

Laura Browder: Do you mind stating your name and the date?

John Dorman: John Dorman. 11-3-17.

LB: Perfect. Okay, now can you please tell me something about how you grew up? Your family, your environment, what your life was like as a child and a young person?

JD: Well the family, except for me, we moved around a lot. We started out in Church Hill when I was little. Then we moved uptown when I was say about seven or eight years old. My parents always for some reason put us around a school. Whether it was elementary or high school, we always ended up in walking distance of a school. That was important to them, but education was the main thing that they wanted to stress to us, all nine of us really, in my family.

LB: Nine of you—where are you in that?

JD: Well, I have a twin brother too. So, I'm about fifth or sixth within that.

LB: What was life like for you when you were a kid? Can you talk about that a little bit?

JD: Our neighborhood was basically segregated in a sense. So, everybody played and studied together. But as a kid I always did something: I had either a paper route or did something in a garage—washing cars, coming up in a sense of speaking. I was always around vehicles for some reason while everybody else was doing other things. During the summer we used to sell bottles, you know you used to drink... what was like five cents. But empty bottles, you could sell empty bottles for two cent if you wash 'em out. You'd get a penny if they was dirty. We sort of played together and made our own toys. We had skates and different things that we made racers out of... take the skates apart. It was always thinking about doing things mentally. That's probably why I ended up as a mechanic because I like tinkering with things.

LB: So when you got the money from the bottles, what did you spend it on?

JD: Well more or less the clothes, or tried to help the family out. Everybody, seemed like, was family orientated, we always did something to put something on the table or help the family. It wasn't always about buying a candy or a tootsie roll in a sense of speaking. It was doing something to help the family.

LB: Were both of your parents working at the time?

JD: Yes, both of my parents were working. Yes.

LB: What was Richmond like when you were a child? Because I'm guessing you were born around 1948?

JD: '47, yes. Well, because of, basically, segregation, in our communities, in my community, everywhere we moved, basically, there were large families. There was nine in my family. There was eleven. Twelve. The highest was nineteen. They lived on Leigh Street across from Carver

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School. It was nineteen kids in that family. It was just like... everybody knew each other and we were sort of run together in a sense of speaking. And there was just certain places we didn't go. No. Because of the areas and, like I said, it was segregation and we had parts of town that we would always go in groups—two or three at a time. We would never travel alone.

LB: What would those parts of town be specifically?

JD: Oregon Hill was uptown. Oregon Hill was basically a tough part of town. When you crossed Broad Street... We would go over to Byrd Park sometime... And when you went towards Oregon Hill, across the Leigh Bridge, toward the Leigh Bridge, you know you almost had to fight your way across Franklin Street and Grace Street because of the gangs that were in Oregon Hill. Although gangs were started back in the 30s here in Richmond. We had gangs... and the leftover, the parents, they continued it through the 60s and the 70s. It was just a struggle even going across Broad Street. Broad Street was like a North and South in a sense of speaking. A dividing line. When you crossed Broad Street you was basically in the white part of town. It was almost like the other side of the railroad track in a sense of speaking. We always was aware of where we was going all the time. Like I said, we always traveled in pairs or more in case somebody got injured or something, somebody could run and tell somebody else in a sense of speaking. We never traveled alone.

LB: When you say “gangs,” were these just like random groups of kids or were they gangs with names?

JD: Oh, yes. They were gangs with names. Different blocks controlled different areas and I have some paperwork to that effect. I have a book of gangs in Richmond.

LB: I would love to see it.

JD: Yes, I have it with me. And they tell you where which ones were good and which ones were bad in the sense of which ones were fighting and controlled certain areas in the city. All parts of towns had 'em. But in Oregon Hill... it has always. Even to this day Oregon Hill still is like a hold-out, far as the people. If you go into Oregon Hill right now, you'll see the people who, to them, you're... they're still... fighting the war, the Civil War, some of the people right to this day.

LB: I see it every day when I drop off my son at Open High School.

