

Marshall University

Marshall Digital Scholar

0064: Marshall University Oral History
Collection

Digitized Manuscript Collection Materials

1-16-1984

Oral History Interview: James Jordan

James Jordan

Follow this and additional works at: https://mds.marshall.edu/oral_history



Part of the [Appalachian Studies Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Marshall University Special Collections, OH64-402, Huntington, WV.

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Digitized Manuscript Collection Materials at Marshall Digital Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in 0064: Marshall University Oral History Collection by an authorized administrator of Marshall Digital Scholar. For more information, please contact zhangj@marshall.edu.



MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA 25701

JAMES E. MORROW LIBRARY

WVVV-17

ACC 402

tapes 20a & 20b

ORAL HISTORY

GIFT AND RELEASE AGREEMENT

I, JAMES JORDAN, the undersigned,
of CHARLOTTESVILLE, County of ALBEMARLE, State
of VIRGINIA, grant, convey, and transfer
to the James E. Morrow Library Associates, a division of
The Marshall University Foundation, INC., an educational and
eleemosynary institution, all my right, title, interest, and
literary property rights in and to my testimony recorded on
11-24, 1984, to be used for scholarly
purposes, including study and rights to reproduction.

JEJ
(initial)

Open and usable immediately.

(initial)

Open and usable after my review.

(initial)

Closed for a period of _____ years.

(initial)

Closed for my lifetime.

(initial)

Closed for my lifetime unless special permission is gained from me or my assigns.

DATE 11-24-84

* James E Jordan
(Signature - Interviewee)

1205 B W Main
(Address)

Charlottesville Va 22903

DATE 11-24-84

J. Hallenbeck
(Signature - Witness)

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: JAMES JORDAN

CONDUCTED BY: JOHN C. HENNEN, JR.

SUBJECT: WV VIETNAM VETERANS

DATE OF INTERVIEW: NOVEMBER 24, 1984

TRANSCRIPTIONIST/TYPIST: GINA KEHALI KATES

Note: extensive audio difficulties-areas of tape are muffled, which are noted by [inaudible] or blank spaces.

John: This is Saturday, November 24th, I'm in Charlottesville, Virginia, with Bud Jordan. He's got a sort of a different story, as far as Vietnam Era vets go. We'll start off finding out where Bud was born and raised. Then he'll tell us how he got in the service and take it from there.

Bud: I was born in the Panama Canal zone. My father was in the Air Force and moved around every three years, moved all over the country and in Canada. I said my dad was in service and lived all over the place. And then when I was, graduated I went to the military academy. After I graduated from military school, I wanted to go into the Army. My father didn't want me to go into the Army. (When did you graduate from the military academy?) Uh...'66. (So you were born in '49?) Forty-seven. [inaudible] So to [inaudible]...in Fayetteville, North Carolina, which is the, also the home of Fort Bragg, which has the 82nd Airborne, JFK Special Warfare Center, and a lot of special forces guys. Another reason I wanted to go down there, I wanted to be close to seeing the real action. While I was down there, met some guys who were in the 82nd Airborne, Green Berets and stuff. They were the first people to turn me against the war. Also, the first people to turn me on to marijuana. [chuckles]

John: A double-edged sword.

Bud: And within one year's time my whole perspective of Vietnam and everything was completely changed, just the opposite of what I used to think. And if I could have voted, I would have voted for Goldwater. [inaudible] Got kicked out of Methodist College in I guess, what was it? January of '68. And went up to New Jersey with Bill Moody, my roommate who also got kicked out at the same time. And stayed with his sister up there for a couple of months. I got an induction, got a thing to report for induction to the Army. But I didn't go to it. I was kind of worrying about what I should do. I called my dad on the phone, he tried to talk me into enlisting in the Army and signing up for non-combatant-type status. And I think a lot of reason I did that was I felt guilty for getting kicked out of college and for letting the old man down and all that stuff. So I did it. I enlisted in the damn Army. And this was a 72 B-20, which was a specialist, which was mainly being crypto coding, decoding messages. And so I went into the Army, I guess it was around June of '68. Then during the time, while I was out, too, I also went to like the [inaudible]...in New York City, went to demonstrations and everything. I went in the Army in June, got sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky for basic training. While I was there, they made me a squad leader, because I'd gone to a military academy, I already knew how to drill and all that stuff. Then I...the drill sargeant was drill sargeant [inaudible].... I liked him. He was a pretty neat guy. (Sargeant Blue?) Blue, yeah. He'd been to Nam. He'd been twice. He was kind of a neat guy. He wasn't really into the, all, a lot of stuff like keeping everything super neat. He was really into the combat training. And even though, I still kind of liked parts of that, even but I still liked some of the combat plans and some of the weapons. [inaudible]

