

Paul & Jane Jeffrey

**Son of Missionaries to Vietnam,
Ivory & Ruth Jeffrey**

*Interviewed by David Fitzstevens
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*Transcribed by Winnie Kaetzel
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Interview with Paul & Jane Jeffrey

DF: Today is May 29, 2005. This is David Fitzstevens speaking behind the camera, and I'm in the home of Paul and Jane Jeffrey in Toronto. They've been gracious to give me a few minutes time to talk with them. Paul was just launching into a story and I interrupted him to get the camera out, so Paul, please continue.

PJ: Yes, well, it was traditional when a new missionary came in, he would preach the sermon—after a suitable three months education on Vietnamese tonal language. You can't preach a sermon without hope. You have to have some hope in it, and the word "hope" in Vietnamese is "eur kao" (rising tone). And you can't say "eur kao" (lower tone) or you wet your pants. So we would all giggle in the front row there. This is one of my earliest memories of the language. As you were saying Dave, every time you went on furlough you'd lose half your Vietnamese 'cause you didn't speak it for a year or so. Ask me different questions.

DF: Sorry, I want to scan over here and show who else is here. Here's Jane. (Dave pans the camera to the other end of the couch)

JJ: Jane puts her tea cup back on it's saucer, says, "Hi," and chuckles

DF: I have a whole interview format. It tends to be for people who have actually been serving as missionaries. But I would like to hear some of your stories about your early memories of growing up in Vietnam and your parents. Can you tell me what it was like growing up in Vietnam?

PJ: My earliest memories... I get recall. I can't get some of the pictures. I was sitting on a bumper of a car parked outside of a building at Dalat, and all of us were wearing those big broad rimmed hats. I imagine that I would have been about four or five years old. My parents, I think had gone to see my grandparents up in Yunan Fu, in China, so they just left us—left me, anyway up at Dalat School. I wasn't old enough, but I attended the classes anyway. My memories are just fabulous. I'd say it would go into three phases. The very beginning phase, the discord of the war until the French defeat, the Vichy defeat. It was very exciting. The United States was a very distant thing. Being there, it was more Brits, French, Chinese and Japanese than American, up until the war broke.

The other tale that I recall was when I brought Jane out. I don't know, I brought you a couple of times, but

JJ: But that wasn't early.

PJ: No, well it's not only early, it's the whole cycle. This was the middle. Now the US is in and my father had arranged with the US Army with an introduction. We asked "could I take Jane around?" Armies are generally reluctant to do this, but we took the day. Two highlights there. I was impressed with the way the English language was spoken. It seemed that every colonel was from Alabama. If they'd been any further south than Alabama, I wouldn't have understood them at all. We came up to this bridge. Jane asked if we could cross the bridge. This is the way the war became more pronounced to me. He said, "no ma'am, you can't cross that bridge. The other side is Charlie's. This is ours. That's Charlie's side on the other and he gets angry if we go on the bridge and we get just as ugly if he crosses it." And this is a different language.

So there are two little stories that carry things from my memory. Well, my memory also, is that I never had long pants in my life until I was about 16, or maybe fifteen. That was the exchange. Anyway.

DF: So you went to Dalat School?

PJ: Umhuh.

DF: Who were some of your peers, or classmates? Just to give me a frame of reference.

PJ: Ah, Franklin Irwin would be one. Jackson.

DF: Bernard Jackson?

PJ: No, the oldest Jackson (ponders to remember name).

JJ: Was it Mickey?

PJ: No. Who? Mickey? Refresh my memory.

JJ: I don't know. Mickey Jackson?

PJ: Yeah. There were two Jacksons. There was the Jackson that ran Dalat School.

DF: Herbert Jackson, and the one in the north was R. N. Jackson.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: His oldest son.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: Okay. I can find that out. That's no problem. So, your folks were down in the Delta, the Saigon area, and you were at...

PJ: I guess my first knowledge of Vietnam was Tourane. This is where the English Language School was and the teaching of colporteurs was. The Delta area, there wasn't anybody specifically there. The furthest south was the Saigon Home, where they welcomed you.

Missionaries are autocratic people. The boss ran it, and if there was too much objection they've been known to have missionaries fired and sent back to the States or Canada.

So, after the war... Were we ever in Vietnam when the war was over? (Asks Jane) Suffice it to say, no. That war wasn't over until the Japanese War was over. So, it's a story of wars.

DF: Now tell me about you internment.

