woman by the name of Margaret in May 1972. He continued to study and got his Master Automotive Tech license, while the two took a couple business college classes together, then they opened their first auto repair business in 1975 at the age of 27. They sold that business

in 1979 and moved to Florida and had four children, only one being James' biological daughter. Owning a few different businesses, the last one they owned for 23 years. Retiring in 2014.

Interviewer: Britani Brown (BB)

Interviewee: James Cruz (JC)

BB: Hello Mr. Cruz, I want to begin by asking you if you enlisted into the military or did you get drafted?

JC: I was drafted.

BB: Okay, so if I have this correct, you were a medic during your time in the Army, right?

JC: I was a medic, that is correct.

BB: So, did you have previous medical training before entering the military?

JC: No, I was an automotive technician before I went into the military. I was already working by the time I was I high school.

BB: Oh wow, so when you were drafted in did they give you options other than working medical care like firefighting or education?

JC: I was a conscientious objector , plus Seventh-day Adventists have that choice. We could choose to be conscientious objectors' when we were drafted or we could just live that lie. I was a conscientious objector, therefore, uh, you don't have to carry arms so as a conscientious objector there's only about three or four different jobs that they'll give you. One is cooking, one is driving a truck, one as medic, and there is clerical. During the Vietnam era and during war time they needed more medics, so I was assigned by the military to medical school, or medic training I should say.

BB: In doing that, how long did you have to train for?

JC: Ten weeks of medical training. I think it's six weeks of basic training, which is where you go in and learn how to be a soldier. In the learning to be a soldier if you are infantry or regular soldier, not conscientious objector then they also train you in shooting and arms. As a medic, they don't take you to that training you just go and train for the medical. But you do go to basic training. So, the basic training I think is about eight weeks for those who are shooting and in infantry and maybe six weeks for non-infantry soldiers.

BB: In that eight weeks, you were already a conscientious objector so you did not train with firearms?

JC: No, if you're a conscientious objector your training period is two weeks shorter because you don't need to learn firearms. Meaning you still train on how to avoid getting shot and what happens when you get a grenade, what you do if a grenade gets real close to you, and how you protect yourself. So, you're still a soldier you still train and keep up with the infantry guys also. You go through physical training: running every day, low crawling under obstacles through the mud. The only thing you don't get is the firearms training. If

you were not a conscientious objector and you became a medic, then you took the firearms training. The only ones that were exempt, and still are, were the conscientious objectors. Uh, we had our beliefs that we can serve the military without having to kill anyone.

BB: For you specifically would you say that your decision to be a conscientious objector was based on religious purposes or merely ethical?

JC: Religious reasons.

BB: What was it that influenced you or inspired you to be a conscientious objector? Because from what I understand didn't you grow up in the Adventist church?

JC: Yes, just growing up in the Adventist church and in my upbringing, I attended an academy in the early years. It's an option given to some denominations and I took the option.

BB: When reading through some articles and books I learned that many conscientious objectors had to appeal to a local court and get approved to participate as a conscientious objector. Was this the same in your case?

JC: Uh, no. when you first sign up for the draft, you must sign up when you turn 18, they ask you all those questions. And I checked the seal, I answered yes and put in all the reasons. And once they review all that they issue the conscientious objector status. So, as I went in, once I was drafted, I didn't have to do anything except check the square and go on from there. In other words, they probably knew what they were getting.

BB: Okay, so adding onto that it is understood that many conscientious objectors believe and have the mindset that war is the evil part of our social order and the way the military deals with certain things. Do you agree?

JC: I do not. Um my thinking and because the Bible said so is you can join a war party if you are not going to kill someone. The church takes a stand that, okay, we could drop out if you were a Seventh-day Adventist and their religion could opt out or could opt to fight or lower the Seventh day Adventist post war period. But that's not the the belief of the church. The church believes that you still serve your country. Your country needs you and in the capacity of war or in the time of war you are still able to serve your country you just don't have to carry arms. You can still do good and do things that will help the cause. Therefore, I believe in what the church says and I believe you should serve your country and do the best you can.

