

Interview with
JAMES PATRICK WEISS

January 8, 2019

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JAMES PATRICK WEISS

James Patrick Weiss was interviewed on January 8, 2019 by Randall J. Bunn at the Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins, Washington County, Utah. He related his military experiences.

RB: I want to talk with you about some of your military experiences.

JW: I tell you it was pretty short.

RB: Before we get into that, tell about your childhood. You were born in Michigan and your birthdate is in 1941. Was [it] in Muskegon [where] you were born?

JW: Yes.

RB: You said your father was around only for a short time in your life. What is the earliest memory you have [from] your [childhood]?

JW: Of being a child?

RB: Yes. When you think back, any memories that you remember as a [youngster]?

JW: When I was four or five years old we lived with my father's cousin [while] he was in [World] War [II]. They had a big Collie dog. In fact, I went back to Michigan in 2001 and visited her [the cousin].

RB: That was nice. Your dad was in World War II? What branch of the service was he in?

JW: [United States] Army.

RB: Where did he serve? Do you know? No idea.

JW: I just know that we got on a bus and went to New York [City, New York] to meet him when he came home. The war was over. I remember that.

RB: Really? What was that like? Going to New York, the big city?

JW: Nothing that I remember.

RB: [Laughter] [While] your dad was gone, you were living with your mom. You were the oldest of three children?

JW: Yes. I was the oldest one and he came home on a leave. [They] had the second [child]. The third one [was] when he came home from the war.

RB: When he was away, did your mother stay with someone else?

JW: We stayed with his cousin.

RB: That was the one you were staying with and saw later on in life. [Did you] go to school in Michigan?

JW: I didn't go to school. I was only five [years old] when we left. He came home from the war and we moved to Washington.

RB: Where in Washington?

JW: [To] Vancouver.

RB: Right near Portland [Oregon].

JW: Right across the [Columbia] River from Portland. He went to work in the shipyards there. He and my uncle both [worked there]. My uncle came with us.

RB: That was a big move across the country for you at a young age. You were about five [years old] in 1946? When did your parents spilt up? How old were you?

JW: I was probably ten [years old].

RB: You don't know what happened to him after that?

JW: I know that when I was ten [years old] he came home and he worked in construction for Grumman Aircraft. He came home, got a divorce, left and we never heard from him until I was, I don't know, I was probably thirty [years old] when I heard from him again. Washington State put us on welfare and they wanted to find him. I remembered vaguely where he worked [for] a company over in Portland. I asked my uncle to take me over and we found the place. It was still there. We were able to get his social security number and they went after him to start paying. I was grown by then. The only one home was Don [Weiss]. He was still there. So he paid child support for Don for a couple of years.

RB: What was it like [for] your mom trying to raise three boys by herself?

JW: Lousy. It was in the slums. My mother slept around with men and got drunk. Took the food stamps and sold them for beer. [Since] I was the oldest, she thought I ought to keep the house clean and take care of my brothers. If it wasn't just so-so, she would beat me. She would come home drunk. It was lousy.

RB: Your childhood memories are not so positive?

JW: No, definitely not. But I was able to finally forgive her. She was ninety years old and we put her in this assisted living place. My youngest brother, Don, did [that]. I went to visit her. She had mellowed, of course, and I had too. I figured, hell, it had to be tough having three [children] and no education. No way to work to try and earn money. I guess she tried to earn money. I don't know what they called it but she worked as a nursing assistant back then. They didn't pay enough. She could get more money on welfare, getting food stamps. They gave us, I should remember growing up on it, oatmeal, peanut butter and dairy products, butter and cheese. It would melt. That is what we ate.

RB: That is what you had all the time? You must be sick of oatmeal! [Laughter]

JW: I can't look at a bowl of oatmeal to this day.

RB: [Laughter] I bet!

JW: A lot of times we didn't even have that.

RB: That was growing up. You were born in 1941, in the early 1950s, your dad is gone, that was kind of the rough period. You were going to school in Vancouver [Washington] or did she stay in Vancouver?

JW: Yes, I went to school in Vancouver. We went to different schools in Vancouver and Portland [Oregon].

RB: You were moving around a lot?

JW: Oh, hell yes! We would move out and they would tear down the house we had been in.

RB: It was probably hard to make friends that would last.

JW: We never had friends growing up. I joined a gang.

RB: You did?

JW: Yes.

RB: What was that like?

JW: It was a good family.

RB: That is what I have heard about being in a gang. They look out for each other and you have a bond with each other.

JW: We did.

RB: How old were you when [you did this]?

JW: Probably thirteen or fourteen [years old] when I finally joined.

RB: What kind of things did the gang do?

JW: We stole cars, we would shoplift, break into houses, burglarize houses. We did everything we shouldn't do. Hell, I didn't know any better. I did it to survive.

RB: It was a survival thing, I think.

JW: It gave me money to help buy groceries for [my brothers]. I didn't see much wrong with it, I will be honest with you. Everybody did it.

RB: No judgment from me.

JW: Then they busted us. Oh, that was when I was sixteen, I guess.

RB: What happened?

JW: That's when I went up to Bainbridge [Island, Washington] to the reform school. That is where I graduated. I was the first one in Washington to graduate from the reform school under the new program they had.

RB: How did they catch you? What were you doing?

JW: They caught a friend of mine and he squealed.

RB: He gave names of everybody and they came after you?

JW: Yes. Of course, he didn't go to reform school, just me and another one went.

RB: You were living in Washington, at the time, so that is why Bainbridge was the reform school?

JW: Yes.

RB: That is kind of a nice resort area now. [Laughter]

JW: It is now. Back then it was just an island that you couldn't get off of.

RB: What was reform school like?

JW: I don't know, I survived it.

RB: Were they strict with you?