I had a pretty easy basic, because I was a squad leader. I also played poker with my drill sergeant; he owed me a lot of money. So I had to do veyr little. I would trade money. [inaudible]

everyone had to march out...I rode in the truck. (Bud joins the Army) Then after basic I got sent to Fort [inaudible].... (Disgusted) And got put into...everybody...[inaudible]...communications and 72-B220's or there were also some guys who were ASA. Went there and I guess...went to school, went all the way through school up until I guess maybe the last week or two of school. And I can't really remember how long the school lasted. It was a good while. It was like at least four months, maybe longer, I can't remember. And just, right before I graduated from school, I was having trouble like sleeping at night, because I felt like [inaudible] ...World War II in Nazi Germany, and they came up to you and said, "Kill that Jew," or [inaudible]...if you wouldnt do it there, what are you going to do over here, you know. There, they'll kill you. Here, the worst thing that could happen to you, you're going to go to jail for a while. So finally, I came in, I had met some Quakers in Augusta and got involved in [inaudible]...friends who were putting out a GI newspaper called [inaudible]...and worked on that and helped put that out. [inaudible]...Red Denning...

JH: Red Denning?

JJ: Yeah, they kicked him out three days before he was supposed to get out of the service. Instead of an honorable discharge, they gave him a court martial and they gave him an undesirable discharge.

JH: For putting the paper out?

JJ: Yeah, basically it was just a kangaroo court. [inaudible]..sort of railroaded this guy. Just because they didn't like him. They couldn't really prove anything. It was just...he really was a communist, he belonged to the People's Socialist Party or something like that. And the other people [inaudible]..... And so, finally, like I said, I called my dad and told him that I just couldn't play. Sorry, I knew it would hurt his feelings and.... But my dad was really pretty cool about it. He, you know, said, "I don't believe what you believe. But I believe you believe it,"..... So he kind of backed me. He didn't try to pull any strings for me, but you know, at least gave me moral support.

JH: Was he still in the service at this time?

JJ: No, he had retired. He was retired and teaching college. Blueridge Community College. And uh, I forgot what I was....[inaudible]....going AWOL or deserting or [inaudible]..... So I went and talked to some lawyers, one who had really been an ACLU lawyer in civilian life and had gotten drafted into the Army; he hated the Army as much as I did. And he told me basically how to go about it, what papers I had to file, [inaudible].... As soon as I filed, the company immediately [inaudible]....not other GIs, but the CO in my batallion, the commander and stuff, they [inaudible] They put me on, well, first they made me a fireman, which was a great job. It was like a holdover [inaudible].... I think it was nine months I waited for CO to be rejected. [inaudible]...three buildings that I had to keep stocked with coal. But, you know, I got so I could stoke a fire and leave it for twelve hours. That was a pretty easy job. Then after that, they put me on extra duty every day [inaudible].....three hundred, four

hundred people, and they'd be one sergeant and somebody would die and they'd call out the names [inaudible].....cut the grass, paint rocks, whatever the shit job needed to be done on the base, that's where they sent me. [inaudible].... We were playing Spades, and the first game, the guy and I who were the last two sitting there, we won. And the sergeant said, I forget what we were playing for. It was like a penny or two pennies...[inaudible-tape skips].....He said, "This time you be my partner." And the sergeant said that to me. And I said, "Okay." And the next hand we won. So from then on, I was the guy who called out the names [inaudible]....[laughter]..... So I did that for months. And it was a great job!

JH: So you're still waiting.

JJ: Yeah, I'm still waiting for my CO to come back one way or the other. And then, I met a couple of other guys, Larry Henderson and Luke Allison, who were two friends of mine, who were in different companies than I was in. But we would go out in [inaudible]... talked him into [inaudible].. And finally, he got out on some type of like psychiatric type thing, I can't remember. And he was getting crazy. They just basically [inaudible]...he got out on that. And then my CO papers came back rejected. And that same day they just hand carried around [inaudible] '...this other guy, Scott....what was Scott's last name? This other guy, Scott, who had filed, his papers came back the same day mine did. And they took the two of us and carried us around the [inaudible]...and we both had gotten orders for Germany. And like I said, [inaudible]...head of the line, thousands and thousands of guys waiting, just sitting around, [inaudible]...took us no time.