JD: Yeah, Okay. Open yeah. Open, yes. I've had a few of my Scouts go there. See I've been a Scoutmaster for forty years. I just stepped down a couple years ago. But I was Scoutmaster at my church for over forty years. A lot of my kids end up at Open High School because of situations. Open High School is a whole different mindset. I mean the kids that go there—they're smart, intelligent kids, but they need to do things their way. Most of them end up in pretty good colleges and everything because, in case they're just not destined to the schools that...

LB: They're a little quirky.

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JD: Well! I don't know. They've become tech savvy, and they're on the upper echelon of things in a sense of speaking.

LB: So what were some of the names of the gangs? What were the big gangs in Oregon Hill then? Was there one gang for all of Oregon Hill? Or a few different block-to-block?

JD: Well there were block-to-block. They had certain names that went with some of the names of the kids themselves. Some of the kids, like you said... Joey, in a sense, that's Joey's Gang. Or they'd nickname. Several streets over there had blocks that they named the gangs after and all that type of stuff you know.

LB: That's pretty intense.

JD: Oh yes, oh yes, yes. But Richmond has always had 'em you know.

LB: So were you living in the Carver neighborhood then?

JD: Yes, yes, yes.

LB: So right near what's... Carver School?

JD: Carver School, yes. We lived... Well, let's see, Carver is probably the 1100 block of Leigh Street. And we lived at the 1300 block of Clay Street, which is the next street over. So we went to Carver School. And Hartshorn Homes is across the street. When I was in Carver School, we came out for the groundbreaking at Hartshorn Homes. And Hartshorn Homes, basically... the name Hartshorn came from Maggie Walker's school or Virginia Union University somehow tied in with Hartshorn...

LB: I think it was the women's division of Virginia Union if I'm remembering right.

JD: Yes. That was when I really... From Carver I went to Benjamin Graves which was basically the middle school. And then across the street where the museum yesterday was at—that's basically where we took gym, in that building itself. We utilized it. I got involved with the Y then. When I was about twelve or thirteen I got involved with the YMCA. I was with the youth council of the YMCA. That's why I think I mentioned, I told ya, I marched with Dr. Martin Luther King. That was August 28th, 1963 when we left from um...

LB: So was the Y integrated? Or were there separate black and white Y's at that time?

JD: Oh yes, it was segregated. It was white and blacks then because the white one's on Franklin Street I think. We didn't have any Caucasians in that building on Leigh Street.

LB: Tell me more about the YMCA that you went to.

JD: I went there basically because the instructor, or counselor, from Virginia University... there was a YMCA and YWCA branch, I guess counselors, in Virginia Union University. There were

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made up of men, and women of course for the YW. And they would come down to the YMCA on Leigh Street to teach us karate. And then it got so that—we joined that movement as far as the Civil Rights. They would teach us how to protect ourselves in case of dogs, as far as the policemen had dogs, and batons, how we would defend our face and basically protect ourselves. And they'd usually come down during the week and we used to march from the Y to the city hall and sit on the steps of the city hall or you know, sing the songs—"We Shall Overcome," and all that. They got involved basically with telling us about segregation and the Civil Rights movement in America itself. They just educated us on how to protect ourself and how to do things as far as life concerns, you know as far as just stay in school (which that was the most important thing of all of our adults). Education was the key word. It was the key to it all in a sense. They were always enforcing education.

LB: So how old were you when you started going to the Y and began working with the Virginia Union instructors?

JD: I was about twelve or thirteen. Because I was with the youth council of the Y. I think the youths, we would go up to after high school in a sense. After eighteen you change over to the young adults. But from about nine to seventeen or eighteen, you would be with the youth council.

LB: So you must have been involved, I'm guessing, with some of the picket lines outside Thalhimers and...

JD: Thalhimers, Miller Rhoads, G. C. Murphy's. And there was a restaurant on Broad Street, Julian's—they wouldn't serve blacks at all. You couldn't sit down on the counter. Just like Murphy's was in a sense. We would, on Saturday mornings, we would march from the Y with the councils from Virginia University. It would be probably, maybe, forty people. Mostly Virginia Union students and the youth council. And we would march down, but the adults would go in the store or in Julian's restaurant, like a sit-in. Some of them got arrested. But we would be outside. We would never go as youth. They would never carry us inside to be arrested in a sense. So they would get arrested, two or three of them, and then we would go back to the Y or go down to the city hall and sit on the steps. That was our favorite spot, city hall, in a sense, you know, because people were always passing by.