BB: That was very well said. So, another question that is very similar to the previous one is this: do you believe that being involved with the military, even though you were a conscientious objector, is un-Christian like. Do you think that being in that environment is negative towards your relationship with God or life as a Christian?

JC: Actually, let me see, how do I say this, um, it is a benefit in I think God looks kindly on those who do go into harm's way and help the people who are in danger and need help. My view of it is that if the country is at war for a reason then you should go and then help your

country. Um, its patriotism but it's also, let's see, there's a saying "if you're in Rome you do as the Romans." We were born in the United States, we grew up here, and even the ones who come and become citizens we just don't believe in killing but we believe that there are certain conflicts that need to take place. In those conflicts they know that people are going to get hurt and we are willing to go and help and put our efforts to helping those guys that are getting hurt protecting our country, protecting our beliefs, or protecting our freedom of religion/speech and all that. Uh, no matter how you look at it, if you are a patriot and if you like your country, when you go and do what you have to do. You don't have to kill anyone but you have to do what it takes to maintain our freedom.

BB: So, did you or any other conscientious objectors have to deal with running into conflicts with other soldiers or other men because of your religious beliefs?

JC: Not at all, I did have one issue but basically a medic is a medic. If a guy is one of your soldiers and someone out there that you are trying to protect gives you a hard time, if that same guy gets hurt the medic might look the other way. So, they're not going to give the medics a hard time. It's like they want to take care of us. They take care of their medics because those are the men that are going to take care of them if they get hit, lose limbs, or get injured. So, if you were not in a war zone I think that could happen. Some soldiers might look down on you because you're a conscientious objector but if you're in a war zone nobody even cares. They don't care if I carry a weapon or not because a weapon is going to take up more space and weigh me down as opposed to carrying more medical supplies. Okay, that is that part...let me relate a quick story. When I first arrived in Vietnam I was assigned to a Civil Affairs Unit and the Civil Affairs Unit had several medics. Another medic was assigned with me and what this group did was they had little compounds or little places around the country that would help. They helped build schools, build aid stations, uh, render medical aids and there were a lot of medics assigned to that company because that was doing single service for the Vietnamese people. When I first got there, I was assigned to another unit and they sent me away, well they sent me up to a camp. There was a house that was built by the military and then there was a refugee camp that was a mountain yard. Mountain yard people are like the Aborigines people of Australia, their mountain people. And because of the war they had been displaced. So, they send me to one of these outposts. It was the last unit, next to last unit to the Cambodian border. So, we were way out in the mountains and far away from everything. It took about an hour to get there from the biggest city. And one of five people, there were two medics, and we took care of these people and as a medic we did perform almost anything. For someone that was a medic and someone that was planning to go into medicine that was the ideal situation because you could practice medicine with no limitations. We could dispense, we could do anything we needed because these people had nothing else and we were out in the woods, out in the country, far far away. The guys before me had delivered twins, when I was there to perform post-natal training *clears throat* for the ladies with kids' um we had the opportunity to pull teeth. The other medic and I had free range to do what we needed to do. Like I said we could pass out medications and all kinds of stuff and we pulled teeth for the men that had really rotten teeth from chewing betel nut it's kind of a seed that's grindy

and they'd grind their teeth down to the nub and they'd have a lot of pain. So, anyway, I was assigned to that unit and I went in there without a gun and so about a couple of weeks after being there, the commanding officer and there were only five of us and we had a house, we were just out there. So, they asked me if we were to be attacked by the enemy (which we were not that far away, the border to Cambodia was about two or three miles away) if we were to ever be attacked would you pick up a gun and help us fight them off? My response to them was "I don't think that will ever happen" I claimed, I always claimed Psalms 91 (a hundred shall fall aside and no one will get to me). I always took that to heart and I claimed that promise. So, my thinking was if God was there, we were not going to get attacked and uh so I was good with that. So, they accepted my answer and two or three weeks later I got orders, transfer orders out of that unit. The commanding officer explained to me that if they started to overrun by the enemy they needed everyone to help fight 'em all. And since my response was that I would not help, they transferred me. They said they would transfer me to a hospital unit. Okay, now should I continue along with that?

BB: Yes! This story is very interesting so far.