PJ: My internment was brief. It was basically in Saigon. Well, it started... Franklin and I were... My kid brother had died. Franklin and I were on the train coming down from Hanoi to... And he dropped off at Tourane, then I went on to Saigon. But at Vinh, I think, in the north, these three Japanese officers boarded the train with their long swords. They looked very military. They immediately took us... They went through English, American, they'd never heard of Canada... So, I was in effect, arrested there. They told us about Pearl Harbor and we didn't believe 'em. But there was nothing we could do about it. I was taken then to a reception area in Saigon...

DF: But they let Franklin off?

PJ: They let Franklin off and took me on down to Saigon.

DF: Okay.

PJ: And Saigon was the same as Saigon always was at that time... As far as they were concerned if the French are their masters or the Japanese are their masters, what's the difference? They discovered there was a difference.

DF: Hmm. Now tell me about what they did with you after...

PJ: Well, they interrogated me and then...

DF: They interrogated you? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

PJ: Yeah, basically, it was... Our home was in Saigon. I would sometimes be left alone for a week and then I was brought in, and they had a reception area for British and Americans in there that wasn't the mission school.

Me Tho... I had a brief time in Me Tho because this particular day, they sent me up to Dalat. I think my malaria came back when they sent me up to Dalat. And then my memory is down in Saigon. The Assammamaru, the Japanese troop ship, picked up Americans from Japan, the Santo Thomas Camp outside of Manila which was the Japanese prison camp for American civilians. It was sort of like a dream. The taking of Singapore was so rapid that it was like a minor incident. But what happened was the two ships picked up the Conti Veriti, an Italian ship, picked up British and Americans and then these two ships picked up the final load from Chengi, the camp in Singapore. The Australians bragged that they had tougher prison camps than the Americans or Canadians ever knew. (Chuckle)

So, I was alone in terms of the mission group. I don't think the ones that went to Camp Me Tho were sure what this mystery ship was. So, my father figured, "well, we'll experiment. We'll put Paul on it and see what happens." So I was taken by these two and the exchange was done in Lorenzo Marks in Portugese East Africa. Yeah, the two ships there, the Gripsholm, which was the Swedish ship in the middle... The Gripsholm took all these prisoners.

DF: So you were part of a prisoner exchange?

PJ: Yeah.

DF: And you were in Me Tho for a short time?

PJ: I was in Me Tho for a very short time.

DF: Okay. And then your father went up to.. And they had a name? They had like a ticket for a particular person?

PJ: Yes. For my father.

DF: It had your father's name on it.

PJ: Yea, he crossed it out and put my name on it. My uncle, which was a fortunate thing for us... My uncle was director of staff duties-weapons, in Ottawa. He was the one who was responsible for preparing for war with Russia. So, for a missionary group and my father a pacifist in the first world war, everything sort of turned the other way. He approved of his son as a paratrooper, and he knew more about... I mean, on the various Japanese troop ships, he knew more about the... and the French

army for that matter. I'm getting away... I'm sorry.

DF: So, you're on the ship... I'm trying to picture this. You're by yourself in terms of family? Are you with some other missionaries?

PJ: All the missionaries that were there were French Canadian Roman Catholic priests. A delightful bunch! There were about eighty of them.

DF: Were you under somebody's care?

PJ: No.

DF: No. And how old were you at this time?

PJ: (Stops to think) Sixteen.

DF: Sixteen. So, that's quite an adventure for a sixteen year old on a long trip to Africa, and then for a prisoner exchange.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: Then you come back to Canada by yourself.

PJ: Well, it ended in New York City. I was most impressed. I'm a fan of the US military. I don't understand how your press slams them so much. I was on a train, and all day long they would show me insignia. Yes, I saw that... because the Japanese practice was... when they had a prison camp it was the nearest military formation that ran the camp. And the worst, the cruelest, were the Koreans. They had this funny hat that looked like you'd been out in the rain—a pith helmet. Then somebody put his fingers in and got it all roughed up. I'd never seen...

DF: So they debriefed you?

PJ: They debriefed me, and I was most impressed. They had the Mounties—my being a Canadian. Of course the Canadians had lost two battalions in the Hong Kong fight. It was just relaxed and... “would you like a Coke?” And the FBI were there and these guys were just... I don't know how a guy who was guilty of anything could resist cooperating with them. They were a fine group of gentlemen.

DF: So were they doing this to all the people who came off the ship? Just trying to gather all the intelligence they could?

PJ: Yeah. And of course, most of them were Americans.

DF: So you sat out the rest of the war? Where?

PJ: I went then to... I had an uncle. He was Dr. George VanGorder.

JJ: He had been in Beijing.

PJ: He met my aunt in Beijing. He was an orthopedic surgeon at Mass(achusetts) General.

DF: This is your mom's sister. Right?