LB: Did you end up having a lot of interactions with the passersby when you were picketing and when you were sitting on the city hall steps?

JD: Oh yes. Well you know they would call racial names. But we always had adults with us most of the time. The main leader that I know of—Adolphus Wimms [sp?], from Virginia University—he was about six... looked like he was about 6'8". But basically I think he was 6'2" and he was really muscular. Plus, he was a black belt in karate. So we never really feared being endangered any kind of way because we knew that he was a black belt and he could take care of all of us in a sense of speaking. So we always felt safe.

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LB: Did you get a... statements of support? Were there ever black people who were walking by you or whites who were not hostile? Or was your experience of picketing just kind of unadulterated either indifference or hostility?

JD: Well it was basically on the streets there was no hostility in a sense. The blacks would sometime join us sometime, you know. But we always had... especially on Broad Street, you always had a lot of whites all the time going up and down and they would call us different names and stuff. But it didn't bother us in a sense. Of course, I could say some people just like Adolphus Wimms, you'd look up to him. And I don't care what would happen. And being young, you always feel that you gonna live forever and nothing gonna kill you and all that. So, we never had too much fear in doing things in a sense of speaking.

LB: Were the police out a lot? Did you get... Did you ever have to deploy any of that training that you had had in violence resistance?

JD: We didn't ever have to as far as the youth now.

LB: Yeah.

JD: Some of the fellows that went into Julian's and Murphy's, they got into some altercation with the police because back then there was a lot of police on Broad Street. They had a lot of walking routes. It wasn't all the cars then. They had to actually walk from say 17th Street/MCV all the way up to the Belvidere and could get on the other side of the street and walk down. So, there was always a police presence with dogs and walking all the time. They always would stare at us. The police department, which was controlled by Dan Dooley, you've probably heard of, showed up a lot on Church Hill and stuff. They always had forcible means of doing things in a sense of speaking.

LB: And how long was Dooley in power for?

JD: Forever. I think it was forever from what I know. They were... just like the Byrd Machine. It never ceases in a sense of speaking. It always was present. Until, I don't think we were... we may've gotten a black sheriff or police chief later on. A lot of things transpired, when I went into the military in 1966, right out of high school. And when I came back, a lot of things, for those three years, a lot happened. Dr. King was assassinated. Robert Kennedy was assassinated during that period of time. Then when I came back in 1969, they had a race riot. June of '69 there was a race riot on Broad Street where it was hundreds of state police and all that was going on.

LB: Tell me more. Because this is the first anyone has talked about that riot.

JD: Well, when I came back they basically... I started applying for jobs. And I applied for GRTC. I applied for the police department, fire department, [unc. Reynolds Mill?], the postal department—all the big... and Philip Morris. Fortunately, everybody notified me the same week. So I went with the post office because I had three years of military and the post office was government and I knew I could add that to my retirement when I wanted to. So I went with the post office. But the Sergeant Saunders from the police department, he was one of the few blacks

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on the police department, he tried to get me in to be a detective and go to the police. But uh... and I passed all the tests for all of them and I always had my military credits. Especially with the government they're 10% veteran's preference so I sort of maxed out on all the tests so that's why all of them really wanted me. I chose the post office because it was still government in a sense of speaking. But in June, like I said, when I came back from Vietnam June 25th, I went downtown the 26th of June, 1969. It was just... It was like a race riot, in a sense, going on. But that was nothing new to me because being in the military, when I was in Germany for fifteen months, we had a race riot in Munich, Germany between blacks and whites.

LB: All the soldiers?