JW: They tried to be strict with you. You couldn't get out.

RB: Did you have to get up at a certain time? Go to bed at a certain time? All the rules?

JW: Yes.

RB: Were there pretty rough [boys] there?

JW: [Laughter] Yes! You had to be tough to survive.

RB: I was going to ask you, were you a big [boy]?

JW: No, I was five foot. I had taking boxing when I was in the seventh grade.

RB: So you knew how to prevent some fellows from picking on you?

JW: So I had some skills. Plus I was a fighter, I didn't give up. They learned not to mess with me. Even if they beat me, I would come back and get them. They had to work hard to beat me.

RB: Left you alone?

JW: Yes.

RB: Being a survivor, it sounds like as a [youngster] with your mom and then going to reform school, you did have to look out for yourself.

JW: Yes.

RB: That was kind of the way your life turned out. What possessed you to graduate from reform school?

JW: I had a lady teacher who said, "Jim, you have to at least graduate so you have something when you get out of here."

RB: Some future for you.

JW: I had a choice when I turned seventeen [years old]. I could either go to the "big house" [adult prison] or I could join the [military] service.

RB: To join the service you needed to graduate.

JW: Yes, I needed to graduate.

RB: This was 1958.

JW: Yes. I was seventeen [years old] when I graduated in 1958.

RB: That is quite an accomplishment, considering.

JW: I was lucky. I was pretty smart, I guess. I skipped the seventh grade altogether. Back then, you just went in and said you were in whatever grade [when you went to a new school. They believed you and put you in the next grade].

RB: They didn't care.

JW: They just gave you a grade and moved you on.

RB: Sink or swim!

JW: It was different than it is now. You couldn't do that now.

RB: There are rules, the testing and everything is so regulated now.

JW: Yes.

RB: You got out of Bainbridge —

JW: I went into the [United States] Navy.

RB: — and you [joined] the Navy. This is 1958. In Seattle they have a naval base.

JW: Bremerton [Naval Base] is up there. I joined the Navy and they sent me down to, I didn't have much of a military career, I went to San Diego [California] to boot camp. I stayed there and went to radio school. After that I was supposed to get on a ship, but it didn't come in. So they sent me up to [Naval Station] Treasure Island [San Francisco, California] to go to electronics school. That was [about] six months. I graduated from that and I supposed to catch a ship there and I didn't. So they sent me back down to San Diego and put me in charge of recruits [coming to boot camp]. When I [was] through with that [assignment] I was finally put on a ship.

RB: Finally!

JW: So then it was 1961.

RB: You went to boot camp down there. What do you remember about boot camp?

JW: I cheated! I knew how to work [angles]. I had a buddy who was in the service. He'd come and see me and we'd sew seaman's stripes on my shirt. Then he would take me to the [enlisted] club. That is where I boxed. They had a [program] where you [could] box every Friday night. The [fellows] who boxed — win, lose or draw — [received] a steak dinner afterwards. So I signed up for boxing every week while I was a recruit.

RB: [Laughter] Were you in pretty good physical shape?

JW: Yes.

RB: I bet you were!

JW: I was five [feet] ten [inches] and weighed 170 pounds.

RB: That was pretty good.

JW: It's not big or little, but it was pretty solid. My friend saw me boxing one night. Afterwards [he] said, "I will get you some seaman's stripes." And we went over to the club. We did that three or four times. Sure as hell, I met my company commander over there one night.

RB: "What are you doing here?"

JW: He said, "I didn't see you here, Weiss." [Laughter] I said, "No, you didn't." And I was gone!

RB: [Laughter] He knew who you were.

JW: He told me [later], "I don't ever want to see you in there again." Anyway, I got through boot camp. When we went to boot camp, they had us [all] in a big group for a couple days. Then they called us out as we were going to be a company. They asked if anybody had marching experience. One little [fellow] raised his hand and said he had been in the reserves. So the leader said, "Okay, come over here. Anybody else?" I looked around. There wasn't anybody else [so] I put my hand up. "I was in the sea scouts and I marched." The leader said, "Okay, get over here." The short [fellow] was the company commander and I was the assistant company commander.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: All through boot camp I had a buddy who was in the same time that I was, but they had to march and carry rifles. The company commander and assistant company commander sat over in the shade, drank lemonade and watched them do all that. We had a little bayonet that we carried on outside.

RB: Oh, man!

JW: They hated it.

RB: You knew all the angles.

JW: Well, I lucked out on some of the angles.

RB: That is true. After boot camp, they sent you to Treasure Island?

JW: No, I went to radio school

RB: Radio school there in San Diego?

JW: Yes.

RB: What was that like? Radio school, what did they have you do?

JW: Just change tubes on radios.

RB: So it was like hardware repair?

JW: Yes. You could operate a radio. Then they sent me to Treasure Island to be an electronic technician. Back in those days, the radio was all tube, not electronic. I don't know why they called it electronic school.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: We just changed tubes on everything.

RB: Did you have to know different types of tubes?

JW: Yes. You had to learn the different types of tubes that went in the different type of equipment.

RB: Did you like it?

JW: It was better than being out on a ship. Except, I joined [the Navy] hoping I could see the world.

RB: Yes, that would be the big draw.

JW: That's why I joined the Navy, better than the Army or the Marines. It was interesting and I got through [it].

RB: You went to electronics school up at Treasure Island?

JW: Yes.

RB: What was it like living in the San Francisco area then?

JW: Oh, [it was] beautiful! I loved it!

RB: That was 1960 or so?

JW: Yes. I graduated in September or October from the recruit school and then I was six weeks [inaudible]. I went up there the end of 1958. I was there the first six months of 1959. Then they sent me down again to catch a ship. After three months, the chief petty officer said, "Weiss, how long have you been here?"

