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### Interview with Jack Wuest

Grace Fanning

*Columbia College Chicago*

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**TRANSCRIPTION**  
**INTERVIEW WITH JACK WUEST**

GRACE FANNING: Ok, um so can you state your name?

JACK WUEST: Jack Wuest.

GF: And I am Grace Fanning. The date of the interview is April 27, 2015. Place of interview is the library at Columbia College Chicago. This interview is part of the Columbia College Chicago Archives Honors Oral History project, Chicago '68, that is part of collaboration with the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. Can you state your year of birth?

JW: [REDACTED] '47

GF: Thank you. Your place of birth?

JW: Chicago

GF: Where you were raised

JW: Chicago

GF: Your father's place of birth

JW: Cincinnati, Ohio

GF: Your mother's place of birth

JW: Fort Thomas, Kentucky

GF: Okay. Can you describe your childhood room?

JW: It's just... I grew up in an apartment; a small apartment and I shared a room with my sister.

GF: What occupations did your parents have?

JW: My father was an accountant and my mother was a stay-home mother.

GF: Who did you live with growing up?

JW: My dad and my mother and then my stepmother; my mother died when I was five and my sister; she was six years older than me.

GF: Who was your favorite teacher in school?

47 JW: An English teacher in college.  
48  
49 GF: Okay.  
50  
51 JW: He was a nice guy. He got me excited about English literature.  
52  
53 GF: How was religion observed in your house?  
54  
55 JW: Uh-- pretty strict. I was raised Catholic.  
56  
57 GF: How did your relationship with religion change during high school?  
58  
59 JW: It didn't really. It changed more in college. So it was a very kind of Catholic, by the rules  
60 and regulations and then when I got to college it was more or less the spirit of the religion.  
61  
62 GF: When did you first stand up to authority?  
63  
64 JW: I think it was like fourth or fifth grade, there was on the playground, there was a division  
65 between girls and boys and I organized all the boys to go into the girl's side of the playground.  
66 So I had to go talk to the principal.  
67  
68 GF: Um, what were your aspirations when you graduated high school?  
69  
70 JW: Uh, just to go to college and not flunk out. The college counselor I had said I should go to  
71 college cause I was stupid.  
72  
73 GF: Can you tell me more about your favorite college professor?  
74  
75 JW: It was Ernie Fontana- he was an English professor. I had transferred to Xavier University in  
76 Cincinnati as a sophomore and it was the English class I had and he was just very enthusiastic,  
77 really liked the literature and got me excited about it too.  
78  
79 GF: So you said you transferred, where did you start college?  
80  
81 JW: I started at Saint Josephs in Rensselaer, Indiana about ninety miles from here.  
82  
83 GF: When did you graduate college?  
84  
85 JW: 1969.  
86  
87 GF: So what brought you to live in Chicago— you grew up in Chicago. Um...sorry. Who was  
88 the first president you voted for?  
89  
90 JW: Lets see— it might have been George McGovern.  
91  
92 GF: Do you remember anything about how you decided who to vote for?

93

94 JW: He was against the war and had a position on his platform against the war. And he ran in  
95 1972.

96

97 GF: Okay. So were you anti-war before you were drafted?

98

99 JW: In freshman year, my brother-in-law was in Vietnam.

100

101 FANNING: Okay.

102

103 JW: Which was 1965. I remember arguing on behalf of the war and then in the second half of  
104 my freshman year I— they brought a few people to speak about the war and it raised a lot of  
105 questions. I felt torn because I didn't want to feel like I was against my brother-in-law but, you  
106 know, the war didn't make much sense at that point. And then I was drafted but I resisted the  
107 draft so I started a draft resistance group here in Chicago. There were two waves of draft  
108 resistance. One was in 1967-68 and we started the second one in '71. People who would not  
109 cooperate with the draft— and in any way— just because the draft is a way to sort kids. The kids  
110 who knew how to play the game would get out and the kids who didn't know would be drafted  
111 and sent to Vietnam. So, the idea was to not in any way validate the draft. I applied for a  
112 Conscientious Objector but then when that was not accepted then we started, I worked with a  
113 group of people and we started a draft resistance group in the city again.

114

115 GF: Okay, so you were out of college when you were drafted.

116

117 JW: I was out of college, yeah.

118

119 GF: Where did you work during the sixties?

120

121 JW: I had a job with a company that filed tax rates with insurance companies for a summer. And  
122 then for two other summers, I worked as a helper on a Seven Up truck and then two summers  
123 after that, including the time after I graduated from college, I worked at an experimental program  
124 funded by Health, Education and Welfare nationally to help educate parents who had been  
125 abusing their kids. And I worked with the younger kids- the boys about seven to thirteen years  
126 old.

127

128 GF: Okay, so do you know where you were working in '68?

129

130 JW: Yeah I was working in that program. It was called the Juvenile Protective Association and  
131 the specific project was the Bowman Center and it had a comprehensive program to work with  
132 families. MSW's working with the parents, childcare working with the younger kids, a group of  
133 young women worked with the young girls and guys like me working with the young guys. So it  
134 really was a comprehensive way to work with the family.