JH: Goodbye, get these guys out of here!

JJ: But they'd given us fourteen days leave. And during that time, we hadn't talked to a civilian and [inaudible]....they took out case, and they filed a habeas corpus.

JH: [inaudible]....

JJ: [inaudible]....take it to federal court. So I took my leave and came back after my leave was up, and [inaudible]...weren't real happy to see me back. [inaudible]...in the stockade for being AWOL, because I wasn't in New Jersey. I was supposed to catch a plane out of New Jersey to Germany. And I told them, I said, "Well, [inaudible]....habeas corpus, and [inaudible]....and they said, "What's the judge's name?" And I couldn't remember it. And [inaudible].....found out it was true. [inaudible] brigade. The full colonel was, I guess he was a brigade commander. Usually when they have that big of an inspection, a guy just walks down the barracks and [inaudible]...and heads out the door. But I had this foot locker and I called this friend of mine who was a lawyer at JAG and asked him, you know, what can I legally get away with. Another one [inaudible]....as far as like having pamphlets against the war and if you had just one of each. If you have just one of each, it's your personal property. If you have two of them, leaflets or pamphlets, they can get you for distributing propaganda. So...

JH: On the base?

JJ: Yes. So I got every paper, article, magazine, anything I could find, just things I didn't believe in or [inaudible].... And I had this big poster I stuck on the top of my locker top, it was open. And on the part where you could see, on the locker top, I had this big poster up there that said, "Old soldiers never die. Young ones do." And when

the commander came walking through, he [inaudible]...poster out of the corner of his eye. And he said, "Look,"....and just totally flipped out, went bonkers.

JH: Did he know you before this? Did he know you?

JJ: He knew, as soon as they mentioned my name, he knew who I was, but he'd never met me. He'd heard about me. [inaudible]...general complaint about where they were buying grapes and lettuce from the [inuadible].....[laughter]

just part of my personal property. His eyes [inaudible].... So they called up, they called [inaudible] [tape skips] And you can't do a damn thing about it.

JH: [inaudible]

[inaudible]

JJ: I wasn't a communist. I didn't believe in that. I wasn't....[tape skips]....pacifist, either. When it came to somebody hitting me, I hit them back. And if somebody would shoot at me, I was going to shoot back. But I wasn't going to be put in a position where I had to make that choice. [inaudible]....I wasn't going to Nam, so I didn't have to worry about that. And I told them [inaudible]....CO papers and also for my court, I didn't try to pass myself off as a pacifist or anything like that. Which is basically what they wanted me to be. They'd say, "What would you do if somebody was raping your mother?"

And I said, "I'd kill the son-of-a-bitch." I wouldn't like it. I wouldn't want to kill a guy. B

JH: So you weren't [inaudible-muffled]

JJ: [inaudible]...philosophical beliefs. So [inaudible]....I went to federal court and like I said, basically told them the same thing in federal court. And while I was waiting for the judge to make a decision, I got hepatitis. And I got it from shooting LSD. And went into

the hospital. And the first couple of days I had hepatitis, so nobody...they didn't know what I had. I didn't, either. I just started feeling real down and groggy and tired. And but then after awhile, I knew something was wrong. I didn't know. And I finally called my dad and I said, "I'm really sick." I didn't know what was happening. My dad kind of [inaudible]...sounds like hepatitis. And so I went to sick hall the next day and this doctor [inaudible]...hospital right now, he's got hepatitis. I mean, I looked like [inaudible]...jaundice was really bad. I got down to ninety-nine pounds. And I had weighed like 175 pounds.

JH: You're what? Six-three?