RB: [Laughter]

JW: I said, "I don't know, a couple of months." He said, "Where are your orders?" I said, "You got them." He went looking for the order to catch a ship and it never came in.

RB: What were you doing down there?

JW: Sitting in the [recreation] hall playing pool and drinking coffee. That was all I did.

RB: [Laughter] You [were] paid waiting for the ship?

JW: I [did that] for about three months. He said, "I am going to put your orders back in the box. A group of kids are coming in and you will be a recruit commander. I did that. Then it was 1958. I am trying to think how it all went. In the summer of 1959 I [was] down there. I took a recruit company in the fall. I don't know how many weeks they lasted. Then they put me on a ship and I went to Vietnam.

RB: You did?

JW: I was one of the first.

RB: I was going to say, that would have been about 1960, or something?

JW: 1960.

RB: That was early on.

JW: Yes, before we were even there.

RB: Yes, I know.

JW: We “weren’t involved.”

RB: Advisors! [Laughter]

JW: We were no more there and I made a couple of trips up the river on a gunboat. They put me on a gunboat and we took supplies up the river. We [were] hit and I [had] shrapnel, injured and everything. That was in 1960.

RB: The North Vietnamese Army or the Viet Cong, were they already active?

JW: Yes, they were active [and] we weren’t even there.

RB: That shrapnel proves you were there. [Laughter]

JW: Fortunately, we had a medic on board. [The shrapnel cut my wrist artery]. [Gesturing] The medic stopped it. Then they flew me to Japan.

RB: Okinawa or —?

JW: No.

RB: Yokosuka?

JW: Yes.

RB: The naval base there?

JW: Yes, the naval base there. They said we can’t handle it. We have to take him back to the states. They flew me back to —.

RB: You took a ship over and airplane back. At least you weren’t in a body bag!

JW: Yes, that was a good thing. They said I was supposed to keep flying, but I [was] hurt. We weren’t there. Our government lies as bad as all the rest of them. I hate to tell you that.

RB: Was [John F.] Kennedy the [United States] president then? Or was it still [Dwight D.] Eisenhower? Or do you recall?

JW: I am trying to think back. It wasn’t Eisenhower. It was the next one.

RB: Was it John F. Kennedy?

JW: Yes.

RB: He was sending advisors there.

JW: Because I came back to the naval hospital and they had the Cuban Missile Crisis.

RB: Oh, in 1962 then?

JW: Was it 1962?

RB: Yes, October 1962 was the big mess [with Cuba].

JW: Yes, I guess it was because I was ready to get out. They had the crisis and they stopped all the discharges and kept everybody. I had a buddy on a ship and he was supposed to get out and they sent his ship down there [to Cuba] as part of that blockade. Once they did that, they finally released us anyway.

RB: It didn't last that long.

JW: I had six or seven operations.

RB: On your arm?

JW: Yes. [Gesturing to his right wrist.]

RB: What was the injury that you had?

JW: [The shrapnel] cut all the nerves.

RB: Do you still have problems? The rest of your life?

JW: Yes. [The doctors] told me I would never use it again, but they're wrong.

RB: I saw you using it [his arm].

JW: I should use it a little bit. But that has been sixty-eight years.

RB: Sure. Do you have VA [Veterans Administration] disability?

JW: Yes.

RB: What percent?

JW: Seventy percent for loss of use of right hand. I was right-handed back then.

RB: Did you have to learn to write left-handed?

JW: Yes, I learned how to write left-handed, and how to throw a ball left-handed.

RB: I saw you signing your name.

JW: You couldn't read it, but I signed it. They released me because they put [a] hold [on discharges after the Cuban Missile Crisis.] I [was] released in 1962.

RB: Like in November?

JW: Yes, November or December of 1962.

RB: So you were in about four years?

JW: Just about. Almost. All I did was go to school, run recruits and go to Vietnam and got hurt.

RB: Your big cruise to see the world was to go up the Mekong River [in Vietnam].

JW: That was it.

RB: What else do you remember about Vietnam? What was it like when you first [arrived] there?

JW: Hot, sweaty and humid. I hated it. We were on the river. I never got off into the jungle.

RB: Did you stay on the ship the whole time?

JW: We were off shore and then we would run the gunboats. We would run supplies up the river.

RB: But you never got off the boat to look around.

JW: We would go to the dock, unload, turn around and go back. That was all we did.

RB: Not big memories of being there.

JW: It was hot and humid, I knew that.

RB: But [in] spite [of] that, you [received] a seventy percent disability from that one injury. Was it shrapnel because they fired a mortar at you? Or what?

JW: I don't know, I just know we [were] hit! We were going up the river and all of a sudden BOOM!

RB: Did it knock you out?

JW: Yes. The medic told me it cut that main artery in [my] wrist. [Gesturing]

RB: That is pretty dangerous.

JW: Yes, he said a couple of more [like that] and I would have been dead. But he got it stopped. He did something on it. They sewed it up enough to stop and hold it so I could fly back.

RB: What do you remember about the ship travel to Vietnam?

JW: Nothing.

RB: Did you go to Hawaii first?

JW: I don't even remember. How is that?

RB: Did they [do] the thing when you passed the International Dateline? There is a special [ceremony]?

JW: Yes. They did something. But I could care less about that.

RB: Sure.

JW: I didn't take part in any of that.

RB: What was life like living on the ship?

JW: I hated it.

RB: You were sleeping in bunk beds? [Laughter]

JW: Yes, bunk beds. The food was lousy. That is where I learned to put ketchup on eggs! We had powdered eggs and they scrambled them.

RB: They tasted like nothing!

JW: Powdered milk, I remember that. Their food wasn't much better than what I got [growing up].

RB: [Laughter] Did they serve you oatmeal?