135

136 GF: Where were you living in 1968; where in Chicago?

137

138 JW: With my dad and stepmom in Rogers Park.

139 GF: What...sorry...what did you think about Lyndon B. Johnson declining the nomination?  
140  
141 JW: Uh I was glad I mean he had increased the war a great deal when he said he wasn't going to  
142 do that. I was glad he saw the mistake and wasn't going to run.  
143  
144 GF: Where were you when Martin Luther King was shot?  
145  
146 JW: I was in Cincinnati. And we could— from our dorm room we could see the smoke rising  
147 from a lot of buildings being burned.  
148  
149 GF: Wow. Where were you when Robert Kennedy was shot?  
150  
151 JW: Hm. I don't remember exactly. He would have won the presidency and been able to change  
152 things substantially different than they turned out. I think he would have attracted the vote, some  
153 vote, from George Wallace and probably would have beaten Nixon. Wallace was the reason  
154 Nixon got elected because he took a lot of the Southern vote away from the Democrats.  
155  
156 GF: How did your family prepare for the threat of nuclear attack?  
157  
158 JW: (laughs) I used to think about hiding in the basement of the three-flat apartment I lived in  
159 and they would do drills at the Catholic school I went to in Rogers Park. They'd tell you to kind  
160 of sit down in the hallway or underneath your desk and be prepared which was totally absurd.  
161 The shockwave from a nuclear bomb would probably carry eight or ten, fifteen, twenty miles in  
162 every direction so we would just be vaporized.  
163  
164 GF: What student organizations were you a part of?  
165  
166 JW: I don't know. I don't remember. I didn't join stuff readily. Basically I organized different  
167 stuff in the university.  
168  
169 GF: How did you decide on the college major?  
170  
171 JW: Ernie Fontana, who was my professor at Xavier, sophomore year just got me excited about  
172 stuff and I decided to major in English.  
173  
174 GF: What was your first experience as an activist?  
175  
176 JW: Uh— we— I organized a— brought in a guy from the American Front Service Committee  
177 from Dayton to speak about the war and they had a movie about the Vietnam War. This was in  
178 the spring of 1966 or 67. I made leaflets and put them under every door and all the four or five  
179 dorms. When the speech was getting started or right before it got started— Xavier had a reserve  
180 officer training corps for the Army and you had to take two years of it. When the military guys  
181 came down the aisle way into the room of the auditorium, everybody applauded and then when  
182 the movie came on everybody booed and everything else like that. So I think the couple of  
183 professors who thought there should be a discussion, not a booing— people were pretty hostile  
184 and I think they were amazed. That this was not the way to carry on a dialogue. But Xavier was

185 a conservative university, relatively speaking, in the conservative town- Cincinnati and to have  
186 officers coming, some of whom had served in Vietnam, people just thought— well it was pretty  
187 early on before there had been any major demonstrations and I had gone to a demonstration in I  
188 think—1967 on a bus that took off from the University of Cincinnati to New York for about a  
189 half a million people for a demonstration. There were only three people from Xavier that went,  
190 so it was a small group.

191  
192 GF: Can you tell me more about that experience?

193  
194 JW: it was interesting I thought I was going to bring a camera but I thought if I bring a camera  
195 someone from the CIA or the FBI will probably be watching us and you know it was really silly.  
196 I mean there was no one there to watch us they were half a million people. But I have never been  
197 to a demonstration and it was just amazing to see how many people were protesting and raising  
198 their voice against the war which was a real tragedy.

199  
200 GF: When were you drafted?

201  
202 JW: Well I got the draft notice— there was a lottery they did to see whether or not— If you had  
203 a high number you were not going to get drafted if you had a low number you were going to get  
204 drafted. So I had a low number. I think the lottery was in December of 1969. I thought about  
205 not wanting to cooperate with the draft then and my number was low so I filed what they call a  
206 Conscientious Objector status which means that you were objecting to that war and you would  
207 fill out forms and all that and I did. The draft board denied it. You know the draft board was  
208 made up of guys who had served in the war either Korea or World War II where you know it was  
209 a different situation. They couldn't understand why someone would want to object to the  
210 Vietnam War. So I got an attorney. The draft board had done the wrong process looking at my  
211 Conscientious Objector status—uh—I— January of 1971 I got a draft notice to be inducted into  
212 the army. I—uh— that was a really interesting experience. I went to all the processing, they  
213 collect your urine, they listen to your hearing and then before you get into the army normally  
214 you're lined up into different rows. And in the morning, you have to get there very early; I  
215 passed out a leaflet to everyone going in saying that I wasn't going into the army, why I wasn't  
216 going to go and the reasons. They line you up in this room and if you step forward when they  
217 call your name, you're in the army so I wasn't going to step forward and another guy next to me  
218 didn't step forward and another guy next to him didn't step forward. So we were all taken out  
219 and then the FBI came and arrested us and we were brought down to the magistrate to determine  
220 whether or not we were going to be kept in jail or you could get out on your own recognizance.  
221 They determined we weren't a risk for flying or fleeing so they—get— our own recognizance so  
222 then I was released about six or seven hours later.

223  
224 GF: Wow.

225  
226 JW: The other funny thing was I brought— I carried a harmonica with me and in the middle of  
227 our hearing test I played the harmonica and three of the other guys failed.

228  
229 GF: Wow. You mentioned earlier your initial thoughts on the war were— You couldn't decide  
230 whether you were for it or against it because of your brother-in-law's involvement in the war.

