

TAPE #40--SIDE A  
JOE POCHE--NOVEMBER 13, 1981

JP We lived in a house in Arizona. A red brick house with xxxx interior. Very comfortable house with my brother, myself, and my sister. A nice backyard with a big patio. Arizona is a very different place, it is very dry.

KF What other things did the family do? Did you sing together, did everybody read a lot of books, did you go to the movies, did you fight with your brothers and sisters.

JP My dad was not home that much because he was in the military. About that time that I really remember about my childhood, I remember we lived in a lot of different places in Phoenix. I use to play. Probably the most impressive thing I remember is that my Uncle made some swings for me and my Dad put them up in the driveway, carport. I use to play with the kids in the neighborhood. That was predominantly my main occupation. Go to church.

KF Your parents were both Catholics?

JP Yes. My grandparents, both my grandparents, were very religion. I had a lot of people who have gone into religious order which are in my family. Religion doesn't play a main role, but it is something that is in my family. So, that was not a vocal point in the family. Visited a lot with my aunts and uncles, my grandparents who had lived in Phoenix also. Played a lot of football, rode my bike. A lot of things kids do.

KF Some kids learn how to play the piano.

JP No.

KF Some kids get taken to the ballet.

JP No. More aggressive things. Being involved in sports.

KF Were you clever in school?

JP Clever? What does that mean?

KF Top of the class?

JP No. At what point?

KF At any point.

JP I have to say for a long time in school I was very xxxxx in school, but probably didn't pay attention in school. More interested in fooling around. That changed quite a bit when I started living with my father the second time. When they were separated. Then I made very good marks in school.

KF About what age were you?

JP Twelve.

KF After the divorce, you lived with your mother for a couple of years and then you moved in with your father?

JP Yes.

KF Then your father encouraged you to do what in school?

JP My father is very much a disciplinarian and so the encouragement was more of a must as opposed to motivation. A different type of motivation. So, I did well in school. I am not a person who is very academic, but I have a lot of brains. The ability to grasp subjects and focus in on them. This is a little known story that might give you what you are looking for. When I was in grade school up until the fifth grade I had a very difficult time reading, but I made good marks

JP in school without reading any of the material by simply getting people  
Cont. to read the information to me and retaining it that way. The reason I  
don't read for fun is because I don't enjoy reading. I read because I  
must read.

KF Fifth grade is how old?

JP Nine.

KF You couldn't read until then?

JP I could read, but not proficiently. You have heard this term,  
functional illiterate, I think that is a good to way list me at the time.  
Just a matter of, probably the maturity and the right environment and  
everything in the sense that you really have to do this in order to  
survive.

KF So roughly after the age of 12 you started to make good marks.

JP Yes.

KF Probably, just how good marks?

JP The upper quarter.

KF Where did you go to college?

JP I went to Saint Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas.

KF What did you study?

JP Initially I started studying Engineering and found that I was not  
emotionally or mature enough to deal with the disciplines that required  
and changed my major to History and Political Science. Which requires  
an enormous amount of reading, (Laugh), and did well in school. My  
first year destroyed my grade point average but I did better than B

JP in school. People should not go to the University when they are 18 or Cont. 19, they should wait awhile.

KF Think so?

JP In my case I think so.

KF People say that a lot. What did you do after you graduated?

JP I went into the Army. Spent six years.

KF You must have graduated in

JP 1968. Went into the Army and went to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma for four months and then went to Ft. Blist, Texas for nine months trained basic trainees.

KF Were you drafted or did you join?

JP Joined. Felt that was a good occupation to be in and it represented a way to figure out what I was. It was a known entity to me, I understood the disciplines.

KF There was a war on.

JP That didn't really bother me. I didn't want to be drafted. But going to war never bother me. When I was there it scared the shit out of me, but I wasn't afraid.

KF When did you go to Viet-Nam?

JP Went to Viet-Nam in September of 1969. I was with an infantry company as a Ford observer until December of 1969. Then I went to another artillery battalion and did various duties in a rare area type environment. Then I went to the eleventh armory calvary unit which was doing operations along the Cambodia War Zone D and the (could

JP not hear) things like that. I was with them until after the invasion of Cont. Cambodia, June 1970, left them and went to an artillery battery that was stationed in Viet-Nam, but was supporting the Army of the Republic of Viet-Nam while they were in Cambodia, short of artillery in Cambodia. I did that until November of 1970, and then I brought my battalion back to the United States. I was the battery commander. We brought all the rest of the records back to the United States. Deactivated (?) and went to Oklahoma.