JW: Hell, yes. We got oatmeal, too! I didn't eat it though. [Laughter] I don't have fond memories of growing up or [being in] the service. But I survived it.

RB: I see that. Did you continue to box after you [were] injured?

JW: No.

RB: You left that behind?

JW: I just dropped out. I entered school in January [1963].

RB: January of 1963? You got out in November of 1962. Did you use the GI Bill to go to the University of Washington [Seattle, Washington]?

[GI Bill of Rights, Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 was government issued bill for veteran's education.]

JW: Yes, they paid for my books, tuition and gave me \$35.00 a month. I had to have a job.

RB: Of course.

JW: I worked at service stations, nursing homes, car rental agencies, whatever I could [find]. I started in 1963 and I graduated in 1965. I went right through.

RB: Wow! That is pretty good.

JW: I went [to school during the] summers. I went straight and sometimes I carried twenty hours, twenty-one hours, whatever it took. I took the required classes. The summer of 1965 was the last.

RB: Then you must have been pretty good with numbers.

JW: Yes, I was. I was fortunate, I had a pretty good IQ and that is why they put me in all the [Navy] schools.

RB: For jumping around in grade school [inaudible].

JW: I was fortunate [that] I had a high IQ. I could read. I was a fast reader, a speed reader. I could read and remember [what I read]. In fact, when we were in the eighth grade we had a history teacher [who] was a pain in the butt. We were talking and she stopped us and said, "Alright, you two, I want you to read the" — what was it? One of [Abraham] Lincoln's speeches.

RB: The *Gettysburg Address*?

JW: The *Gettysburg Address*. "And I want you to recite that tomorrow in class." We had five or ten minutes left in class, I opened the book, read it and raised my hand. "Can I recite that now so I don't have to come tomorrow?" She said, "Don't be a smart aleck." I said, "I want to recite it." I stood up and recited it verbatim.

RB: Oh, my gosh!

JW: Her mouth went open! She said, “Get out!” [Laughter] I could read and I had a good memory.

RB: That’s right. Something about your brain allowed you to retain what you read.

JW: I will tell you, you lose it if you don’t use it. I still read a lot, but it is not near as fast. I don’t remember near as much. I could read a page out of an encyclopedia and recite it back to you.

RB: Wow! Had you had some different breaks in your early life, you probably would be a PhD and had a really good career.

JW: Yes, but you can’t look at life that way.

RB: No, no, no. It happened the way it happened. Nobody’s at fault, it just happened.

JW: One time I counted and I went to eleven different high schools. [Laughter] How’s that for a [crazy childhood]?

RB: [Laughter]

JW: Should I tell you how long I was in each one?

RB: Yes!

JW: For nine terms or semesters.

RB: Well, it is amazing that you did get through college.

JW: It was amazing that I got through high school! But I just told them what I had done and they just accepted it and put you in where you said you were.

RB: I am guessing that you were pretty good at learning to adapt to new environments? Because you were always changing and moving.

JW: Yes. I could adapt to anything. I still can. I adapted to this place with no trouble. They have rules. There are ways around all the rules. You can ask the nurse, I am a troublemaker because I am always breaking the rules.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: We are going to be another hour?

RB: No, I think maybe twenty minutes. You got out of the military, you went to the University of Washington, you said your growing up period wasn't so good, your military [time] wasn't so good. How was college?

JW: It was just books. I didn't join in any activities.

RB: Where did you meet your wife? [Renee Easton Weiss]

JW: Down here. One of the fellows that I went to school with wanted to bring me down to show me the good fishing they had [at] Strawberry Reservoir [Heber, Wasatch County, Utah].

RB: You came down to Utah?

JW: Yes. We came down. He was going to show me some good fishing [for] steelheads, forty pound trout. I caught [lots of] big trout. He said, "Come down." So we came down. Then when we were going back in September or October of 1965, and a lady broke down on the freeway with five [children].

RB: Oh, no!

JW: I said we have to stop and help her. My friend said, "No!" I said we had to. So we stopped and pulled her into a service station. This was after Labor Day. I remember that.

RB: Labor Day is in September. So it was still summer.

JB: Yes. He took me home and I did some shopping or something. I went back by the station and she was still there. So I went in and asked, "How are you doing?" She said, "It is something [for which] they can't get the part until Monday."

RB: Right.

JB: She said, "I can't get a hold of my brother." She lived in a duplex next to her brother. So I said, "Well, I can take you and your kids home." She said, "No, just take us up to the big mall." Cottonwood Mall, I think it was called. It's gone now. I dropped her off there and left. And I came back by there again at 9:00 o'clock at night and her and the kids were standing out on the curb.

RB: Oh, no.

JW: She had not gotten a hold of her brother yet. So I said, "Get in [the car] and I'll take you home." It was not [a] big thing. So I took her home.

RB: Where was home for her?

JW: Oh, I don't [recall]. It was south of 21st South [Street in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. There is a road that cuts off of Highland Drive.

RB: Here in St. George [Washington County, Utah].

JW: No, up in Salt Lake City.

RB: Oh, yes. In Salt Lake [City].

JW: It's 13th East [Street]. She lived between Highland Drive and 13th East just below the freeway in a duplex there. I did that and the kids were saying that they didn't know how they were going to go to a movie the next night without a car. So the next night I came by and asked if they wanted to go to the drive-in movie. I had a little Chevy [Chevrolet] Nova station wagon. I said, "If you want to go I will take you and the [children] to the movies." She said, "I can't ask you to do that." I said, "I am not asking, I am just volunteering."

RB: Right. [Laughter]

JW: So we went and we came home and we sat out on the lawn. It was warm still. We sat out in her yard almost all night talking.

RB: Wow!