231

232 JW: Yeah he was in Vietnam— in combat.

233

234 GF: What do you think changed your mind? What was the tipping point?

235

236 JW: Well there was an interesting— at Saint Joe— I wasn't at the football game but our political  
237 science teacher told us about, this was a political science class we had on a Tuesday, or maybe it  
238 was a Monday and he said he was appalled because there where demonstrators at the Saint Joe  
239 football game and people came out of the stands and started beating on them and the guy said,  
240 "Well even if you don't like— If you're for the war, why are you— what are you doing if you're  
241 stifling dissent and freedom of speech? You may not like it but beating on them is another matter  
242 so maybe start thinking about it." [pause] Of course he was right. You know it's hard if you have  
243 people— like again my brother-in-law was in combat so I felt torn and conflicted but on the  
244 other hand I saw that... You know it was right to object it. And then it was only a handful of  
245 people cause this was 1965 we were ahead of the times when people started to ask questions  
246 about the war and deciding it was not a thing that should be done.

247

248 GF: Why did you decide to become an activist?

249

250 JW: Well I don't know. I've just— I've always— If there is something going on I think  
251 shouldn't be or should be, I feel the urge to do something about it.

252

253 GF: Tell me the story of your experience during the Democratic National Convention in 1968.

254

255 JW: Uh— The kids I was working with, we would take them in a van and we would take them  
256 passed Lincoln Park where there were people organizing to protest and I thought well, I didn't  
257 think much one way or another. Uh I hadn't planned, uh, the kids would sort of mockingly wave  
258 at them and say, "Hey! What are you doing you hippies?" and stuff like that and we would tell  
259 them to shut up and be quiet. So as we drove by, and we did it a couple times because we were  
260 taking them down to Lincoln Park to play and to the beach down on North Avenue. Uh I had no  
261 intention to go down to the Democratic National Convention and a friend came in from  
262 Cincinnati and said why don't we go take a look at it. So we went down on Saturday night over  
263 to Lincoln Park where people were going to gather— and— you know in Lincoln Park to do  
264 some kind of demonstrations there cause the convention didn't start until I think Monday. So we  
265 went down and just look at— the people— you know there were a lot of hippies and stuff and I  
266 didn't consider myself you know a— obviously I didn't think the war was smart and shouldn't  
267 have been done but uh— there were just a lot of different people in the park. The cops told  
268 everybody they had to get out of the park by 11 o'clock, which was sort of stupid because it then  
269 forced a confrontation but all the other stuff that was going on was building to a confrontation  
270 anyway. They had talked about putting LSD in the water. Daley, The Old Man, used a kind of  
271 heightened sense of aggravation between the hippies and the demonstrators and the city had had  
272 major riots and buildings being burned down on the west side and Daley said that he gave the  
273 National Guard orders to shoot to kill and that was really controversial. And then, and then  
274 when Bobby Kennedy died I think a lot of people just sort of gave up hope you know that Hubert  
275 Humphrey wouldn't really come out against the war, which he didn't. So the two sides were  
276 really split, enormously. When the police gave the order to get out of the park, people said screw

277 it we're not going to get out of the park- it was a public park. And then the cops started lobbing  
278 tear gas everywhere and then people really got mad and started fighting back. There was a lot of  
279 press there and the cops started beating on the press and I remember leaving the park with a lot  
280 of other people being chased by the police, down LaSalle Avenue and then up North Avenue and  
281 down another street— Sedgwick and we just kept running to get away from the police. So that  
282 was Saturday night. And then at that point I thought well I'm going to go down on Sunday. I  
283 went down Sunday and the same sort of thing happened. This time there was a lot of negative  
284 press because literally the police beat on the press and you know it was just interesting because it  
285 was up to the point where the cops had forced confrontation and said everybody had to get out of  
286 the park. You know there was a lot— There were people playing Christian music. There were  
287 all sorts of people doing stuff. They were handing out leaflets about LSD but they meant  
288 Lakeshore Drive and you know just a bunch of interesting shows going on with people just you  
289 know on hock. So you know it was something to watch and just sort of experience. They forced  
290 the confrontation and again everybody ran. Some big windows were broken while people were  
291 running away and you kind of had to just stay away and get outside away from the teargas too. I  
292 was a poet, Allen Ginsberg, who was there and he was trying to calm everybody down by  
293 "ohming" you would go "ohm ohm" there's billowing teargas and people are running  
294 everywhere and it was really a crazy situation, funny. And while he's "ohming" he's sees a big  
295 NBC truck filming all of this so he's running as quick as he can to be seen in front of the truck  
296 "ohming". And he was a well-known poet from the 50s and 60s.

297

298 GF: How did you know about the protests?

299

300 JW: Oh, everybody knew about it. Again we drove, we went with the kids from uptown— we  
301 just went— we had driven through— not really to look at them but saw them because there is a  
302 parkway between the park on the east side and a park on the west side. And so we drove on the  
303 parkway and we could see everybody demonstrating- you know practicing their demonstrations  
304 with big long poles staying in sync and in unison so they could supposedly breakthrough the  
305 police lines.