KF You must have seen some action then?

JP Four-hundred and seventy-five days of it. Quite a bit.

KF You probably won some medals?

JP I didn't win any medals for bravery, I have two bronze stars for xxxx service, three Army commendation medals, one which I got here in the States, and two from Viet-Nam. Those are fairly profunction things. I was never wounded. I was with the infantry company I was with went on patrol with normally 75 people. At one point in time we ended up with 35 people in the company, because of casualties. I have seen people die, seen them wounded, seen them hurt really bad. The hardest thing about it in war, for me, was being dirty. The uncertainties. It wasn't the death, or the fighting. In fighting you know a certain something is going to happen. Whenever you are not doing anything is the uncertainties. After three or four days of being filthy, that doesn't bother you anymore either. It is the constant getting sacked up to be in the field and then coming out it then going back to it was a difficult one. Being away from my daughter. I would not trade that experience. That of being in the Army, surviving Viet-Nam. It was very good for me.

KF Got any feelings about the war, whether it was right or wrong?

JP It was an Army as an extension of diplomacy. Diplomacy fails, a war begins. That is now I look at, historically, that is how I see Viet-Nam.

KF But also you are a citizen. You are one of the people who has to choose whether or not to go to war. Do you think that was the right decision or the wrong decision?

JP Based on the facts that I had, I didn't see that it was a wrong decision. I wasn't even old enough, necessarily, to choose. But when I went to Viet-Nam I was old enough to vote but those decision had already been made.

KF You are still entitled to an opinion.

JP I do not think we should be the world's policemen, but yet we have a certain responsibility in the world. I think, based on looking about what we knew about the Gulf of (Tomkin?) and all the other things going on, it was a right decision. I never questioned that. I do not always think that our leaders are right. If what (Haige?) is saying today is right, I think he is wrong if he think we should do a nuclear or drop nuclear devices to make them we are for real, I think that is insanity. It doesn't make sense. There is no reason to have a war any longer realistically. Unless there is some internal struggle. A world war makes no sense, because all we do is destroy the world economy if we have a war. Short-live that. Following destroying a lot of people too. That doesn't make sense. Because I think we have gone beyond that point in time where an Army really represents the ultimate end of diplomacy. There are so many other diplomatic ways, other things that can cause a war not to happen. I don't think we have done away with Armies entirely, but I just don't represent what they did before. Too many weapons, too destructive for that to be used. You are smiling about this.

KF No, I was smiling because you probably don't realize that a lot of Europeans are reassured by all this. Too many sophisticated

KF weapons. But you felt rather strongly that the politicians had made  
Cont. the American arm forces weak.

JP They did. They gave us. The diplomacy failed we have to go fight a war. We go fight a war, but they never gave us the ability to fight that war. It became a situation where the Army sat still. Every general was afraid of making a decision that was decisive in winning the battle. So we became a stagnate element. When we invaded Cambodia we actually, the moral of the Army went up. Not because we were killing people or anything like that. We were doing what an American army should do, and that is taking the ground necessary to achieve the objective security of securing that ground and bringing certain stability to that political area, geographics that were involved. The rest of the crap that we did in Viet-Nam was just a waste of the people. The other aspect, it was the American people who never supported it and it is right, we lost fewer people from death than we do every year on the highways in America. It is such crap to hear about people complain about Viet-Nam. Lets quit killing people on our highways. Those things disturb me. The military was destroyed, hurt severely, not destroyed, because we are not asking the military to be what it is. Did you ever see the movie, "Apocalypse". The last portion of the movie is an extreme tedious of what war is and what it is all about and what Viet-Nam was about. Marlon Brando has been axed, macheted by Michael Caine. He is laying there in the floor. He is a rebel Army officer who has been leading these Cambodians and these atrocities through Southeast Asia. He is laying there and he is dying and he says War is horror. (Varifies that it is horror, not whore). He repeats horror over and over again. In order to fight a war you have to be brutal, you can't have compassions. You have to see the objective, take the objective, and once you have secured the objective. You can't let anything stop you from taking that objective. Women, children, unfortunately they are in the way, you have to have that mentality to do that. We never took that mentality into Southeast Asia. That is the only way you can fight a war in that environment. You would fight a war here or in Europe differently. Committing atrocities or horrible things in Europe or the United States worked to your