JD: Oh yes. Soldiers. And my year in Vietnam, it was a lot of racial tension in Vietnam, too. Although we was fighting the Viet Cong. As blacks, we were fighting two wars, we were fighting the whites from Texas and Georgia, Alabama... And I was, personally, being a paratrooper, and being sort of high echelon, in this respect, five. And in charge of a motor pool, which... tanks and all that is coming in and out. And I know of one incident, which I can show you, in a book, of a similar incident, where one of our M6A1 patent tanks come into our motor pool and then most of the time a second lieutenant, first lieutenant, officer is in charge of the tank. They were flying the Confederate flag on a U.S. tank. I gotta picture. I can show you that in the book. Like I said, as blacks, we weren't only just fighting the Viet Cong, the enemy—we was fighting a lot of the whites who wanted to fly Confederate flags in our hooches. Hooches were buildings in the rear. When we come to the rear. Now it was a policy for states, if you requested a flag of your state, they would send you a flag, send us a flag in Vietnam of the state of Virginia, Alabama, whatever. But a lot of them wanted to fly the Confederate flag in their hooches. That wasn't allowed. That caused a lot of tension. Plus it always caused a little problem with... But we never had them to fly in our hooch. Over our bunks you know we always would have the state flag that we would post. And it was a lot of tension there too. But...

LB: It sounds like...

JD: But you don't see. You just don't hear about it. A lot of it, in that program there was, only a couple weeks ago, did you see any of that?

LB: I didn't. I read about it. But I haven't seen it yet.

JD: Yeah. Well you can get the whole tape. It costs about seventy dollars for the whole series, but that was one of the most truest account of the Vietnam War that you'll ever see. And by being a person that's been there... you probably won't hear this from a lot of people, but I know personally myself that we could have won the war easy because we have, and we had then, our superiority. Any time you can look down on the enemy, you know his movements. And you've probably heard of the Tet Offense. The Tet Offense should've never happened. It was almost like Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor should not have happened either. But they caught Americans sleeping. And the same thing with the Tet Offense. You get twenty, thirty thousand North Vietnamese penetrating down to South Vietnam. There, to put this in perspective in your mind, think of Maine to Florida. That was the way that... Say North Vietnam is Maine, and Florida is South Vietnam. And the middle part is Virginia—which is the central highlands in Vietnam.

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They move forty to fifty thousand troops from Maine to Florida throughout [unc. our north?] so they caught a lot of people asleep. So there shouldn't ever have been a Tet Offensive, in which a lot of Americans was killed. And 56,000 eventually was killed in Vietnam itself.

LB: Where were you stationed in Vietnam?

JD: I was stationed in a place called Din [sounds like "Zion"]. It's spelled D-I-N, but it sounds like "Zion." And that was about seven clicks outside of Saigon which... they were considered to be... the central highlands. And I equate that, again, to being basically in Virginia.

LB: Yeah. That's a great analogy.

JD: Yes, yes. Halfway. The central highlands.

LB: Makes it very clear.

JD: Yes.

LB: Can I take you back for one moment to the Carver neighborhood, because I did a project with... did you ever remember Ms. Margarita Austin who taught at Carver Elementary School?

JD: Oh yes.

LB: And she had a theater. I did a play with her. Gosh it's close to twenty years ago now. I can't believe that but be that as it may. And we interviewed a lot of people from the neighborhood and it sounded like it was a pretty amazing place to grow up during the time that you were there, between all the thriving black businesses there, as well as people like Roy West who was living there and Barky's Records.

JD: Yeah, well I lived around the corner from Barky's. We always... Barky's was the store for all the records, especially black hymnals and he's still in business today.

LB: Yeah!

JD: Barky is always. He's always helped the community. He gave to the community. And he was always like... Barky would be out there sweeping the curb for trash and stuff. We had people in the neighborhood that took care of the neighborhood. It was a tight knit neighborhood where we had everything we needed in the neighborhood—the grocery stores, we had [unc. T? tea?] laundry, we had Waller's Jeweler. Which Waller now is on Broad Street.

LB: Yeah, Mr. Waller too.

JD: Yeah, he's a deacon at my church.

LB: Oh!