306

307 GF: How were you involved in the protests?

308

309 JW: Um— I went down every night after that. I went down Monday night and I don't  
310 remember— That's why I was asking you about the books— I would like to look at the different  
311 days and what happened each day. Uh there was one time I remember there was music. It was  
312 playing in the Grant Park shell, the band shell that used to be down on the south end of the park  
313 then someone got in a ruckus and there was tear gas everywhere again and people were  
314 scattering all over the park area. There was another night that I guy named Dick Gregory who  
315 had done a lot of, well he used to be a well-known comedian and really got involved in the civil  
316 rights movement and he told everybody, I think it was Tuesday night, "I'm going to take you out  
317 of my house." And the police wouldn't let anybody demonstrate where Democratic National  
318 Convention was over in the old auditorium— not the auditorium— where was it? It was about  
319 4500 South so Dick said, "Well let's all go down to my house and you can go two by two down  
320 the sidewalk." And his house happened to be in Hyde Park so— It was kind of funny. You'd go  
321 down to his house and then you would go over to the demonstration at the amphitheater- that's  
322 what it was- and there's railroad tracks and an overpass on Michigan Avenue Down around 18<sup>th</sup>



323 Street and as we got closer, five jeeps pulled up each with a grill of Barbwire and formed a wall  
324 across the whole area going underneath the railroad tracks so you couldn't go any further. And  
325 then they started lobbing teargas again and everybody started running back on Michigan Avenue  
326 going north. And I ran into a friend from high school and Phil said, "What's going on? I don't  
327 understand this. I just got back from Vietnam. What's going on?" You know "Why are they  
328 lobbing tear gas at everybody for demonstrating?" And I said, "Well you see it. This is what  
329 they're doing." So everybody ran back and I think that was Tuesday night. I think— I don't  
330 know if it was Wednesday night or Thursday night— I stayed all night. Peter Paul and Mary  
331 played music and we slept out on the grassy area East of Michigan Avenue across from the  
332 Conrad Hilton where a lot of stuff was happening. And there was a confrontation at the Conrad  
333 Hilton earlier in the night and everybody was being chased all over again and teargas was  
334 billowing and the cops were waiting in the crowd beating them and my wife's sister got hit in the  
335 head a couple of times – she was in from out of town. But at that time the cops just weren't  
336 taking anything, they were doing whatever they wanted. You know I was dating a girl at that  
337 point and her parents were editors of one of the main papers in Cincinnati and they said it's  
338 amazing— Well at least nobody got killed. Which, given what had happened, was pretty  
339 amazing. But there is this massive protest, and people were fighting back and beating on the cops  
340 and the cops were beating on the demonstrators, which is all part of the incredible divisions that  
341 were created because of the Vietnam War.

342  
343 GF: Um you mentioned a friend that had served in Vietnam; did you know a lot of people that  
344 were serving?

345  
346 JW: Not many. As I think of it, no. There was one kid who we were in high school with who got  
347 killed. Uh, but no. Other than my brother-in-law and Phil— most of the guys I knew— well this  
348 was too early because— Phil— um I'm not sure why Phil went in. I think most of the guys I had  
349 graduated with had gone to college so they still had a deferment. And it really didn't— the draft  
350 didn't breath down your neck until you graduated from college which was— for me, my class  
351 was 1969.

352  
353 GF: What parts of Chicago were you protesting in during the convention?

354  
355 JW: Well first it was Lincoln Park on Saturday and Sunday night and then out in Grant Park- all  
356 over Grant Park. You know I was glad I was young and I was fast (laughs). [pause] I ran into  
357 another friend in Grant Park one of the nights and he had said how he had socked some cop and I  
358 didn't really think that was good but you know I understood it because people were fighting  
359 back. Cops literally were just wading into groups and billy-clubbing them.

360  
361 GF: Can you tell me more about what your interactions with the police were like?

362  
363 JW: I just got as far away as I could. (laughs) I was— I wasn't for getting on the frontline of any  
364 kind of confrontation. I also just didn't want to get beat on either so I made sure I kept my  
365 distance. Most people did. I mean most people— some people, in the case of a crowd- they just  
366 happened to get stuck on the front. And some people I think went out after the cops too. But I  
367 mean I just know that one friend I ran into was so pissed and so angry that he was glad he got his  
368 licks in.

369

370 GF: Describe the scene you encountered on the first day of protests.

371

372 JW: Well that was Lincoln Park and again that was—uh Larry came in from out of town and he  
373 said let's take a look at it and I said I hadn't even thought about it. You know all I had seen  
374 before was what I mentioned. The kids- you know we drove past the protesters and the kids kind  
375 of went and you know they had a little thing they said— Dougie- he was a kid from uptown-  
376 he'd uh— he'd lean out of the window and go "Peace! Pot!" and he'd go, "Pussy!" (laughs) And  
377 we'd say, "Stop! Stop! Dougie Stop!" But then when Larry came in on Saturday I went down  
378 with him and again you know it was interesting up till 11 o'clock when the cops decided they  
379 wanted to get everybody out of the park and then you know the confrontations came about. And  
380 the teargas and the people wouldn't leave. People were in different clumps of folks who wanted  
381 to stay and then the cops teargased them. And then everybody ran and then I think people started  
382 throwing some stuff back at the cops and the cops were billy clubbing people and then I just  
383 remember running out of the park down LaSalle up north and down another street until I felt I  
384 was safely away from it.

385

386 GF: What did you see of television coverage of the event?

387

388 JW: The only thing I can remember was that story I was telling you about Allen Ginsberg. Now  
389 they have these mobile trucks that are you know small little vans. This was a huge bulky truck  
390 that had— I think they had a camera on top of it and was shooting the scenes of the Lincoln  
391 Park- the confrontations and all that on Saturday and Sunday night. Other than that I don't  
392 remember too much of the press other than reading about how the press got beat on by the cops.  
393 But you know the cops reaction was don't take a picture of me beating on someone or I'll beat  
394 on you and when that happened, the newspapers really got angry and provided a lot of accurate  
395 coverage of what was going on.