JJ: Six-one. And I got down to 99. I looked down at the scales...I mean, I looked real bad! And so I was in the hospital for just about a month. While I was in the hospital, Larry Henderson and [inaudible]...Scott's papers came back and [inaudible]...he was going to court with me at the same time. And both of our papers came back, you know, rejected. [tape skips] ...Scott and put him on a plane. And I knew the day I stepped out of the hospital.... [inaudible]...'49 Chevy, drove up to New Jersey [inaudible]... And while we were, we were gone 29 days and we got stopped. I think it was like 15 times by the police. [inaudible]...and they were really checking the Jersey turnpike. And one time we got stopped on the Jersey turnpike. This was unbelievable. And we got stopped and Larry had stuck his military ID under the floor mat of the car. And the cops stopped us, asked us for our drivers license and stuff like that. And then they searched the car, found a carton of cigarettes in the trunk. [inaudible]...state tax thing, because we bought 'em on the base. They wanted to know where we got them

[inaudible]...

JH: You had one carton?

JJ: One carton. And I used to live overseas, and you're allowed to bring two cartons of that per person [[inaudible]...two gallons of liquor. [inaudible]...state to state with a carton of cigarettes. And they found Larry's ID card under the mat in the car. And they wanted to know, "Are you in the military?" "Yes." "Let me see your pass, or papers." So Larry showed them his pass, because he was on..what do you call...see, he wasn't in school. He was already out of school. He was stationed at Fort [inaudible]...permanent party was what it was called. He was permanent party. So he had a pass that was good like for fifty miles around the base. Well, this was New Jersey from August, Georgia. The cop goes, "This isn't," you know, "this isn't valid." And Larry said, "Well, this is what they gave us." So he said, "Well, let me call it in." So he called in and tried to find out what was going on. And we were sitting in the car [inaudible]...and we went, "No." And that was it. Never "Here's your draft card," or anything.[inaudible]... "Well, follow me back to the police station." We had to get out and push the car to get it started. The guys were getting [inaudible]...three different directions. Just as we were getting ready to bolt, the cops [inaudible]...he said, "All has been cleared. You can take off." See, they don't really put you on the FBI list until after thirty days. After thirty days you've become a deserter, up until twenty-nine days, you're AWOL. So we went to...

JH: [inaudible]...deserter during war time, right?

JJ: You're still, you'd just be AWOL. See, if you were over in Nam, and you left the

field or something like that, you might be, they'd get you for desertion. But otherwise, you have to be gone more than thirty days for to be considered a deserter. So I went to the moratorium in DC, which was kind of strange. Because we talked to a bunch of MP's and guards, guys over there on duty and playing security and stuff, and tried to talk them into joining us, got high with a bunch of them. [laughter] We had a good time. It was fun. And then we went back to August, turned ourselves in after twenty-nine days, again, so we wouldn't be deserters. Basically I was hoping was that they would give me a perfectly good excuse to kick me out of the Army. And I was hoping that was what they'd do. We'd get some time.... I was wrong. They gave us three months at hard labor. And like I said, the first day I got back from there, they threw me, put me in maximum security and took Larry and Luke down to the compound. And the very next day, my [inaudible]...up to see me, and they wouldn't allow him to see me. And the next day we were in federal court. And the lawyer had gotten ahold of the judge, and the judge was really just giving me Hell! He told us we still had to obey the law of the land. [inaudible]...judge, and if he heard of anything more like this happening again, somebody's ass was going to be in a sling, real bad. [inaudible]...So they took me out of maximum security and put me down in the compound. And then Christmas eve night, we had to stay in the compound. The whole field was nothing but sand. Every night they'd rope the field off [inaudible]... huge peace sign. [inaudible]...Christmas eve, and that's what Christmas was all about. Peace on earth. [inaudible]...And they took me, they had a double fence around the compound and put me in between two fences by this little house they called [inaudible]...

...head of lettuce and two pieces of bread. And I can't remember how much water we got.

JH: That's a whole day?

JJ: That's a whole day.

JH: And you coming off Hepatitis.

JJ: Yes. Looking back on it, I should have, I could have probably gotten a medical thing that they couldn't have done that. [inaudible]...

END OF SIDE 1 -BEGIN SIDE 2

JJ: . . .first saw the doctor [inaudible-muffled]...big difference on the treatment. So I told him [inaudible]...which I found out later was a crock of shit. [inaudible]...is this confidential? I mean, is this strictly between me and you?" [inaudible]...never go any further. [inaudible]...thrown in the stockade [inaudible]...all these charges off to me, selling drugs, using drugs, and I thought, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." I don't want to hear another word until I get my lawyer down here. And my lawyer came down and [inaudible]...

[remainder of tape is too inaudible and muffled to transcribe.]

END OF INTERVIEW