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JD: And his father—he was a deacon too. And he tried to get me to be a wash repair man because his shop was on Leigh Street. Right in the middle. Right across from Carver School, his shop was. And see I had a paper route, while I was in beginning grades. It started there and went all the way up to Bowe Street. There was no houses on the other side of the street, so I just, when I came from school, I went around the corner, pick up my papers, threw papers all the way up and down. I always go into Waller to deliver Times Dispatch every day. And he would always try to hold me in there, to just get me to... But I was interested in cars. And up on Catherine Street, got started working in the garage when I was eleven years old. So that's where I worked until I went into the military.

LB: So how did you start off? Were you just kind of hanging around in the garage and then they'd start letting you do a little...

JD: Yes.

LB: ...a little of this a little of that?

JD: During the summer we would go to the garage and we would wash cars. They saw that we was interested in cars so Mr. Braxton who owned the garage, he said, "How would you like to work, you know, changing oil?" So I started changing oil, tune ups... you know back then cars were simple.

LB: Yeah.

JD: You know you didn't have all the electronic ignition and all the dials. You had parts, plugs, the condenser, and changing oil was just a breeze in a sense. Then that's graduated to rebuilding motors, transmission, taking out motors and engines and getting involved with cars until I went into the military.

LB: So you really had a profession all set before you even graduated high school?

JD: Yes! That's true. That's true. Just like I probably mentioned to you that, before, that Nathaniel Carson, he worked over in Church Hill in a garage and he started... we graduated at the same time. But he worked there and I worked in this garage. And Mr. Coleman, which is a teacher of auto mechanics, he used to sit back and let us teach the class because we had more hands-on. He had a lot of theory, he graduated from Virginia State. But he had a lot of *theory* about working on cars. But as far as turning wrenches and bolts and nuts—we had that experience with hands-on. And he would allow us to teach the class because he had a board chart on the wall of a hundred things that you had to do to pass his course, like explain how to change brakes, how to take out spark plugs, and gap spark plugs. Then you'd get a check, check it off. You had to have so many at the end of the school year to pass his course. So we would teach the students 'cause we had hands-on. We could go more thorough. And he would just sit back and let us do it. That's why a lot of guys that's mechanics, from Armstrong, they'll tell you that we helped them get started because we broke it down simple to 'em.

LB: That's great! That must've been a real gift to them.

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JD: Yes, yes, yes.**LB:** So tell me about some of the changes that you saw in Richmond during the time that you were growing up. Because it sounds like it was a change, a time when a lot was happening.**JD:** Well, I guess because I was involved with the church, the Boy Scouts between Jackson Ward and the school system itself, going back and forth. You know when they put 95 through that broke up the neighborhood, as far as Jackson Ward one side and then... Although the community was still there it just seemed like it was broken up. But there wasn't that many drastic changes far as I was concerned, because we had everything in our neighborhood that we needed and we really didn't have to go out of our neighborhood, in a sense, not unless we wanted to... Sometimes on Sundays after church my father he used to take all of us down to the Capitol Square. He used to walk us down Marshall Street and we'd stop at Stanley's Drug Store. Stanley's Drug Store used to have popcorn, five cent a bag, and he would get about four bags, you're talkin' nine kids, so he had four bags. And we would go down to Capitol Square and Mr. Peanut was on the corner there, at 1st street. Pick up a bag of peanuts to feed the squirrels in the Capitol Square. So that was our Sunday outing. And on Sundays Broad Street was just like a desert. I mean it wasn't too many people on Broad Street at all 'cause everything closed down. You didn't have... stores wasn't open. I mean the blue law... I don't know what blue law it was that came later but stores wasn't open on Sundays at all, so it was just like a deserted place on Sundays. So we didn't have too much problems with racial tension or anything because you were free to walk back and forth.**LB:** And what was your church during that time? Are you still at the same church?**JD:** I'm still at the church, yeah. I joined that church, I was baptized when I was eleven years old at Moore Street Baptist church. And I'm still up there. That's where I've been ever since in a sense of speaking. 'Cause when I grew up we were in the Scouts at the church. And then when I went in the service that stopped. And when I came back, I went back to help my Scoutmaster out. He got a second job, so he left me with it in 1970. So I was Scoutmaster from 1970 and '78 and all of forty years after that. So that's how long I stayed as Scoutmaster.**LB:** So when did you get involved in Scouting? How did that happen?**JD:** Every kid in the neighborhood joined Scouting for some reason. Because basically everywhere we went basically we could walk to school. We could walk to church. Wednesday nights it was just automatic. You meet at Moore Street at seven o'clock for the Boy Scouts. And you know with the Scouts you go camping. And we'd go on people's land that would allow us to camp because back then we had two camps—Camp Wakonda [sp?] and Camp Shenandarcy [sp?]. Shenandarcy was white. Camp Wakonda was black. So you know, you went to camp Saturday mornings, come back Sunday. But just to get away from the city and see the trees and woods. I mean this was fascinating to us and to get away from the city of Richmond and to just have fun running through the woods and all that. It was a community type thing. And now you may see a troop with ten or fifteen boys. One time we had the largest troop. We had about forty-