396

397 GF: How did the mood of the protests change as the days went on?

398

399 JW: Well people got— it got more ugly and people were—you know the Saturday and Sunday  
400 nights were sort of fun and I think they called it a "Be-In" you know kind of fun music and all  
401 that. And then as it went on with confrontations people got angrier and people would fight back  
402 and throw stuff and the cops would chase them and catch them in some cases. And people would  
403 urge uh not getting violent and not attacking the cops and there were just repeated confrontations  
404 and they sort of circled back on themselves where the people might have not been that aggressive  
405 but then the cops were more aggressive and then the people were more aggressive back and  
406 forth. Again, as the days went on it got tougher and angrier.

407

408 GF: What made you want to keep coming back each day?

409

410 JW: Well the first time I went down because I thought it would be kind of fun and the  
411 second time I was angrier about what was going on and then every time after that it was a  
412 chance to really voice demonstration against— in opposition to the Vietnam War and the  
413 opposition to being threatened with not even uh threatened with confrontation of not  
414 demonstrating against the war and being afraid of not you know being apart of the voice

415 against the war. So the more they pushed and tried to stop the demonstrations, myself and  
416 other people got more firm and committed that we would demonstrate against the war.

417

418 GF: How did your college classes influence your views on the events of 1960?

419

420 JW: Um when I went to Xavier in '66, I had not— I have kind of gone to some of the dates at  
421 Saint Joe in the spring of 66 and like that thing I told you earlier that demonstration when  
422 they had the political science professor in October of 1965 who said what are we fighting  
423 for if people can voice their dissent. When I went to Xavier I got to be friends with some  
424 seniors and we talked a lot about the war and we did that demonstration— I mentioned  
425 that demonstration— we did the uh forum with the guy from the American Front Service  
426 Committee and the movie about Vietnam— I had gone— I had heard about this big  
427 demonstration that was going to be in New York in the middle of April 1967 so I went there  
428 too. And that pretty much started to solidify stuff I had read and the big debate on Vietnam  
429 was that it was supposedly two different countries and one was... You know the north was  
430 the aggressor to the south and I mean you know that really was bologna. Vietnam was one  
431 whole country and then went France lost control of you know their colony- the whole  
432 Vietnam- then the powers that be decided to split it between north and south and the north  
433 was going to be quote unquote communist although it was much more nationalist than  
434 communist and the south was going to be more the continuing of the colony. Although  
435 France pulled out, the United States \_\_\_\_ (??) South Vietnam was... the leadership was  
436 manipulated literally the Kennedys, at some point in the early sixties had the head of  
437 Vietnam killed— and the CIA— they ended up trying to get someone to head up South  
438 Vietnam who would do their bidding, "their" meaning the United States. So you know  
439 basically it wasn't even a civil war— the war that we were trying to maintain some sort of  
440 control of South East Asia and then we just got involved with massive numbers of troops  
441 the only reason we didn't quote unquote lose the war is that we dropped I think it was  
442 three ton... three times the tonnage of bombs we dropped in Vietnam than we did in all of  
443 World War II- which was crazy. Not to mention the Nape bomb and other things that would  
444 defoliate the forest supposedly would make it easier for us to find the enemy when the  
445 enemy really was native-born people and the irony is that we had become the colony— uh  
446 the power with the backing of World War II, kind of the world power in the same way Great  
447 Britain was the world power in the 1770s and where we fought the colonial power of  
448 Britain, we had become the colonial power of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fighting against people who  
449 wanted to get control of their own country- Vietnam. Which doesn't mean that they were  
450 not brutal warriors— you know they were, but we were even more so and it put our noses  
451 in the middle of a war that we shouldn't have been in. Ho Chi Minh made overtures United  
452 States in 1948 or 47 for (unintelligible) and we rejected it. And basically Vietnam had a  
453 long history of being— uh we thought it was the domino theory that if Vietnam fell, then  
454 Thailand would fall and then other countries would fall but by fall we meant not  
455 necessarily coming under our control. And there had been a long history of Vietnam being  
456 kind of antagonistic to China and China had always kind of... would want to take uh...  
457 extend its power so Vietnam was kind of pushing against that extension of Chinese power.  
458 And what we would do through the war, we ended up moving Vietnam closer to China,  
459 which was kind of screwy.

460

461 GF: Who did you protest with?

462

463 JW: Well I went down with my friend Larry the first two nights and then I just went on my  
464 own. I just went down. I really wanted— I had sort of followed Students for a Democratic  
465 Society but I didn't really belong to groups uh so then I went down and was sort of  
466 participating as one person among many in the whole demonstration. So that was Monday,  
467 Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday.

468

469 GF: Were you scared at all to be by yourself and be a young college student?

470

471 JW: No. No the only fear I had was just getting caught by the cops. You know I haven't really  
472 done anything I just had demonstrated and I just wanted to make sure I didn't get beat on  
473 the head with a billy club.

474

475 GF: When did you know the riots were coming to a stop?

476

477 JW: I don't know if I would call them riots you know they were you know massive  
478 demonstrations you know pushed by the cops and then they called it a police riot as much  
479 as it was a riot of the people demonstrating— more accelerated by the police and Richard  
480 Daley Senior really did get kind of suckered by Abby Hoffman Jerry Rueben and these guys  
481 who had done a lot of outrageous kinds of things talking about— they released a pig and  
482 called it Pigasus and said that was their candidate for president. Again, they were releasing  
483 thoughts that they were going to put LSD in the water filtration system in the city and  
484 anything to sort of just provoke and people— Daley and his staff got really provoked, which  
485 I can understand but they really bought into it and got suckered into it so what was your  
486 question again?