JW: She had five [children] and was going to teach school out where she was moving to the next weekend. I came by the next weekend and her brother was trying to load stuff up in his pickup. So I helped [load things] because I still had strength in my arms. I had a lot of [feeling] in my left arm and I was strong. We got her moved. I asked her if I could come see her. She said, "Yes, if you want to." The [children] had already told me she was thirty-six and I was twenty-five.

RB: Yeah.

JW: We got her moved. I went and saw her. We got along pretty [well]. I stayed out there and took a job out in a Western Auto [Store], maybe.

RB: Yeah?

JW: Is that a department store type of [business]?

RB: Yes, it was. They sold auto parts, but also all kinds of [goods].

JW: So I got a job working there.

RB: In Salt Lake [City]?

JW: Yes, I stayed right there. I kept seeing her. The next fall I was going to...the [children] had a big Christmas. She bought them presents, I bought them [presents] and the [children's] grandmother bought them presents.

RB: That's pretty nice. [Laughter]

JW: They had a hell of a Christmas. The next year I stayed there until summertime.

RB: Yes.

JW: I am trying to remember what we did. It had to have been 1965. We got married. Oh, she didn't want to get married, but she got pregnant.

RB: Is that right?

JW: So we hurried over to Elko [Nevada] and got married in January or February [1965].

RB: You told me January of 1965?

JW: Yes. She was pregnant so we had the baby up at Hill Air Force Base [Ogden, Weber County, Utah] because I had, what do you call them?

RB: Military privileges?

JW: It cost me \$100.00 back then.

RB: And you had [the military privileges] because you were disabled?

JW: Yes.

RB: So that was your son, James Patrick Weiss, Jr.?

JW: We lived together for twenty-five years.

RB: So you got married in 1965 or so and then.

JW: And we had him.

RB: He was born later that year.

JW: 1966.

RB: Oh, that's right. You told me he was born in 13 September 1966. So you must have gone and gotten married in January in 1966? You would have met and

gotten together with your wife in September 1965. You stayed with her until 1990? That's twenty-five years.

JW: Yes, twenty-five years.

RB: So did you raise the other five [children]?

JW: I raised her other five [children]. I got all through college. I [saw them] get married and bought them all homes.

RB: Good job.

JW: Yes, it was good. And then she was sixty-one, I guess, and said, "I want to get a divorce." The [children] were all gone. [My son, James Patrick Weiss, Jr.] was back from his [LDS] mission. So I said, "Alright." I didn't fight with her. I just loaded my belongings into an old pickup truck, took my dog and my hunting and fishing gear, and said, "Good luck."

RB: So you lived in Salt Lake [City] all that time?

JW: No, we lived down in Utah County up in Alpine.

RB: So you were doing all kinds of different jobs? No, you were an accountant.

JW: Yes, I was an accountant up in American Fork [Utah County, Utah]. I had a friend who was a CPA [Certified Public Accountant] and I would help him when he needed help. So I just referred all my clients to him. He said he would pay me for them. I bought a new Jeep.

RB: Yes.

JW: No, it was a Chevy Blazer. A little one. I just sold the business and left. I traveled around the country. That Christmas I went to Europe for a month. I left on December 2, [1990].

RB: Where did you go?

JW: I went to Germany where one of my tax clients was in the service and he was stationed there. He said, "Come on over and I will put you up."

RB: Nice.

JW: [He said], "You can go [where you want to on the base]." I spent a whole month there. It was a beautiful time of year at Christmas time.

RB: Do you know where it was?

JW: They have a big Air Force base there.

RB: Ramstein [Air Base, Germany]? Kaiserslautern? Rheim-ain [Air Base, Germany]? Frankfurt [Germany]?

JW: Not Frankfurt, but east of there.

RB: Wiesbaden [Air Base, Germany]?

JW: Yes.

RB: I was stationed in 1992 at Sembach Air Base [Germany], near Ramstein [Air Base, Germany]. It was in the south of [Wiesbaden, Germany].

JW: It was great because I got to go on all the trips they offered the service members.

RB: Yes, MWR [Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Office].

JW: We went to Belgium and Austria. I rented a little Volkswagen [car] and got on the Autobahn and was going sixty miles per hour on the slow lane and those cars were passing me, even back then, like I was standing still.

RB: Yes, you look in the rear [view mirror] and there is no car and you are driving and the next thing you know that is a car which is passing you that came out of nowhere. They are going 100 miles per hour.

JW: So then I got on the old highway. The old Romantic Highway and I drove all the way down to the Black Forest. It was a good trip. I had some good times. I went to some of the walled cities down there on that highway. I went in there and was having lunch and this young girl and little boy were eating. There you enjoy people who are eating at the table.

RB: At a Gasthaus [German restaurant]?

JW: She asked if she could join me. Her husband was across the street in a dental office. She had this little boy who was about two years old. It was Christmas time and I asked to have some of the Christmas candy. She said, "Sure." The [little boy] picked some out. I had a United States \$2.00 bill and I gave it to him.

RB: That's pretty special.

JW: Then her husband came over. He was through with his dental appointment. He asked where I was staying. I told him I hadn't decided. He said that his neighbor runs a bed and breakfast and said he would call her and see if she has a space. He said, "You come out and we will go boar hunting in the morning." So I did and

she had [have a space] and I went out and stayed, and went boar hunting. We actually got a boar and I got to help carry it on my shoulders.

RB: That's great.

JW: I carried one of the sticks [gesturing like he was holding one side of a stake with the boar on it and carried by the German man]. The German man asked if I was in a hurry to leave. I said I wasn't. So the man said he would call and see if the woman who ran the bed and breakfast could put me up another night. I stayed another night and the man's wife had me come over the next morning. We cut steaks off of that boar. We had steak and eggs.