JC: Okay, so, I arrived there at the city where the headquarters was and picked up all my stuff that I had there. They sent me to An Khê which was about 90 miles up the coast inland. I arrived to the 173rd brigade airport and they gave me my orders to where I was to go next. It was the 1st of the 50th mechanized infantry and so I inquired, uh, I said, "well what is this?" They said well, you're going to this unit which is attached to the 173rd brigade as a medic. And so, I inquired and said, "they told me they were sending me to a hospital unit." So, then on I was an infantry medic. Again, they did give us the more additional training in Vietnam to be ready for what goes on in a war zone. We had had a basic training for a war zone but when we got there they went over it again and showed us what jungle warfare is and, uh, that was it.

BB: That's really cool. But remind me of were you were sent after you left the hospital?

JC: I was never at the hospital unit, when they changed my location and gave me orders to go to An Khê they said they were sending me to a hospital unit but the commander who was telling me all this did not have the authority to decide where I would end up. Um, so he told me what they wanted but that was just something he was saying. When I got to An Khê there was a hospital which I was in but not as a medic. So, when I got to An Khê I was assigned to the 1st of the 50th mechanized infantry. And I accepted that.

BB: With all the training that you received before being sent to Vietnam, was the war zone anything like you had imagined?

JC: Not at all. The training didn't really show you what you were really going to see. As well landed imagine you are going into a warzone there was the jungle with tall brush and trees. It's like Florida but nobody's cut down the trees and such. And so, you're flying in this big airplane coming in from the US and that's when we were getting close and starting to see land and the vegetation. As we are beginning to land I see smoke in one place and see

smoke from another place and you start to wonder, “what is going on there?” because you don’t know what to expect. And it turns out it was just people cooking food in the jungles. So when the plane lands you were in a military base, you still haven’t seen any of the cities or anything like that. A big huge military base with thousands of soldiers that are coming and going. And so, in answer to the question no. As you see these fires and smoke coming up you start to thinking if there are fire fights or bombing but you turn out to just land and hang out with the rest of the soldiers waiting to find out what their assignment is. They did not prepare us for what it looked like as much as they prepared us for how to survive.

BB: In saying that, some say that Vietnam was very close to being a genocide or a mass murder with the use of napalm and technological weapons. So, do you think the US should have stayed out of the war? After seeing everything that you saw...

JC: Give me a minute *chuckles softly* okay. I do not regret being drafted and going into the military and going into a warzone. I do not regret that. I think it was a good experience and I learned a lot. In terms of whether the war was worthwhile; at the time that it started, um, hold on. At the time, it would appear to be a good thing to go help this country stay out of communism. It started way before I went there, it started before I was even interested in anything. I had no knowledge of what was going on in the early 60s and it had been going on for many years. Was it a good idea at the time? It was and it was done for a good cause but that, um, repeat your question please.

BB: It was, should the United States have gotten involved in the war being the fact that so many people were injured and killed?

JC: Because I was there and I saw what was going on I can’t answer that unbiased. In my opinion it was worth doing but its biased because I was there. Some people that just stayed home or didn’t go did not see any benefit in it. Unfortunately, they pulled the rug out from under us like Iraq. Anyway, they defunded the war effort and a lot of kids died over there because of that. So, if you start a war you need to commit wholeheartedly that we’re gonna finish it. Whether I agree or not, again it’s my personal view and I’m biased because I was there and I saw what was going on. If I had not have been there I’d say it was a waste of human life.

BB: Okay, I want to go back to when you were in the Civil Affairs Group. What did you do the month you were there since you were a conscientious objector?

JC: I was still actively working as a medic. With a refugee camp, we must have had about thirty or forty mountain yard families and men and women that we took care of. When I went, I took my job as medic and we operated an aid station or a dispensary where we helped all these people. And every day we went and did whatever needed to be done. We were next to doctors. There was no one to care for them there. And so, I worked up until the day they said they were transferring me out. That is when I picked up my stuff and left. I did more things, medical procedures and things that you would never ever be able to do today. Even doctors that are in practice aren’t allowed to do the things that we did. We could do just about anything to these people that would keep them healthy and well. We

could patch and cut and fix and uh, again dispense whatever medications they needed. Whatever we needed we would call in and get the supplies. They didn't let us dispense opiates or anything like that. Hard drugs and things like that, but we could give them just about anything else.