PJ: Yeah. So I (contacted him) and he sent me to a school called Kimbel Union Academy in Meriden New Hampshire. Great School. And then I got my hands on the other uncle and found myself one week later in the army.

JJ: So, he took a year in the States. A year at Kimbel Union—finished high school, then came home (Canada).

PJ: Now I was seventeen or eighteen.

JJ: You were seventeen.

PJ: I was seventeen. Found myself in the army.

DF: Sorry. Did you join up or did he have a lot of influence.

PJ: I joined up, but he joined up for me.

DF: Before you had anything to say about it?

PJ: Well, I have a fear of heights, so he said, "well, we'll put you in the parachute regiment. That'll cure you!" I have some very tough militaristic uncles.

DF: My goodness!

PJ: Then I'll get off this part. Jane's uncle was colonel of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, which was an augmented regiment—really a brigade. They fought in Italy. I wasn't in that regiment, but they knew that by law I was supposed to be nineteen before I went overseas. I was only eighteen. I guess I aged very quickly at Passaic New Jersey because on the train—by then I had...

DF: (chuckle) So, you served in?

PJ: I served in the European Theater.

DF: Okay. As a paratrooper?

PJ: As a paratrooper.

DF: You overcame your fear of heights?

PJ: No, but I had an awful lot of jumps. I don't recommend it. (Both chuckle)

It sounds disjointed, but after the amusing Passaic incident, I had my papers cut to go to Fort Benning in Georgia, another parachute formation, and jumped in Japan in the Commonwealth Division. I had the pleasure of seeing Fort Benning, but I didn't see...

So, getting back more to French Indo-China part where you have more of the interest, obviously. It was idyllic. It was just unbelievable. Because at that age growing up, you think the whole world is idyllic. You're not exposed to... You have the interesting time. Every year that they (my parents) had a furlough, I had a year in an American Prep School. The Stonybrooke School on Long Island. Have you every heard of that school?

DF: Yes, I have.

PJ: In fact I've got records. I was the valedictorian at Stonybrooke. Stonybrooke is a good school.

DF: Yeah, that's a famous boys school and still is. Can you share with me some memories of your mom and your dad?

PJ: Ah, yes. I was fortunate in having the two. My mother was three times as tough as my father. Most mothers are, I guess. My mother was a doer. She raised the money for the only Protestant Church in Saigon. And it's big. You have to have some size or the Orientals don't want to... They don't want to go to a shack and across and down the street is a Roman Catholic citadel. They don't like that. So, yes, my parents... I was extremely proud of my father. For a pacifist, I think he... In building of the church, the French contractor lost his temper and hit the leading Vietnamese man that my parents had hired on the building (project). And breakfast was always at six o'clock in the morning because it was cool then. I said, "Father, you'd better look at this guy. He's been beaten up." And it was his man. There were a few words of Vietnamese, and my father leaped in the car. I just got the back seat. And he literally punched the lights out of this Frenchman. He threw him off the place and said, "don't come back here." It hit the papers. LOCAL MISSIONARY BEATS UP FRENCH CONSTRUCTION WORKER.

DF: So, this was during the French days.

PJ: Yeah. This was under French days. My memories of growing up in Saigon. There wasn't a boy, other than my younger brother, that spoke English. So I spoke French. My accent, I'd say is superb. My vocabulary and all that ended at sixteen. There was a great puzzlement on my professors when I took French at the university. The university being Queens University in Kingston Ontario.

I really do not have a bad memory. I remember being a missionary's boy in Vietnam at Dalat School. Dalat is high, as you know... Have you been to Dalat?

DF: Umhuh. I went to Dalat also.

PJ: Did you? At night the wind signed through the trees.

DF: Oh yeah. I can hear it now.

PJ: That (shaking head) has never left me.

JJ: Yes, I love that.

PJ: So, you learned at Dalat?

DF: First through twelve.

PJ: The only time I wasn't at Dalat was when they (parents) were on furlough. So, I'd have...

JJ: You must have been about the last class? Weren't you?

DF: Ah. I graduated in '69. It had moved from Vietnam already. It moved in '631.

JJ: Oh, it had moved?

DF: Yeah, it moved to Thailand, and then down to Malaysia when I came back. I was on furlough during that move.

PJ: It was for a time in Thailand?

DF: One semester, while they looked. They had a place where they could keep things moving while they had a search party out there looking for another campus. They ended up in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia after that.

¹The actual move of Dalat School was in 1965, though Dave said '63.

PJ: It was a rather pleasant spot, wasn't it? Of course, it would be hotter than Dalat.

DF: It was very much like Dalat. It was a mile high also. Didn't have the same kind of pine trees, but it was good. Very similar (weather). Rained a lot.