487

488 GF: Um when did you know the—

489

490 JW: Oh the riots? Well the demonstrations and the things that were to "Be-ins" on Saturday  
491 and Sunday were not harming anybody but the cops decided they had to have control and  
492 moved everybody out of the park and then the confrontations from there just accelerated  
493 on Sunday night and Monday night and Tuesday night.

494

495 GF: What are your thoughts on Andy Kaufman (Abby Hoffman) and the other leaders who  
496 are getting a lot of media attention?

497

498 JW: Kaufman? Reuben? Jerry Rueben?

499

500 GF: Right.

501

502 JW: I don't know. I just thought the stuff was kind of goofy. It was just all theater you know,  
503 looking back on it. I mean it was just provocative but there was so much context with what  
504 was going on you know the FBI had targeted the Black Panthers and systematically killed a  
505 lot of them um over the mid to late 60s. Uh there were you know the SDS started as kind of  
506 a group form what's called the League for Industrial Democracy and that was just an out

507 growth of the unions. And the (unintelligible) statement really read really well about  
508 people participating in politics and in government making a change and a difference. As  
509 things got on, the more people protested, the more the pother side dug in and people got  
510 frustrated so— What was the question again?

511  
512 GF: What were your thoughts on the people—

513  
514 JW: Oh Jerry Rueben— I just thought it was— The stuff is kind of ridiculous. But you know  
515 the people who were the powers in Chicago took it seriously when they probably shouldn't  
516 have but who knows. Who knows if they would've tried to put LSD and water system?

517  
518 GF: You mentioned your wife's sister encountered some police brutality; can you talk more  
519 about that?

520  
521 JW: The only thing I know about it is that Maggie got— was kind of on the front line and  
522 the cops went in after the people on the frontline at the Hilton Hotel and she got hit a  
523 couple times and I think she was arrested and they had to bail her out.

524  
525 GF: So you had—

526  
527 JW: But I wasn't with her because I didn't know her at that time.

528  
529 GF: Okay.

530  
531 JW: Yeah, I didn't meet my wife until eleven years later.

532  
533 GF: Right, Okay. How aware of you were— how aware were you of the events happening  
534 inside of the convention?

535  
536 JW: Not much. Only later did we find out Ribicoff was saying things and Daley called him a  
537 "fucking kike" or "Jew" or something like that. I mean— It was just a— And then I  
538 remember the interview that Walter Cronkite did with Daley and he just wussed out I mean  
539 he didn't really confront Daley on all the stuff that had gone on. But I wasn't really going  
540 back watching TV coverage because I'd get home late, go to work in the morning then go  
541 on— you know go onto the demonstrations at about 6 o'clock at night.

542  
543 GF: How did you see Chicago change after the protests?

544  
545 JW: I didn't really, I mean and I was living up in Rogers Park and you know everybody was  
546 going about their day-to-day lives— you know doing stuff and there might have been I  
547 don't know how many eight or ten or maybe fifteen thousand people at the  
548 demonstrations. I don't think there were more. And a lot of people came from out of the  
549 city and a lot of people were sort of like me, they went back kind of, you know, upset or  
550 disillusioned about the demonstrations. Everybody, you know, went back and was  
551 working. So I didn't see any real change day-to-day because I just absorbed back into my  
552 neighborhood.

553

554 GF: What was it like to go back to your job and your daily life after the protests?

555

556 JW: It was hard. I thought about not going back to finish my senior year of college. You  
557 know everything I saw and experienced kind of boggled me— boggled mind. You know it  
558 amazed me and I thought what kind of country is this if this happens? And I'm not sure  
559 what I would've done if I hadn't gone back. But I just— It was so upsetting that I just didn't  
560 see the sense of finishing college and going back and studying and all that. I did go back  
561 and then I barely— You know I barely got through the first semester and barely got  
562 through the second semester to graduate. But it was definitely a huge impact in terms of  
563 my thinking.

564

565 GF: What made you decide to go back for your senior year?

566

567 JW: I don't know. I just— I thought if I don't do it now, who knows when I'll do it? And it  
568 just seemed like I ought to finish it up and get it done with.