RB: [Laughter] What a good time!

JW: Yes. I met several nice people on that trip. And, of course, I bought a cuckoo clock in the Black Forest.

RB: Right! Right!

JW: I don't know whatever happened to that clock. It was a good trip. We went to France on the speed train through the [United States military] service. They had one of the [MWR] trips that went to France. I had never gone so fast in my life. The telephone poles were like toothpicks going by. It was interesting.

RB: Did you go to Paris [France]?

JW: Yes, I went to Paris. Beautiful city. Beautiful people. Everyone says that all the French hate Americans. They didn't. I always liked to go when I went somewhere and take one of those [Grey Line] Bus Tours.

RB: That's the best way [to see the city].

JW: Then I could go and see and do whatever I wanted. I went on this trip [to Paris] with the tour and saw everything. The fellow that was guiding the tour asked when we got back at dinner time where I was going to dinner. I said that I didn't know, and asked if he knew of a good place. He said, "We can go around the corner to this little place that is really good. Why don't you come and join us." I went along with him and it really was good. Then the group was going to the Moulin Rouge with the French dancing. He invited me to go with them that night. It was better than sitting back at the hotel room.

RB: That was nice.

JW: So we went and had a good time. The next day I went to the Sun Palace.

RB: [The Palace of] Versailles?

JW: Yes, Versailles.

RB: Beautiful.

JW: Yes, absolutely beautiful. I enjoyed that thoroughly. And then I stayed a couple of days and went to the Louvre. I spent two full days [at the Louvre] and didn't see half of it.

RB: It's an incredible museum.

JW: I would like to go back. I was surprised how dusty and dirty it was in there around all those beautiful paintings and tapestries. But it was good to see and I enjoyed it.

RB: Yes. You had some good experiences. So finally you got to see some of the world.

JW: Yes, finally I did. And then on Christmas Eve, I took off, I had my little rental car and I went over to Austria. I am trying to remember the name of the big town in Austria.

RB: Salzburg? Innsbruck?

JW: Salzburg. I went to Salzburg and from there I took a tour out to the chapel where the song *Silent Night, Holy Night* was written. On the grounds we went on a horse sleigh. We went out to that and came back. This was on Christmas Eve and we went to a Catholic mass. We got into it because we were on a tour. We came out about one o'clock in the morning and the [town] square was full of thousands of people. It had to have been ten degrees below zero. I don't know how the people stood out there and did that.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: We got back to our hotel. The next day was Christmas and I got up and went to the desk and asked where I could get something to eat. [The hotel staff] said the only thing open is the Hilton [Hotel]. So I said I would go there. I got there [and discovered] that it is \$100.00 per plate.

RB: Oh, no!

JW: It was a seven-course Christmas dinner.

RB: Did you [eat there]?

JW: Yes, I [ate there]. What the hell! Once in my lifetime [I would enjoy an expensive Christmas dinner].

RB: You ate like a king.

JW: I got in [to the restaurant] and they sat you at table, not by yourself. I had the Ambassador from Spain and his wife [at the table], and a Salt Lake City plumber and his wife at the table.

RB: Of all the places in the world and you sat next to a couple from Salt Lake [City].

JW: Yes. I met him. I [sat next to] a young couple from Australia that had been working [in Europe] for six months and they were going to travel for six months. They had done that a couple of times. They had been on a safari in Africa and somewhere else. This time they were going to go to Russia and see St. Petersburg. They were a nice young couple. There was another young couple and I don't remember who or what they were [doing]. We sat there for about three and a half or four hours. The food was fabulous and the company was great.

RB: What a great experience!

JW: Yes. That was a great experience. Then we left there and I drove down through Austria and I wanted to go to Switzerland. I was going to Lake Lucerne on New Year's Eve. I checked in [to the hotel] at seven o'clock or so. I was no more in my room [for a minute] when I hear a band playing. I looked out the window and there was a band with town's people following it. I called down to the desk and asked what was going on. I asked if it was a pied piper. [The man at the desk] said it was New Year's Eve. They were having a festival upon a hill where the old folks' home was. All of the money goes to support the old folks' home. I asked if [I] was welcome and he said that everyone is welcome. I got out my warm [clothes] and walked up the hill. They had food and shows [entertainment] and all kinds of [activities] going on. The money went to support the old people.

RB: Nice.

JW: So that was interesting.

RB: You had some really good experiences in Europe.

JW: Yes. When I was in Frankfurt [Germany] I went to [see] several castles. That was interesting. When I drove down the Old Romantic Highway I went to Bavaria and went through [Ludwig II's Neuschwanstein] Castle. I couldn't believe all the gold —

RB: Neuschwanstein?

JW: — they had given him [Ludwig II]. It was just amazing.

RB: Yes. That is incredible. So when you went to [Europe] you had already sold your business?

JW: Yes, I had sold it.

RB: So what was your plan when you got back?

JW: I didn't have any [plans].

RB: But you were single. Were you just going to figure it out?

JW: I came home and went to an LDS [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] church singles group.

RB: Okay. You said you joined [the LDS Church] when you were about thirty [years old]. That was about 1971.

JW: I was thirty-five when I joined.

RB: Okay. So that was in about 1976. So was your first wife LDS?

JW: Yes, but she wasn't active.

RB: Sure. Did you and she get active at the same time?

JW: No. I joined the church and then what she would do is that when the boys went on [LDS] missions, she would go see the bishop and pay six-month's tithing and get a temple recommendation.

RB: Oh, I see.

JW: Then she would never go again.

RB: But she wanted to go to the temple with her boys?

JW: She wanted to go through for their endowments.

RB: Where did your son go on his mission?

JW: [My son] went to Chile.

RB: Chile. So he speaks Spanish?

JW: He was there when there was that dictator there.