JJ: So, were Ruthann and Kay Joy Houck with you?

DF: Kay Joy is a few years older than I am.

JJ: I see. Okay. She's the second. Ruthann is older.

DF: Right, I talked to her after I talked to Bert and Ruth in Florida in December. I got her phone number and called her up, because I was encouraging her to write that book that she's working on her parents.

JJ: Yes.

DF: Keep going for it. Anyway I can help you with any information, let me know.

JJ: That's great. Where's your family living? Your dad is still alive?

(They turned the video off while talking about personal things.)

DF: Now, you went back to Vietnam in the '60's?

PJ: Yes.

JJ: In '66, we were there in Saigon. That was my first visit.

DF: What was your impression of this place where your husband had grown up?

JJ: Well. In '66, at that point, all around this beautiful home that they had as a receiving home, were corrugated tin structures. All the poor people had moved from the country and had just settled. It was a very, very sad time. But they spoiled... (Smiles at Paul) They were so happy to see this little descendant of the Jeffreys, that they brought some kind of fruit that was white inside. It was out of season.

PJ: It was purple on the outside and you cut into it.

DF: Milk fruit.

PJ: What?

DF: Milk fruit.

PJ: Yeah, that's right.

DF: Black stains...

JJ: And this Vietnamese gentleman brought it to Paul, and he was just thrilled. Paul even spoke a little better Vietnamese by the end of the week. We were just there for a week. We weren't there long.

DF: Now were you there for a visit, or ...

JJ: To tell them to come home.

DF: Can you tell a little bit about that? You mentioned a little bit about it on the phone.

PJ: Yeah, the mission board didn't authorize... Well, they were making appeals to remain, but it was foolish because health... For whatever reasons, there were a dozen reasons why you shouldn't be out there when you're... (looks to Jane) what were they? He wouldn't be as old as I am now?

JJ: Well, they must have been in their 70's.

PJ: Yea, I think they were... No, and I'm not really telling it very well. I can remember that home in Saigon, we got up on the roof... You know the architecture there... I call it the Spanish architecture. We were up there... There wasn't any particular firing because as you know, on the house... the main French military camp was right across the street. Later it became the Foreign Legion camp, and then the Japanese... I could stand at the gate and marvel at how well, or how badly the various armies had come in there and marched across there... The Japanese were pretty good.

DF: In those days, it would have been the secret police across the street there.

PJ: Yeah. Yeah! But the beauty is when the Japanese General came on... Boy, they don't have a sloppy army. The ones who had just been in the fighting, of course... no soldier looks like he's on parade then.

But, I finally got 'em up there, and I said, "Father, I'm just going to tell you one thing. You can tell me that it's quiet there, but I'll tell you that the tracers that you see are outgoing. When they're incoming, you don't see them. And then all of a sudden, as though it had been staged, all hell broke loose. 'Cause it's the house—you know the house there in Saigon, don't you? It's just the other side of the river where the big ships dock. And we were both yelling to get the point across and I didn't stop yelling

fast enough. He had this look of shock. He had never been yelled at by me, and he started to cry. And I started to cry. (Chuckle) That was a sad one.

JJ: But you got them to come home.

PJ: Ah... It took six months. Six more months.

JJ: Yes, they took six months.

DF: Now were you asked to...? This was a personal mission?

JJ: Oh, a personal mission. Oh no, not a...

DF: To encourage them to come home. Did you bring them a ticket or something like that? Did you say yesterday?

PJ: I had a ticket in my hand, and of course, it was able to change. But then my troubles only started because we got them into that place in Florida.

JJ: Yes, into Shell Pointe.

PJ: At Shell Pointe, and my mother said, "No, this is too cold."

JJ: She didn't like the air conditioning all the time. So, they came back to Canada.

DF: Where's it's warmer. Too cold. (All chuckle)

JJ: And they went to a wonderful home in Stoweille which they really enjoyed. They didn't want to live with us because we have bad habits. So then, all the boat people came and they had a whole new ministry which was absolutely marvelous. They found them second hand cars. They found them apartments. They were still young enough to do all those things. And they preached every Sunday. And Mrs. Irwin was with that group helping these people. It was just a marvelous thing for them. Because they had hoped, of course, to be buried in Vietnam. That was their home. They'd been there about fifty years, I think.

DF: So, was it difficult talking your father into leaving the place where he'd spent his career?

PJ: Well, he finally agreed. He finally saw the logic of it. I think when Charlie took over... One of the first things they did was... There was this big French cemetery where mainly French soldiers (were buried), but my brother was there. The Viet Cong took a bulldozer and broke up all the stones and cleared the whole thing out. That one got 'em. They wouldn't even let him take a picture of where his grave might be.