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eight Scouts in the troop itself. And that was four or five Scout patrols. And now if you get one patrol of twelve Scouts, you're doing good in a sense of speaking.

LB: Well you know the first black Eagle Scout in Virginia was an Armstrong alum. You probably knew that. James E. Jackson.

JD: Yeah. Oh yes, yes. You know the history of how he got his award and everything?

LB: No, tell me.

JD: The governor... They had the ceremony at the Moss Auditorium. And it was all those Scouts, he was the only black one there. And the governor was pinning the Eagle Scout awards on the Scouts. And when he got to the black Scout he just threw it to him and I think it hit the floor. He didn't pin it on him at all. And I got that in writing too, in a book, in print. [**LB:** I believe you!] Oh yes. Although I think one of the other Scoutmasters just picked it up and just pinned it on him himself. But there still was that racial tension back then in a sense. Yeah.

LB: What do you remember about your education during this time when you were in the Carver Neighborhood and going to first Carver School and then to middle school?

JD: Well, all of the teachers, all of our teachers, was like our parents in a sense of speaking. The teachers, and the principals, and administrators [sic]. We just were all... the guys wouldn't fight or be bad, but as far as the teachers, the principals, and the pastor. They would like guard themselves. I mean everybody feared them when they were speaking or whatever. And so in school, the teachers, they always stress doing good education-wise. We didn't have a lot of disruption in classes like they have today, or fights in school, that just didn't happen because if there's one thing you didn't want were your parents to come to school. That was the most embarrassing thing that could happen to you. Even when I was little to have your parents to come to school to the principal office for you. And so you know what you're gonna get going home or when you get home what was waiting for you when you got there. So it was just that... we just didn't perform bad in school. And in my family, with nine kids—they were always wanting... everybody graduated from high school, and a couple of them went to college, but really they passed on everything to us as far as education-wise, in a sense of speaking, so we always was ahead. Just like when I eventually got to Armstrong, four years there I was on the honor roll the whole four years and I never missed a day—perfect attendance and all that—'cause I just, we just couldn't wait for the weekend to get over with so we can get back to school on Mondays with our friends and just bein' in school learning things you know. And so it really was great in school. Even in Carver School, which that was the beginning for us far as really focusing on middle school and then high school, they set the tone for us there.

LB: Sounds like at that time the middle schools and the high schools taught much much more than they do now.

JD: Oh yes, oh yes. Well you know high school, especially at Armstrong, Armstrong basically prepared you... you was two years ahead as far as college is concerned. When you left Armstrong, you basically didn't need four years of college because you already got the two years

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basically they prepared you there. But the middle school prepared you for, say, two years of really high school, in a sense of speaking, because most of the students from Armstrong, they maintained A's and B's just like since the day we got the school over on Open High and the school over on the parkway now [LB: Community] yeah, Community High. Both my kids went to Community. And Community—you know you can't make a D or F. There is no F's period. You make one D for two semesters and then you go back to the regular system. You don't make D's. And that's the same way with Graves Middle School, used to be you just didn't make F's. I don't know if any of my friends ever made F's really. Because the teachers were that good to as far as make sure that you know what they're teaching. And you looked forward to learning what they had to teach.