RB: [Salvador] Allende?

JW: No. It was someone else. I forget his name.

RB: Pinochet?

JW: Yes. Pinochet. That's where [my son] was at.

RB: That was about 1986 or so?

JW: Well, let's see.

RB: [Your son] was born in 1966.

JW: Yes. He was born in 1966.

RB: He went at age nineteen. So that would have been in 1985 to 1987 or so?

JW: Yes. Then he came home. He was home from his mission when [my wife] told me she wanted a divorce. I was fifty years old so it would have been 1991.

RB: Yes. There you go. So after your trip to Europe you came back to Salt Lake [City]?

JW: Yes.

RB: What did you do?

JW: Nothing. I had my disability [pension]. I rented an apartment for \$65.00 a month. It was up on 700 East [Street] behind a Zion's Bank. I had to climb some stairs.

RB: You didn't have to pay alimony?

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

JW: No. That was all over and done with. The [children] were all grown and gone.

RB: Did you ever work again after that?

JW: Yes, I did. That was 1991. I didn't do anything for a couple of years. I just floated around. And then one night I went to that [LDS] singles group.

RB: Oh, yes.

JW: I met a lady there. She didn't care to dance or anything, so we just sat and had cookies and milk and talked. I got interested in her. She was seven years older than me.

RB: You had a thing with these older women in your life. [Laughter]

JW: She worked at Granite Furniture with the flooring and carpet. She had been divorced for three or four years. Her husband left her for somebody else, and she didn't want to get remarried again. But she wanted to have someone to go out with and do things with.

RB: Yes. Companionship.

JW: I said that is the same with me. I am in no hurry to get remarried. So we started going together. The [LDS] singles group back then would go on trips together. We went up to Idaho to the hot springs. We went to different places as a group. I don't know if they do that anymore.

RB: That's nice.

JW: We did that. We went on those [trips] and then we started going on trips by ourselves. And then we started getting into trouble. [Laughter] That lasted for about four or five or six years. I had been [alone] about a couple of years until 1993 when I met her and we started going [out together]. We kept going with each other until 1998.

RB: What was her name?

JW: Janille. We went everywhere and did everything together. Then she retired. She wasn't feeling good and said that we had better stop this. I was six or seven years younger. She was only sixty-two when she retired. She said, "You are still young enough you can find someone else." She didn't want to marry me because I had put on quite a bit of weight and she didn't want anyone who was fat. She had quite a bit of money. And all I had was just my monthly check.

RB: So it wasn't going to work out?

JW: [She said], "It won't work." So I said, "Alright." And this was in the summer of 1999. She had a sister who was in Nebraska, I think it was. And her sister owned a condominium in St. George [Washington County, Utah]. She rented it out to help pay for her mission while she was gone. The renters moved out and left a mess. Janille and her brothers had to put about \$300.00 into the missionary fund [to support her sister on a mission]. So I said, "I will put in \$100.00 and if your brother puts in \$100.00 and you put in \$100.00, then no one needs to know." She said, "Okay." That was in July [1999]. Her sister's birthday was the end of the month. I ordered her a flower arrangement.

RB: Okay.

JW: I had it sent back there [to Nebraska] and signed secret admirer. I did the same for Halloween which was her favorite holiday she said. The sister [missionaries in the Nebraska Mission] worked in the office. [The card] said it was from a secret admirer. [The office staff] thought it was from someone in the mission field. She had no idea.

RB: No, of course not!

JW: I did the same for Thanksgiving.

RB: Wow!

JW: Now [the staff] was really wondering who it was from. [They were saying] “Who have you been seeing?” She had no idea. [Laughter] It was rotten to do, huh? She came home the day before Christmas that year.

RB: Janille’s sister?

JW: Yes, Janille’s sister. I went to the airport with Janille and picked her up, and took her to Janille’s house. It was the afternoon of the day before Christmas. She was going to spend Christmas Eve and Christmas with her sister. I said, “That’s fine. I will see you later.” Then she said, “Wait. We were supposed to go to Janille’s [children’s] Christmas party.” Janille said she had a headache and couldn’t go and asked me to take Carol. I looked at Carol and she said okay. [The children] were [Carol’s] nieces and nephews.

RB: Yes, they were family.

JW: We went and when we left we were standing at the door saying goodbye, one of the [children] said you have to kiss now. We said, “Why?” They pointed up to the mistletoe.

RB: Oh, no!

JW: We said, “No. We [don’t even know each other].” They said, “No, you [have] to do it. It’s a tradition. So Carol said, “What the heck.” I said, “I won’t bite you.” So we kissed. Really, it was pretty good.

RB: That is nice.

JW: I took her home to Janille’s. Janille was going to cook [Christmas breakfast] for me before we knew that her sister [Carol] was coming home and we would open our gifts. I asked if she still wanted me to come over and she said yes. I had bought Carol a Christmas gift because I knew she was coming. I had it all wrapped and I took it and put it at the front door and signed ‘secret admirer’ [on the card]. The next morning when I came I knocked on the door the package was

there. Carol opened the door. I said, "There is a package here for somebody." She bent down and picked it up and it said, "To Carol from your secret admirer." She wondered where it came from. I said it was there when I got there. She had no idea that I was the [secret admirer] all along. We went inside and [Carol] told her sister [and me] the story about the flowers from secret admirer and how everyone [at the mission office] was kidding her. She wondered how the secret admirer knew Carol was going to be [at Janille's] for Christmas. We said, "We didn't know." [Carol] opened it and loved it. I don't remember what it was. We had our breakfast. Janille and I were going to go to a movie. Janille said she still didn't feel good and said for me to take Carol to the movies. I said I didn't care [that Janille couldn't go] and Carol said she would go. We went to the movies and came back. Carol then went down to [St. George] and I told Janille I was going to move back to Oregon. I'd had enough.