No, I'd say it was... I guess, my mother's negotiating would say to my father, "tell 'em I'm not going." But he did. As Jane said, he had a new life (in Toronto). No, and of course, Vietnam really was his life. They got married at Yunan Fu up across the border (in China), and my grandfather, Jonathan Goforth was there for that.

DF: That's quite a heritage you have there.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: Did you every react against it? As a PK or an MK? Like a lot of us do.

PJ: No, not to my knowledge. No, I'll tell you... I don't know the truth of it, but in my regiment—the parachute regiment, some interested party who came on... We were out on maneuvers and whatnot. They wanted to know what did the fathers do? Thirty-two percent of all the paratroopers in the Canadian Army were PKS., preacher's kids. Their fathers were ministers. Now that's an awful lot of dissatisfaction, or whatever, but...

DF: Wow!

PJ: They were not particularly religious themselves at this stage but they were very proud that they were sons of ... So, I guess I don't need to... I don't think there were any other missionary's kids. Oh we know a lot of (Mks) from the China Inland Mission, and the Japanese, and Korea...

You know Toronto... Are all your cleaning shops in the United States Koreans?

DF: I have no idea.

PJ: They are here.

DF: Okay. Now Paul, you said your brother passed away in Vietnam. I know that, but I don't know anything about it. Did he come down with something, or?

PJ: Well, there are two or three theories. One was, at that particular time, it was either encephalitis or whatever the other was.

DF: Like dengue? Or hemorrhagic fever?

PJ: Well, dengue, I had all those. The word was encephalitis or spinal meningitis. One of the two,

DF: Okay.

PJ: And the Japanese announced that they had asked for a supply... At that time the Japanese were really the conk of the wok (?). They said they had asked for the medicine from the Americans in Manila and they had been turned down. And the French said, we had asked, and they'd been turned down. I doubt either had gone to that point, but it's... (shrugs) Yeah, he went very quickly.

DF: How old was he?

PJ: & JJ: Twelve, I think.

DF: And you were?

PJ: Sixteen.

DF: So this was shortly before you left to go back...

PJ: Yeah.

DF: So this was during the time of Japanese occupation?

PJ: Yeah.

DF: Or Vichy, I mean?

PJ: Yeah, that's right. The confusion at that time was that it was Vichy guards but not any authority. The Japanese would be watching. And my sojourn was with the Kemptai, the Japanese secret service. Because normal Japanese prison camps would be the Japanese formation that was on the way through. They were responsible for the prisoners, and if a prisoner escaped, the Japanese concern would get shot, and when the prisoner got back, he'd get shot. And they took the most prominent English speaker, which was my father, and they had a banker from England, etc., and these guys would get shot if there were any escapes, so that was Me Tho, up until I ceased to see it. Camp Me Tho was very much like a civilian operation but it got more and more military. Have you been to Me Tho?

DF: Umhuh. My folks lived in Me Tho. Yeah, I did too, for a year.

PJ: There's the most fantastic little French restaurant on the river. I never... For a poor missionary's son, I was learning good food. (Chuckle)

DF: Now, do you have any recollection of your short time in the camp?

PJ: No. No, there were like permanent interrogations. They didn't believe me. I'm

shrinking now, but I was about six one then and they didn't believe I came in at fifteen. They didn't believe that anyone at fifteen or sixteen could be six foot one. I learned to quickly do as I'm doing with you right now. I won't put my eyes on your eyes with the Japanese.

DF: Look down. Right?

PJ: Yeah. Look down. Look anywhere, but don't look 'em in the eye.

DF: Did you discover the hard way?

PJ: Yeah.

DF: What happened when you did?

PJ: Oh, he kicked (me). They were great for slapping and kicking. But, I'd say at the end of two or three weeks they calmed down. They didn't like that game anymore. So, that by the time the first... And the US was losing an awful lot more of those naval battles up in the islands. Sailors wash in and Japanese walk up and they had some more prisoners.

DF: Divert their attention somewhere else?

PJ: Yeah. What I think is a nice touch. I was chairman of young president's association and we were invited to the Japanese embassy. And this was a group of Americans, mostly ones that had a connection to Indo-China or China. As I walked by—it was a lovely big room and the chrysanthemum was there. They outdid the English in the protocol. If the faces were English you could put the accents... They acted perfectly like in an English castle.