569

570 GF: How did your protest experience in 1968 influence your decision to challenge your  
571 being drafted?

572

573 JW: That was all part of thinking that the war— that we shouldn't be fighting the war and I  
574 wouldn't join to go fight it, it was pretty straightforward. In the beginning it was, rather  
575 than out right resistance to the draft, and the injustice in the whole sorting process and you  
576 know a lot of young men not knowing how to play the game and get out of the draft— I  
577 applied as a conscientious objector you know I was conscientious and said I objected to the  
578 war. It was denied and then when it was denied and met a lot of other people. We formed a  
579 draft resistance group and we got the names of 300 other guys who had been arrested and  
580 started you know we sent a mailing out and we met with them at a bigger meeting and we  
581 started a month—Monday potluck and got more strength by meeting with other people  
582 who thought the same way- that the war was unjust and we shouldn't do anything to  
583 support it, which meant not do anything to support the draft itself. One of the guys I met –  
584 the first guy I met, actually ended up resisting the draft. I got lucky because when I was  
585 arrested, the case was dropped because they had blown the process of looking at my  
586 conscientious objector. By that time I had decided that I wasn't going to do a CO but I was  
587 just going to resist the draft. So for about a year and a half I thought I was going to go to jail  
588 and that was the hard part. Who wants to go to jail? But you know they were going to take  
589 me if I was going to state my conscience. The guy I first met – the first guy I met, he was  
590 raised on the southwest side and his dad was a construction labor. Steve had no idea of  
591 conscientious objecting and his brother Pete had gone to the war. Pete was my age and he  
592 said, "You're crazy you're not going to this war" when he came back. And they literally  
593 duked it out and Steve began thinking about the war. He traveled around the country and  
594 then he got his notice – a 1A they call them- his eligibility for the draft or being drafted.  
595 And he said no. He just resisted the draft. I met him because he was part of the group of  
596 those names I got who had been arrested by the FBI about three hundred guys again. And  
597 he ended up spending two years in jail, the last year in isolation because he wouldn't go  
598 along with the prison industries. They kept the prison going and wouldn't support it. Then

599 Nixon had backed off the draft for his reelection bid in '72. I had gotten the 1A and they  
600 dropped it— I mean they just— So for about a year and a half I thought I was going to be  
601 taken to jail. Steve, As a part of Nixon's reelection work, he began offering— I don't know if  
602 it was Ford or Nixon in 73 or 74— releasing them, pardoning them. Steve wouldn't accept  
603 the pardon because he said, "I didn't do anything wrong". So he continued to be in prison  
604 another four or five months I think. And then they finally just kicked him out but he would  
605 not admit to anything wrong that he had done. And then his uncle who had been a colonel  
606 in the army you know agreed with what Steve was doing and you know other— His family  
607 agreed to it too even though it was hard. My dad had agreed well I don't know if he agreed  
608 with me but he respected me and didn't reject it or be in opposition to it in terms of my  
609 resisting the draft.

610

611 GF: How did your experience in the protests inform your activism later on?

612

613 JW: It just accelerated my thinking about the war. That it was not the world we should be  
614 fighting. It was— we shouldn't have been in there. And again I was doing odd jobs after I  
615 graduated and I became a caseworker at the Department of Children and Family Services  
616 for foster kids and I just did all this other stuff while we were paralleled with this having  
617 those Monday night dinners as a way to support everybody. We called it the Draft Refusers  
618 Support Group. So you know you're living your life with all the stuff here and meanwhile  
619 this other thing, it may cross your path to the extent of if they do draft me again and I resist  
620 again they'll take me away from what I do day-to-day. So it just made me more aware of  
621 what was going on. It made me read more and it made me more convinced that the war was  
622 wrong.

623

624 GF: How did you come to work with the Alternative School's Network?

625

626 JW: I was working with, a new guy came in to head the Department of Children and Family  
627 Services and I was working in the Department of Children and Family services and this guy  
628 wanted to do a lot of community resources as preventative stuff to see if he could provide  
629 stuff for kids before they went into the child welfare system and I worked at the Juvenile  
630 Protective Association, a really creative program working to keep kids together with their  
631 families instead of taking them away from their families into foster care, so it is something I  
632 thought about and uh as part of our Draft Refusers Support Group there was a guy who had  
633 helped start a thing called the youth network council, his name was Mark Tenas and he  
634 knew Stan Davis and a bunch of other people, he was doing his conscientious objector work  
635 at a youth agency called the Bethel Youth Center, I think, it was, no it was Grace Lutheran  
636 Church Youth Center over in Lincoln Park before Lincoln Park got groovy, and I got to be  
637 friends with Mark from our Draft Refusers Group and Mark was working on the Youth  
638 Network Council and I was the guy who headed up these events in 73 and wanted to do  
639 these community-based resources and I began working and Mark and I sort of  
640 brainstormed what we could do and we started with this festival of preschools the Ameri—  
641 the American Front Services Committee had done and they had a workshop on starting a  
642 federation of alternative schools or free schools— A federation of free schools, which is  
643 kind of a contradiction- free schools wouldn't want to be part of a federation. So Mark and I  
644 talked about it and he said why don't we go in there and— you know Mark had organized a

645 youth network council why don't we develop an alternative schools network? And that's  
646 where we started in May '73. And it was all... came out of the draft stuff too because I  
647 wouldn't have met Mark— him doing his conscientious objector work with the youth  
648 network counsel – he started it with him. And I don't know— I'm not sure what I would be  
649 doing if the draft hadn't happened and I gotten my— lottery number had been high—  
650 confront the draft head on. Who knows?

651  
652 GF: How did the events of 1968 change you?

653  
654 JW: Oh I think it made me much more aware of the Vietnam War and I already was but it  
655 may be much more against it and it made me much more critical of, well, both parties but  
656 especially the Democratic Party that Hubert Humphrey hadn't come out against the war.

657  
658 GF: What is your most vivid memory of the protests?

659  
660 JW: Uh geeze I don't know. I mean a few. One is Dick Gregory telling everybody to come  
661 down to his house for dinner. And then that wall of Barbwire on the front of each of the  
662 jeeps and all the billowing teargas there, and then in Lincoln Park all of the teargas. Allen  
663 Ginsberg "ohming" to get in front of the TV camera, the demonstrations right out in front of  
664 the Conrad Hilton where the cops were beating people, all of those are pretty much equal in  
665 terms of standout.

666  
667 GF: How did the protest compared to future protests you took part in?