JP      disadvantage but in that massive sea of people there is, it seems to  
Cont me, that it would be the only way to accomplish it. I think that was  
the (?). Win or lose in Viet-Nam, it was horrible. We never went there  
to win and that hurt us moral wise. The other thing that hurt us  
moral wise is we never really strictly went there with people to fight  
with. We sent people there for 12 or 13 months and then went back,  
spent 6 months hiding or doing whatever you had to do on duty and  
spend the other 6 months hiding to keep from getting shot. We never  
went after it. That was the problem.

KF      Now when did you get married?

JP      In '67.

KF      Now tell me your wife's name.

JP      Susan.

KF      You met her at the college?

JP      I met her in high school.

KF      In Arizona?

JP      No, in Texas. I went to high school in Texas.

KF      Tell me when your children were born.

JP      Kelley, she is 12 and she was born in 1969 in April. Lisa is 7, born in  
1973.

KF      Same age as my children.

JP      But I'm not interested in them being in any part ... of what we do.



KF I understand you.

JP Simply because everything that I do is not. . . I am just very sensitive about how they get involved in any of this at all. Not to the point where I am paranoid or anything like that, I am just upfront about it. What I did is what I did, and how it gets involved is mine. Be it good or bad. However it turns out. If it turns out good that is great, if it turns out bad I do not want them to be directly identified.

KF You had rather that I did not put their names in the book. (Apparently JP nodded his head yes.) But tell me how they felt about it.

JP My wife was a bit miffed that I never told her what the hell I was doing. I gave her clues but I was asked not to say anything and I felt that I shouldn't do that. When I look back on it, I probably think that that was an error, that I should have told her.

KF What makes you say that?

JP Thinking about it, thinking about our relationship. It is better for a relationship to be totally opened. You see I stayed in Viet-Nam a lot longer. I was only required to be there 10 months. I stayed a lot longer because I felt that I wanted to career point.

KF From a career point of view?

JP Yes. Being in Viet-Nam and having the ability to see more combat and gain more experience is what military is about. That I could be more valuable to the Military. It certainly wasn't a matter of getting my ticket punched. In fact, I could have done that a lot of other ways while other people were slugging it out over there. So, I really never discussed I was staying in Viet-Nam, I just told her I was going to do that. I said, "What real objections do you have." Basically, whatever you think is best type of situation. But this other thing, I should have spent more time and said this is what I am going to do, I have

JP confidence that she would have not said anything to anyone. Probably  
Cont. a bit of concern that she might have said something to the wrong  
person accidentally. It could have caused other people problems. Not  
me, personally, but it could have got distorted somehow. Right now, if  
I were to look back, that was a mistake.

KF How did she feel when she found out what you had been doing?

JP She asked why did I do that. That that was really fairly dangerous  
situation. That really makes sense. That was fair. I can't answer that.

KF She did feel it wasn't then.

JP She didn't say that. I have never asked her whether she thought it  
was fair or not fair. She never expressed an opinion.

KF When did you come out of the Army?

JP November of 1973.

KF Why?

JP Because of a reduction in force. I was a reserve officer and because  
the reduction in the size of the military at that time. We had too many  
officers in the same grade. They started going down the list based on  
xxxx order. Certain officers were sent off.

KF What was your rank?

JP Captain.

KF Did you join EDS then?

JP Yes. I was hired by EDS in August of '73 and was discharged in  
November of ?. My actual start date with EDS wasn't until November.  
As a matter of fact, the 11th I have been in the company eight years.

KF The 11th of November?

JP Yes.

KF What are you now? What is your job now?