So, I got my drink and they were signaling me. "If you want to sit in that chair, I'll bring your drink over." I said, "no, I think there's a courtesy." I took the glass and as I walked by, I bowed deeply to the chrysanthemum. The ambassador came over and said, "I hear from friends that you were a prisoner of ours." And I said, "I will admit that the hotel I was in was not exactly outstanding." He said, "what was your ship?" I said, "the Assammamaru." About two or three months later when we were living in Russelville, this very official Japanese, in uniform, had a package, courtesy of the ambassador. It's a lovely painting of the Assammamaru. It was called the "lucky ship" by the Japanese. It was the only passenger ship that wasn't sunk. Every other one in the Japanese was sunk except this one. And of course, the voyage was...

I've always liked to be a loner. If you lived in Saigon, and you want to speak to anybody, you had to speak to your parents in English. I'd pick up basket ball games

and everything. I think that half my French was more the swearing variety...
(chuckle)

DF: Street language.

PJ: Yeah. Street language. But very friendly. Most people are... even the Japanese.

DF: So, back to the ship experience. You were one of many prisoners being taken to exchange. Right? That was in Africa? You're still a prisoner at this point.

PJ: I was until the Lorenzo Marks (incident). Then I was taken off with a group who weren't Americans. They did it on the Assammamaru. The Assamma and the Conti Verity was the Italian ship. Those two ships took all of us to Lorenzo Marks, Portugese East. The interrogation and discussion point was in Chengi (Singapore), and you lived very close. I think it got back to the British headquarters again, but Chengi was where the Japanese outdid themselves.

DF: But when you were taken on that ship, you weren't sure whether you would be taken off there?

PJ: I didn't know anything. When I first came down, I figured, "they're not going to put me on the railway (Burmese Railway built by prisoners of war) because I've got a new pair of pants. They're not going to waste a new pair of pants for me on the railway.

DF: That gave you some hope. Huh?

PJ: Yes. It did.

DF: So, you said, your father wasn't sure what was going on when he put you on there. Let's go back to that for a moment. Did he know there was going to be a prisoner exchange?

PJ: I think my father knew there was going to be a prisoner exchange.

DF: And he wanted to get you out and into a safe place?

PJ: Yeah.

DF: That must have been a bitter sweet kind of thing to do. You know you're going to be safe, but yet, to say good-bye—it must have been very...

PJ: Well, he and I were not permitted to talk to each other. We weren't in the same camp. My mother was in one camp. My father was in another, and I was in another.

I was in the security... what do you call it? Intelligence group because they figured that I knew things that I wasn't talking about.

DF: So among the civilians, your mom and dad were separated.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: So, how long before you found out that they were okay—once you got back to the States? Canada?

PJ: I didn't really know about my father. And he didn't know about me. When he came back he had received a note that Paul G. Jeffrey had been killed in action.

DF: What?

PJ: He had been notified, but it wasn't right. He got into the Canada House in London and asked, "do you know anything about my son?" (The soldier) asked for my rank and serial number. Dad said, "I don't have any serial number for him, but the last I know he was a lieutenant and he's a paratrooper. The guy (searched the records) and read out that I had been killed in action. He (my father) was flown back the next day...

I'll go back a little more. He was so pro-Vietnamese he was a translator for the British Army in Saigon.

DF: Now, sorry, we're talking about 1945 now, right?

PJ: Yeah. Getting back to there.

DF: The Japanese had surrendered to the British and he's working as an interpreter for the British?

PJ: Yeah. But pleading the cause of the Vietnamese saying, "the Japanese are not treating them any different from what they did before." There were crazy incidents. I'll tell this one quickly. The cooks for some of the Nepalese officers served...

DF: The Ghurkas.

PJ: Yeah, the Ghurkas... What is it the Ghurkas can't eat? (Turns to Jane) Meat. Cows. Beef. I don't think they can eat beef. Well anyway, these cooks, these Chinese cooks served it and they ate it and then there's all kinds of screening etc., and my father said, "how can I help?" And they crucified the cooks.

DF: Literally?

PJ: The Brits. Well there's not much that the French could do on a basic religious point like that, but literally, yeah.

DF: Literally?

PJ: Nailed them to the door.

DF: They didn't kill 'em. They just nailed 'em to the door?

PJ: Yeah. I think they survived. But they were...

DF: Did your father witness this?

PJ: He witnessed the end of it. Puttin' 'em up there. The British said, "don't make a move anywhere near there. The only ones who will take 'em down are their own people, because that means that we are forgiving 'em, and we're not forgiving anything." We live in interesting times.

DF: Now, that's very interesting. I never heard that before. I know the British released the Japanese soldiers to help guard... protect... or maintain order...

PJ: Yeah. They did and they obeyed completely. You know, like an English corporal could give an order, but don't give it to the officer. Give it to the corporal and lower. There's a real protocol with the Japanese. But yes, when they surrendered they were very proper.