RB: Yes.

JW: I went home. It was tax [season] so if I was going to move I needed to do something with my clients. I talked to Ferris, a CPA I knew, and he agreed to take them. I had built up about sixty or seventy clients. Then Carol called me from [St. George] just as I was getting ready to leave. She said she and others were having a "First Night" [New Year's Eve event] [at St. George]. She invited me to come to St. George to see that and I agreed. I came down [to St. George] and got a room at [a] motel. We went out and I had a good time. I stayed another night and then I went back. I told Ferris that I would stay the tax season [after all] and do the taxes [for clients]. I would drive down [to St. George] to see Carol. We seemed to get along pretty [well]. It was the year 2000. We went together all that year. At the end of the year, Carol said we should get married.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: It was toward the end of the year and she said we ought to get married. I said, "Well —"

RB: [Laughter]

JW: "I don't know if I want to." The reason I was holding off was because my ex-wife had died. If I turned sixty, I got her full benefits on social security.

RB: Because you had been married [over ten years].

JW: We had been married over ten years. I didn't tell Carol that.

RB: Just not ready?

JW: Not ready. I had to wait until March 17th, my birthday [when] I turned sixty [years old]. If I married [earlier] I lost it. So I said, "I will tell you what. March

17th is on a Saturday, let's have a reception then and get married the next week in the [Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] Salt Lake Temple." "Well, that is different!" "You might as well know, I am different!"

RB: [Laughter]

JW: So we did. Of course, we had [a St. Patrick's Day reception]. I had a green tuxedo. We had all kinds of Irish decorations.

RB: [Laughter] That's wonderful.

JW: I got a pot, a black kettle. We had a dollar for Sacajawea that wasn't gold but looked gold. I filled that pot up with [those coins] and put it on the table. Then everybody [took one as a keepsake].

RB: Kind of a keepsake?

JW: Yes. We put every one of those [coins] on everybody's tray. I said, "You all notice you have a gold coin." I got a gold coin. I said, "I found a pot of gold. I have two of them. I have my wife and I have this pot. I want to share my good fortune."

RB: That was a neat idea.

JW: It was cute! She thought I was dumb.

RB: You are a hopeless romantic! [Laughter]

JW: We had our reception and the following Monday we [were] married in the [Salt Lake] Temple. I thought it was great but we were only married seven years.

RB: What happened?

JW: She said she loved me, but she couldn't live with me. She didn't like to be touched.

RB: So you [were] divorced? I am sorry to hear that.

JW: Yes, she did. She wanted a divorce. I said, "Fine." We had just moved. We fixed our place up down here [St. George] and had just sold it and bought a house in Riverton [Salt Lake County, Utah]. "I love you, but I can't live with you." We were divorced for three years. I went and got an apartment. The whole time we were divorced she came over and fixed me meals and decorated my apartment.

RB: She still cared about you.

JW: Yes, she did. She just couldn't live with me. After three years, she said, "Well, I been going to a counselor, a therapist. And I think I can change. I would like to get remarried." I thought: this is stupid. I still cared for her. She was fun to be with when I was with her. I said, "Alright." We [were] remarried after we were divorced for three years. We [were] remarried in 2011.

RB: You probably didn't get a temple divorce?

JW: No.

RB: So that was still [valid].

JW: We came up to last April, a year ago last April [2017]. She said, "I can't live with you."

RB: Oh, no?

JW: "I love you, but you are too fat." She had all kinds of [reasons].

RB: Sure!

JW: "I love my boy too much." I said, "Why didn't you ever say anything? Instead of just telling me you wanted a divorce and that is the reason why?" Her mind was made up. There wasn't [any] way she would change. I said, "Alright." I threw my stuff in my car and called my boy [James Patrick Weiss, Jr] and said, "Can I come live with you?" He said, "Yes." I came down here [to St. George]. He couldn't be with me so I had to come in here [Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins] a month or two ago [December 2018]. A month or two ago, my ex-wife called me and said, "Your name is still on the title of the house. Get it off." So I said, "Alright." I took care of that. She hinted that she still loved me, but she didn't think she could live with me. I just don't want anything to do with [her] anymore.

RB: Yes. I can imagine. It hurts.

JW: Once is alright, twice is no good.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: I send her a teddy bear every once in awhile. She loves teddy bears. I sent her a teddy bear with a hole in the box that had a gold pendant in it. I sent her that for Christmas. "Wish you well, but don't call me anymore." So that is where it sits.

RB: To kind of sum up — your life has taken some turns. It started out kind of rough, the military wasn't what you expected, but it sounds like you did pretty good.

JW: I did alright for twenty-five years. My first wife, the reason why she wanted a divorce was [she] and her first cousin had made vows when they were sixteen years old that when they turned sixty [years old] they would divorce whomever they were married to and get married. And they both did.

RB: [Laughter]

JW: Our divorce went through in a couple of months. His took a couple of years. His wife fought it and wanted everything! But they did. They couldn't get married legally in the states, so they went to Mexico and [were] married.

RB: Is that right?

JW: Who knows! They were together for about three years. They traveled to Scotland which is where they were from. They went to the Holy Land. Then she started living with each of her [children].

RB: [Laughter]

JW: Too bad!

RB: It is time. I appreciate it.

JW: So here I am.

RB: There you go.

JW: I met a gal here at the Senior Center. We went together for a year and she told me the same thing. I was too fat. She loved me like a brother, but not romantically. So she quit seeing me. We were together six days a week. So that hurt.

RB: I bet!

JW: But I am fine. I am over that too.

RB: It is like you said, you are resilient. You know how to bounce back.

JW: What else are you going to do?

RB: I know. We will close up here.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]