JP Since we don't have titles. My responsibilities are for the implementation of Iowa Blue Cross Blue Shield record business processing. When I took the project on in September of last year I was responsible for the entire project other than the Account Manager who was there. So in essence, there was another project manager head of Medicare, Senior Care project. So I had all the regular business project. Subsequent to that I have divided my task up and taken on the claims processing portion and given the actuary and the enrollment functions to another man. So there are two of us who have equal responsibility for the implementation. Primarily because it is just too big of a job for one guy to do and keep up with everything. We have a problem today in all our business. We can't keep enough experienced people working on projects. It is hard to get people move around. Basically, we are starting over a lot of times. We have to train as we go, so it becomes a very big job. I don't really mind working 12 or 14, 15 or 16 hours a day but too many things start slipping away from you. The decision of how do you control it and be sane at the same time. So my primary responsibility is, my function is Project Manager if you would over the claims processing function for Iowa Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Before that I did the same thing here in Dallas for Texas Blue Cross/Blue Shield. As soon as I came back from Iran it was the third or fourth time I had implemented a system here and then went to DeMoine to do the same thing.

KF What do you do with your spare time?

JP I sail. I have a sail boat. Fourteen foot sailboat. Very enjoyable. I play racketball. Try to play twice a week but right now at the end of the project I have been lucky to play once a month. That is in essence what I do in my spare time.

KF Do you still go to church?

JP No.

KF Lapsed.

JP I have expressed my views on religion.

KF OK. Are you ambitious?

JP To what extent?

KF That answers the question.

JP Am I willing to sacrifice everything, my soul, my convictions, in order to obtain a goal?

KF I wouldn't call that ambitious. I would find a stronger word for that.

JP Then yes, I would say I am ambitious.

KF I think I am running out of questions.

JP I have not thought about the answer to the most enjoyable time or the most humorous. Was that the question?

KF The funniest thing that happened.

JP I guess my funniest thing that happened is the fact that I walked out of there with \$20,000 in my shoes was the funniest thing that happened to me the whole time I was over there.

KF OK.

End of interview--discussion on following pages were typed to complete the tape.

KF I am very grateful.

JP I enjoyed doing it. It is Ross's time and money.

KF You certainly are the least enthusiastic that I have interviewed not about the adventure but about my book. Apart from Reza that won't see me at all.

JP It is not that I am not enthusiastic about your book. I think that a piece of me says, Oh, great, I am going to be put in history or whatever that happens. Then there is a piece of me that says I do not want to be in the limelight that way. That is why I am guarded about my family. It is not because they are involved in it because they very much are. I don't want them, There is a phase that we have gone through this drill four times with different situations and there is a constant phrase about exportation and . . . signing a release and I basically refused to do that. I was not be exploited. You write the book, you make the money, wherever the money goes, I (could not hear--something to do about Ross). You do not want to be exploited, neither do I. I want to contribute but not to the point of exploitation. I keep thinking about when we use to sell bonds during World War II and we would take people and they would go around the country and they would be listed as heros. They are heros for a momentary sense. But they have other lives. A guy will get be a Congressional Medal of Honor person and people will expect him to act differently and then he was or is. It is tough to carry that title. People come to my office and start talking to me and everything and they recognize in front of our handbook of our company that my name was listed as being one of those people involved in Iran. I'm glad I did it. I am glad that Paul and Bill had that. I don't think Paul and Bill owe me anything persay. But I can't be a hero, because I am real. Heros are fictionary type things. You have got to be able to be what you are and books and history will point that out. But if you get up in front of the public and you are exploiting, you are the show, people have human frailties. Sure it makes me feel neat that everybody recognize my name. Ross was giving a speech in San Antonio, where I

went to school, and some guys came up and said, We know Joe, we went to college with him. That was pretty neat. I was surprised at their comments that they said, He was really a neat guy because I thought I really had a bad reputation. I would not expect them to say anything else other than that to Ross. That is kind of nice. Because you were famous as an author there was just a certain thing you were trying to accomplish. You have accomplished that. It is sometimes more difficult whenever you are always recognized. You may get different privileges and things like that. It sometimes becomes a burden. You want to be left along. Perhaps that is why you live in a different, or a smaller city other than Paris or someplace like that in London. People do not have the access to you. That is kind of the reason I am not enthusiastic. If it never gets written, I know what happened, other people know what happened. It is sort of a monument to Ross. Simons would not want it written in my opinion.

KF I can believe that.

JP I am not carrying his banner, but he wouldn't be enthusiastic about it at all. I am not enthusiastic because he's not enthusiastic. One way or the other something is going to happen and destiny is not for me to deal with. I am glad that somebody of your caliber is doing it.

KF I will do my best.

End of Tape