DF: Now, come back to what you were saying... Your father was interpreting for them. He's pro-Vietnamese...

(Paul tries to tell Dave not to use some of this information.)

PJ: (nods) Oh yeah. A thing was taken to Mountbatten who was resident. He was commander-in-chief. I think the Americans were not too happy about having the Brits in there at that time. They figured they're not going to let the French back. The French of course, did come back in, and the Brits were smart enough to know, "let's not have a war with France right now. If the Americans want to... let the Americans fight 'em, because they're more likely to listen to the Americans than to us."

The Japanese, from what I heard from him and others, were very professional, very, and certainly smoothed the way...

DF: Your father was taken in to see Lord Mountbatten?

PJ: I believe he got beside in the next office or something like that.

DF: Umhuh.

PJ: And Mountbatten had some ugly words about, "these religious bottoms really muss things up, and cause us all kinds of headaches," referring to my father.

DF: Because he was so pro-Vietnamese?

PJ: Well yeah, he wondered why he wasn't pro-British. He's of our nationality. What's he doing taking the side of the Vietnamese?

DF: Huh. Now, that had something to do with him being sent back?

PJ: Back. He was put on a plane... He really enjoyed the trip because it was a much shorter trip than the ship.

DF: To?

PJ: To London. They flew him to London and then he was placed under Canada House to get passage on a Canadian troop ship taking him back to Halifax.

DF: Where was your mother?

PJ: She had been taken and released on the second or third trip of the Gripsholm.

DF: So your mother was already repatriated.

PJ: Yes, my mother was already repatriated.

DF: She went on the Gripsholm, too?

PJ: Same routine.

DF: To Africa?

PJ: To Africa, New York City, and up (to Canada)

DF: Wow! So, I'm just imagining this reunion after...

PJ: My father fainted on the airstrip here in Toronto when he saw me, because up until then he thought I had been killed in action.

DF: So, from '45, when he was on his way back, in Canada House in London. He finds

out that you're dead and how long until he found out you were okay?

PJ: Well, I think he found out there, because they weren't releasing where I was or whether I was alive or dead. I said, "I am not dead, Father. They're not sending a dead man out to jump into Japan." I thought that was going to be a joke and I think he just about fainted again. That's why I'm a very pro A-bomb, or I wouldn't be talking to you.

DF: That would have been quite a mission, huh?

PJ: That is...

JJ: It's an awful thing.

PJ: Well, it's obviously awful, but let's face it... Truman, for somebody who was described as a panty-waist, was a very strong president. He was a good man. He made ugly decisions. That one was one of them.

JJ: But you're working on getting war stopped, David, aren't you? We all have to just stop it all. It's so awful—man's inhumanity to man. It's too much.

DF: I've a feeling we've only touched the tip of the iceberg here. But is there anything else that you'd like to tell me about or something I need to ask you about?

PJ: (chuckles) I once was weakening with you to see if you want something to write about. I really have nothing to write.

JJ: Well, you've got a million things to write about the whole of your life.

DF: Yeah.

JJ: 'Cause Paul is really a boy-soldier. Seventeen. You were about twenty when you got out.

PJ: I read about the hundreds of thousands, probably about eighty thousand seventeen and eighteen year old Marines who died in those Pacific Islands. So, I wasn't the only young guy. It was a good shot.

JJ: No, I know you weren't.

DF: That's quite a young age to be going off to war.

PJ: Yeah.

DF: Especially... and you weren't having any communication with your folks at the time,

were you?

JJ: Your mother was in New York, wasn't she?

PJ: Yeah, I got in the hospital. Something happened to me and I got into a military hospital and she turned up with Ruth, my sister.

JJ: Yes, they came up from New York to see you. Where? Kingston? Or somewhere?

PJ: Kingston General Hospital.

DF: This was during the war?

JJ: Yes. Just at the very beginning of his training.

PJ: I was in a mosquito net and I thought, "my God, here I am in Canada, what on earth? Where are they sending me next? And this is when I found out that my mother had been traded. And it was a trade. The Japanese had this list and the Americans had theirs and... The Gripsholm survivors were... Well, there were a lot of Japanese that they were bringing over and they had... (Paul leans over to draw a map of the plan on the floor. The viewer can see only the back of his head not the map.) It was like this here, and coming down here and up here were the Americans, Canadians, and Brits. Here, you have the Japanese. And each group would stonily look at each other. And it was a quiet shuffle. The Gripsholm had brought them from New York City...

I forgot the good thing... When the Gripsholm took us via Rio de Janeiro. I got to like that city. The music is just... Every place you walk. Have you been in Rio? It's something else.

DF: Hmuh.

JJ: And the Americans threw oranges.