BB: Okay, so you were actually in the refugee camp the whole time helping these people for a month?

JC: That is correct.

BB: Well, I was really curious, when you went to be a part of the 173rd Airborne Brigade did you ever hear the nickname "Sky Soldiers."

JC: Yeah, but sky soldiers were pretty much people that were literally airborne and jumped out of airplanes. All the fighting soldiers from the 173rd Airborne are paratroopers. As are the others that I mentioned. But yeah, their called sky soldiers because they jump out of airplanes.

BB: And all these men were the ones you ran along with providing medical care for?

JC: No, I was attached to the 173rd airborne. I was the commanding unit but my unit was the 1st of the 50th mechanized infantry. We were part of the 173rd but our unit was a ground unit nobody jumped out of any airplanes. We were in machinery that tracked our personal air carriers. I was in D company that was a support company and the medics were all a part of that group. And then I served and I helped watch over A, B, and C companies that were out in the field. In other word the 173rd was a brigade. As a unit, we were an attached to them so we were their patch meaning we were a part of them. Meaning we didn't work directly with them but we supported. When they needed support, we would go out and do that for them so they could continue to go out and do their job and do whatever they were gonna do.

BB: Ohhhh, thank you for clearing that up for me.

JC: Clear as mud?

BB: *laughs out loud* absolutely! Um, so when you returned home from Vietnam were you discharged? Because I am aware that President Nixon was trying to withdrawal a lot of the troops out of the war to attempt in stopping the war.

JC: Within that time when they started defunding and made it more difficult I wasnt during those years. Um, 68 and 69. Vietnam was a year tour so I had finished my tour and came back and served the west with about six months of what I had left in the military at Fort Benning Georgia and then I got out of the military. But when I came back I was done with my tour of duty and the fight was going on in Vietnam because they wanted us out of there so they cut the funds but as a result there were less medics being trained. There was a shortage of medics when I was there as well. Also, equipment was not getting repaired cause the people back in the States didn't want the war. So, Congress began to defund them and take away money so the Pentagon didn't have enough money to have the best

equipment and they started shorting us things. I was in that era but actually did not know that until about eight to ten years ago when I saw a documentary on television that talked about how they had defunded and what was going on at the time. When I saw that, it all came together for me because I remembered we did not have enough medics. Instead of having four per company there were sometimes three or just two. Or should I say, yeah, per company. Each platoon is supposed to have a medic. Most of the time when I was there and out in the field with the infantry we had two medics, sometimes three. And when I saw that documentary I understood why we had the shortage. The thing that I noticed while I was there, the equipment that we had there was falling apart and they had stopped sending us parts to fix it. They wanted us out of there so they cut the funding and we didn't receive what we needed. When we did get out of there they basically pulled us out and there was no one there to protect the Vietnamese people. As soon as we were gone the communists came in and took over. It was almost the same thing that happened in Iraq and the middle east.

BB: That must have been intense with how you had to figure out what to do once a machine broke and you had no parts.

JC: We used pieces from other machines. It was like we had a junk yard where we could go and find whatever we needed. Instead of having new pieces come in like we used to. It would be hard to gage how many American lives we lost because of the defunding while we were still over there. We were doing the job that they sent us to do and they pulled the rug out from under us. I was one of the fortunate ones who came back a few years before, but there were guys still going over there in 70 or 71.

BB: I am sure they adapted and learned how to use the scraps of other machines to repair the working equipment just like you did. So, I have a question that is a little change in subject. From what I understand a purple heart is a medal soldiers receive when severely injured or killed in battle. So, how did you receive one? Would it have been just from all the medical work that you did?

JC: No, a purple heart is someone who sustained injuries in a warzone. If you get shot up or wounded, you get a purple heart. I was wounded Thanksgiving Day of 1968.

BB: Vietnam has been described as grim and painful. So, if you are comfortable would you be willing to tell me what it was like in Vietnam?

JC: okay, well give me a couple minutes to catch my breath.