It was just a great experience. I just remember so many things. Even from Benjamin Graves. Mr. Green, he taught me something that I tell people: What is work? He always would say: "What is work?" You could write a paragraph on work. But he said it so straight. And I remember to today that work is moving or calling something to move in the direction that you want. That's it. Your mouth—you workin' when you're talkin'. Even with your hand, you're controlling that. So that's work. And I remember that from Benjamin Graves. Just like I told you about the commencement exercise at Armstrong with Mr. Peterson. His last words in '66 was "Give to the world the best that you have and the best will come back to you." And that stuck with me all my life. And that's probably why I'm doing so much in the community or trying to help people, because whatever you do it's coming back to you much better. Whether it's health or whatever. In December I'll be seventy years old. And I've been around the world—Germany, Bangkok, Thailand, Lebanon, Alaska, Germany.

LB: Now I know what took you to Germany, but what took you to Bangkok and Lebanon?

JD: Being a paratrooper, you travel a lot in planes and different things now. Bangkok, I went there three times on R & R. When you were in Vietnam, you're in the war, you wanna get away from it, you could go on R & R—Rest & Recuperation. So I just liked the people in Bangkok. And I liked the system in Bangkok. They do a system right today of bartering. You know you go into a store and you see a suit. They have \$200 on it. You say, "Well how about \$175." And they say, "How about \$178?" You know there's just no set price on things. That system of barter is prevalent in Bangkok, Thailand. And the people there, they treat you like *royalty*, especially Americans anyway. So that's why I like Bangkok. But there were places—Cambodia, Laos—that we weren't supposed to be in. And right to this day in books you'll say that in the Vietnam era... this wasn't in Laos and Cambodia... but I know, I was there. We were there. And our special mission is right across the border. So we would go to different places. Same with Lebanon. They would fly us to different places unknowing and just like what happened here about Africa. Half of America didn't know that we have... We've got troops all over the world, doing special operations, FBI, CIA, they are everywhere. We are everywhere. Global.

LB: What was your special operation in Lebanon?

JD: We were on missions just to see the layout of the land in a sense of speaking, more or less. And trying to figure out, you know if something was to happen...

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LB: ...just in case.

JD: Oh yes. Where we could attack or where...

LB: Yeah, I'm sure you had a very eventful time in the military. You were there during some of the most intense years.

JD: And I covered all this in three years. All in three years. Because basically I was always, in classes, I was always either 1 or 2. It took me... I took pride in being 1 or 2 in a class. If I wasn't first, I would be second. And vice versa, back and forth. Because of the training basically that we got in high school. They were always, like I said, doing the best you can. And I always felt that I could compete with anybody—especially mechanical-wise. If man made it I could fix it. That was my mindset. One thing that I did for four years was, and while I went to high school, this one combination lock. This combination lock stayed with me for four years. And I lost the combination to it. And I tried and I tried for four years to figure it out. And eventually I did. The fourth year I eventually figured out the combination. It wasn't but three combination lock alternatives. And I figured it out. I would write down what I would do every day. If I was at home I would play with it. And eventually I got it open. I got the combination to it. It was all in my mindset. If man made it. I could fix it.

LB: And you did.

JD: Yeah, yeah.

LB: What kinds of extracurricular activities did you do in high school?

JD: I was in the cadet corps and I was on the drill team because of dealing with rifles and that fascinated me. Plus the drill teams always set aside, always set twelve of us at all times. We were performing baseball games, basketball games, football games, and you had to be [unc.] The boots we wore with the white strings and like the railroad tracks you had to have them clean all the time and pressed starched uniform. And that impressed me. That's probably why I was a paratrooper. Because as you know, most paratroopers, they dress well. They always... everything's always in line and it just stayed with me. But I was a captain in the cadet corps. And most of the officers, we had to teach military science to the students. I mean we read books that we read. Basically we would just share that information and drilling them on the field and all of that. I really wanted to get into athletics but I didn't have the time because by me catching the bus every day I would've had to get to school an hour early to go set up with the cadets, and then...

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