PJ: The two troop ships, the Ulysses (?) and the Queen Mary were loaded with American soldiers going out to the Pacific. "Now hear this. Now hear this." they were saying. "This is a group of prisoners who are coming for exchange. And (chuckles) they threw oranges and other things. It might have killed them.

DF: They were throwing them over on your ship?

JJ & PJ: Yes. (Hearty chuckles all around) Over to them.

DF: Looked like a food fight to me. So that was very welcome, I'm sure.

PJ: Oh, it was.

JJ: And when they first got on the ship they said to them, “don’t eat too much.”

PJ: In Saigon.

JJ: In Saigon. But they all ate too much because they hadn’t had proper food and they were all ill.

PJ: I remember getting off at the top. The Swiss guy who... I’m still that magical sixteen, seventeen. He’d be about twenty-four. He stopped me, and said, “you look Swiss.” And I’m looking at the food. I said, “Get out of here.” He said, “don’t eat too fast.”

DF: Got sick, huh?

PJ: I barfed all over the rail in about five minutes.

DF: Too rich for your stomach after all that, huh?

PJ: Yes. I just couldn’t take it.

DF: Jane, are there any stories that you want to remind him of?

JJ: No. I’ve heard a million stories. But the beauty of Dalat was very special.

DF: Did you get up to Dalat?

JJ: No, we didn’t, sadly. No, that was really wartime. They were not playing around when we were there. No, we were just in Saigon. Sadly. All our pals want us to go back to Vietnam now.

DF: It’s possible.

JJ: Yes, lots of things happening there.

DF: Did you ever resent being sent away to boarding school?

PJ: No. It was a way of life.

DF: Didn’t know any different, huh?

PJ: And I liked Dalat. There were the Stebbins, Bob Stebbins. Did you talk to him?

DF: No.

PJ: He lost his marbles. He got strange. He had to have the worst job of the war on these huge American bombers. When they came back he had a bucket and a spoon to pick up the flesh and try and identify who... The Germans were pumping shells, The plane would make it back without crashing, but there were shot up airman in there. Oh (shakes head)! And Bob was doing this. I saw him after the war. I once spoke with somebody who was in the early stages of alzheimers, and his mind just closed on some of those incidents. Bob and George... George Stebbins, did you speak with him?

DF: Uhhuh. No, I know George, but I haven't. His son was my age.

PJ: Boy, you're bringing back memories for me. The Mighty Six we called...

DF: Who were the Mighty Six?

PJ: The six of us. Oh crudy, myself...(tries to remember with his fingers). Franklin.

JJ: Franklin.

PJ: Well, Gordon Smith had one boy that distinguished himself in the diplomatic service.

DF: I'll bet that's Doug. Douglas.

PJ: Doug. Has he retired now?

DF: Yeah. He was with the State Department for many years.

PJ: Well, let's get back to this one. I like to walk and I walked across the valley there and up again on the railway station, and to my horror I see my uncle coming out. He had on a loin cloth, and was dressed like a Vietnamese. He refused to talk to me other than in Vietnamese. And these French were up on the hollowed end, there in Dalat with all this and there was dead silence. I said, "what is this walking across?" (Hearty chuckle) He carried right on. And I said, "I'm going to call you into the school building until you pull your underwear up." Oh, he was a braize. (Reddens in the face with shame)

DF: I missed the first part of that story. Could you start over again and tell about when you came back.

JJ: Well, one weekend, we came back from a trip to London Ontario, and on our doorstep in a very residential area was sitting this Vietnamese boy. He was about eighteen, and we had not known he was coming.

PJ: The temperature was about zero.

JJ: It was so strange for him because he was used to being downtown where there was action everywhere. He was not used to being in a residential district. There were no sidewalks here, only large houses. He was quite disturbed, but he could toss a soccer ball with his hand and hit it with the back of his heel. They're so, so agile.

DF: How did he get here?

JJ: He came by air. I think. We've no idea how he got from wherever he was into the city. Well, he obviously had been given our address.

DF: But the part about Mr. Jeffrey.

JJ: Oh, Paul's father, Ivory Jeffrey, had spirited him away from Vietnam to get him to Canada because he said he would be cannon fodder. He was a Christian and he should go on and do something else.

DF: And he had your address?

JJ: He had our address and that's all he had. He had nothing more.

PJ: And our children loved him because he was at their level of intellectual English.

JJ: But he had a _____

PJ: He did very well.

DF: You helped him get started.

PJ: (Shakes head) Got him a job in CIBC here and then he transferred to Montreal because, I think he had French, too.

JJ: Oh yes.

DF: And this man's name is?

JJ: Tim Nguyen.