BB: Take your time.

JC: I'll go back to the beginning when I arrived. When I got there on the airplane of course I had no clue what we were getting into. When they assigned me to the Civil affairs they put us in a C-1 plane which was a cargo carrier. It has jump seats all around and inside the plane there was a big stack of supplies they were shipping out somewhere. So, about twenty of us got into that airplane and took off from the city which we had landed. This was Camron Bay which was very near Saigon. We landed and the other medic and I got off. The trip was scary because we didn't know what we were doing or where we were going.

We landed in another base in La Drang and it was pretty normal. From there we went off to our respected jobs or our assignment. Um, the other medic and I were assigned to different units. I lost track of him completely. And I went to the mountain yard camp, when they sent me back, and at the mountain yard camp I was never afraid of anything, there was never shooting we were just helping people. I did my job there with satisfaction. It was a nice job. So, then I was transferred on another plane that was smaller with probably seven other guys. We get on the runway with two little jets on the side that help it take off since there were only two propellers. I had never been on one that took off like this. We all looked at each other and it was scary to think if that plane was safe to fly in. but it took off and we landed the base in An Khê. I then learned in training that you wear long sleeve shirts and long pants cause you don't want to catch anything. There's a lot of bugs like ticks and chiggers and leeches all around the jungle. The other thing is the medics are to take care of their troops, especially making sure they change their socks. We can't provide them but the helicopters would bring these supplies. I continued to learn and it seemed like a peaceful place, they mentioned some mortars and fire fights that occurred a few weeks earlier. But pretty much it was a big big base with lots of people in it and good perimeter security. So, then I get to my unit and I get indoctrinated with the medics and met those who were already there. The company I was then assigned to was B company. And its important to know that if anything happens you can always count on the helicopters to come to your rescue since there are machine guns mounted on the sides of the helicopters. My company, at the time, was protecting the spot that was used for supplying all the bases from the shore all the way inland. We were kind of in the center of that. And so, they had bridges to carry these supplies such as supplies, gasoline, diesel fuel. But the enemy would blow up these bridges so our trucks couldn't get across. The 1st of the 50th was then sent out, and I went to one of the bridges as a medic. When I was there I took care of a whole company of guys. Which was about thirty or forty guys. My bridge was #25 so I would have guard duties as well as medic duties. One day I hear small arms fire between the bridge I was on and bridge #26 which was about a mile and a half down the road. I heard gunfire so I called our support unit which was about ten miles out. I mentioned to them that it appears we have an ambush. In doing this, all the other men and bridges heard me. But I called for backup. I felt comfortable at this time and I saw the helicopter going to help. He started shooting with the machine guns and I was just watching and looking around. All the guys I was with were doing the same, there was not anything for us to do but watch. A bullet or something went up and sheared the back rotor off the helicopter and my heart sank. It just deflated me so badly. It scared me so bad because if the guys you felt were always there for you can get shot out of the sky then, you know, we're in a warzone. It was devastating to watch that helicopter go down. It was even more devastating when they brought out the men. I shot one up with morphine and sent him off but we could not find the pilot. From that day on it was a different place for me. It was my first thought became terror. Believing in the guys who fly above you is so reassuring and when you see one hit the dirt, it was terrible. So, give me just a second. Our company had three missions: patrol the bridges, going around and doing reconnaissance, and for that we used the personal army carriers. The other mission was going on reconnaissance on foot, and each month you

rotated from one to the other. My first was on the bridge my second was on the track. the third rotation was when I went out with the infantry guys and I never rotated out of that one. Um, so that one we would go out and check out the different villages we were out in the woods. We would spend a week going one way then they may come in and move us on helicopters to somewhere else. It was in one of those assignments when I got injured. Would you like to hear the story?

BB: Yes, of course! Now, this is the story of how you received your purple heart?