668  
669 JW: Um, we ended up having different demonstrations against the war as part of the Draft  
670 Refusers Support Group. We did silent vigils instead of big demonstrations. So we did silent  
671 visuals and I think somewhere overnight in front of the federal building down on Dearborn.  
672 Are there many more questions?

673  
674 GF: No.

675  
676 JW: Okay. I just have to be back to my office around 2:30.

677  
678 GF: Okay.

679  
680 JW: This is fun to do though.

681  
682 GF: What part of the experience had the biggest impact on you?

683  
684 JW: The demonstrations?

685  
686 GF: Yes.

687  
688 JW: I think just being part of the demonstrations and then having the police working to  
689 break up the demonstrations— that solidified my thought that the demonstrations were  
690 important and being against the war was important. If there hadn't been all the other



691 things that happened with the confrontations, who knows how much of this— were there  
692 people on the other side... the demonstrators were trying to confront the cops.  
693 Undoubtedly there were. But again I think saying it wasn't going to happen... The  
694 atmosphere was too charged but if they hadn't pushed people out of Lincoln Park for two  
695 nights—the press— I think it might've been or could have been different. But the  
696 atmosphere again, where the cops and the National Guard during the black riots after King  
697 died had been told to shoot to kill, you know that was at least provocative.

698  
699 GF: What are you most proud of as an activist?

700  
701 JW: Organizing a draft resistance— being able to take that stance myself and providing a  
702 chance to support a lot of other people to act on their conscience. Doing the Alternative  
703 Schools Network continues— that sort of work you know people in the neighborhoods  
704 control and have a say over their own lives through education. But you know participating  
705 in the demonstrations was important because the strength of any kind of country is going  
706 to be is tolerance for the people who disagree with those in power and that's what really  
707 was happening substantially in the 60s and someone into the early 70s in massive kinds of  
708 demonstrations.

709  
710 GF: What parallels do you see between society then and now?

711  
712 JW: I think the main one is that anybody that's in power doesn't want someone to tell them  
713 they're wrong or what they're doing is wrong whether or not it's a small organization or  
714 whether or not it's a country. The tolerance for listening to dissent is really crucial because  
715 sometimes the people who dissent have something to tell you that other people who have  
716 been busy around you telling you what you want to hear— you're not seeing what you  
717 need to see.

718  
719 GF: What was the most regrettable consequence of the Democratic National Convention in  
720 '68?

721  
722 JW: Geeze I don't know. I don't know. The whole thing was kind of regrettable. There  
723 were these demonstrations that were— Attempted to be suppressed by the police force.  
724 There was a report done by a guy named Dan Walker who was then the corporation  
725 counsel for the Montgomery Ward he wrote a report and called it a police riot and people  
726 were just shit on the city side—the police didn't riot- the other people rioted. I think the  
727 whole thing and just gave a huge black eye to the city. I think Daley was already reeling by  
728 the black riots because he thought he had done so much for the black community but he  
729 really hadn't and didn't have a clue what was really going on in the neighborhoods. And  
730 this was again he didn't have a clue about this issue. I had read that he was actually against  
731 the war and said it privately to Lyndon Johnson but didn't want to be saying this publicly  
732 for telling tales out of school you know being someone on the outside who was really on  
733 the inside against the war. I think a lot of people, even Johnson, thought the war was a  
734 mistake. But he had— at some point he didn't want to be the first president to lose the war.  
735 Which was just an unbelievable tragedy. You know 59,000 guys were murdered or you  
736 know died in Vietnam and probably 1 million Vietnamese. We have a good friend who's

737 husband served in Vietnam and he died of cancer from Agent Orange. And her son died of  
738 cancer at about the age of 23 and I think it was the same kind of genetic problems that  
739 happened from Agent Orange that they talk about. And who knows how many hundreds of  
740 thousands or millions of people have been affected that way no one really makes a  
741 connection you know there certainly has been plenty of stuff done on the harm of Agent  
742 Orange. Second and third generations even. That was just a real mess.

743

744 GF: What was the most positive consequence of the convention?

745

746 JW: For all of the beatings and all of that I didn't get beat. And I got to see Peter, Paul and  
747 Mary and other people saying in front of the Hilton Hotel. I think that was on Thursday  
748 night. I saw a bunch of friends in and out of the demonstrations. There was a lot of music  
749 and a lot of fun that way besides the demonstrations and the beatings. I'll always remember  
750 Gregory saying "Come on down". He was on this hill where that statue is over here on the  
751 east side of Michigan and he said "Come on down to my house for dinner". And everybody  
752 one down nice and neat, two by two and then hitting this road blocked on the train tracks.

753

754 GF: Why did you agree to do this interview?

755

756 JW: Well Stan I think had told me and you were persistent and I thought it would be fun to  
757 sort of talk about this stuff and it would be interesting to see how much of it jogged my  
758 memory. I mean I don't sit and write about this stuff. There were all sorts of other things  
759 going on. The French students nearly shut down and changed the government in France. I  
760 think— I don't know if it was in '68 or— in Czechoslovakia— There was a push in  
761 Czechoslovakia. Dubcek was overthrown but they were demonstrations there too. There  
762 was a lot of stuff going on around the world- so just remembering that. I get caught up in  
763 the day to day of trying to have all of our programs survive these cuts that the Republicans  
764 want to do.

765

766 GF: All right, that is it. Thank you.

767

768 JW: Good, good.