JC: Yes, the story goes like this: we had been climbing a mountain for about a week. We got to a shoulder, it was a big shoulder, probably about four hundred feet across, maybe five hundred feet. It was a nice clean, grassy area. Not much in it but maybe two trees. The mountain feet kept going up for about another thousand feet with more trees. We set up our tents and everything we were a complete company with platoons and a commander. Got up the next morning and it was Thanksgiving Day, 1968. We were resupplied with fatigues and things to wear like socks. They provided us with a Thanksgiving meal and brought us the mail we had received. Everyone was set up with fox holes and was prepared to stay there for about three or four days because it was so nice. So, we ate lunch, thanksgiving dinner was excellent, then I was going to write home that evening. I usually laid on my air mattress and leaned over the edge to write. I hadn't written in three or four weeks. But after we ate we all just hung around but I had to go out because nature was calling. We didn't have bathrooms so we went out into the woods and did our thing. So, I'm walking with my shovel out to a little wooded area near some trees. Once I walked passed the tree there was a wasp's nest and they started attacking me. I started beating them and they started going for my face. They caused me to forget why I was going out there and I got stung two or three times. One near my eye. This was around 2 p.m. and my face was swollen so I couldn't write home anymore. So, I left my helmet and bag in my tent and walked around for a little while. Not a real tent, but it was a shelter. So, I walked around and visited with all the guys and around 4 or 5 o'clock the sun began to set. I was on the far side of the perimeter and we started getting attacked by mortars. Apparently, the trees had been dead and the enemy had set up their mortars up there. They must have known we were going to set up there. So anyways, they started throwing mortars at us and the saying goes that the scariest moment is when you hear it go *gapoom* and once it hits the ground you know you're good. So you'd hear them go and duck for cover. But this time it was rapid fire you just heard *gapoom gapoom gapoom gapoom*. They walked across our perimeter. So, we started firing at them and they quit for a while. I had been on the other side so I ran to my tent to get my medical supplies and helmet. Right before I got there they began firing mortars again I was almost there and had to dive for cover. They dropped one right on my tent, blowing up everything I had. Even my air mattress where I would have been lying if I could have written home. Anyways, as I was lying there I felt the concussion. My left arm was up, up around my head, and my body was as flat as I could get. I just laid there because I felt the concussion when the mortar hit. After a few seconds, I crawled over to a fox hole that was about ten feet away. By this time, night had fallen. I got there and asked if there was room for one more. All the guys responded saying, "yeah come on in" so

I went down on top of everyone. Standing there started to feel my fatigues getting wet and my shirt on my side was also wet. After ten or fifteen minutes, I finally felt around on my body a little bit and realized it was blood. During that time, we had called support so there were 155 millimeters shooting as well as helicopters and f-15s came dropping bombs on the mountain. That went on for a couple hours. I picked up an aid bag when things calmed down. Oh, little piece of the story, there were three of us medics with the company, but one had gotten sick the day before and was sent back to the base. The other guy's name was Dan. And that day we both got injured. He had shrapnel on his back and I had it on my side, my arm, and my leg, and it almost blew off my elbow. We looked at each other, patched each other up and went on patching the other eleven soldiers that were injured. We spent that night, that was probably one of the worst nights of my life because my air mattress had exploded, the wounds were achy and sore, my concussion was bad and the ground was covered in rocks. The next day they transferred us out of there while the guys up in the mountain continued to shoot mortars at us but they must've gotten hit cause they missed every shot. About 10 o'clock they started moving us off the mountain and I went and spent about a week in the hospital because my wounds had gotten infected and both Dan and I needed surgery. They left one piece of shrapnel in my leg that they said would come out on its own. Which it did, but not till many years later. And that's the story.

BB: I am amazed, it's awesome how the wasps ended up saving you in the end.

JC: They did and I have a soft spot in my heart for them now, you have no idea. I claim the promise of Psalm 91 that whole time. The wasps were sent to keep me alive, there must have been a plan or something going on that I wasn't meant to lose my life there.

BB: Okay so one final question. Out of all the time you spent in Vietnam what would you say was the most valuable lesson you learned?

JC: Uh, one is trusting God because the bottom line is trusting God. I learned a lot of lessons, um, you can do for people and they appreciate it whether in a warzone or not. We took care of those mountain people who knew nothing. They had no reason to be misplaced because they had nothing to do. You learn to appreciate life with your buddies you gain. You learn to appreciate God and what He has given us.