

Conversation
with
Jim Love

2730 College Street
Jacksonville, FL



Recorded and Transcribed
by
Lyn Corley

TAPE 1 SIDE A

LYN-Today is the 11th of May 2017 and I'm at the State Farm Insurance Office of Jim Love. Jim has had several careers and one is the one we are talking about today especially with the U.S. Navy. Jim was a pilot and was stationed at Cecil Field. I am going to let Jim introduce himself and tell us where he is from and about his family. Then we are going to talk about his days at Cecil Field.



Jim Love State Farm
Insurance
2730 College Street
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JIM-Sure. Well, I was born in D.C., Washington, D.C. because my dad was in the Air Force. Before he was in the Air Force actually he was in the Marine Corp in World War II with Pappy Boyington. But he was an enlisted man, he didn't fly. He got out, he joined the Reserves like many men and women did and he got his GI bill and went to Temple and then later on got recalled to Korea as a Marine and then when he got back he joined the Air Force.

He was stationed in D.C. and they had me and moved to Alaska and had my sister and then we moved to Missouri. When he came back from Vietnam he got a choice of duty stations to Florida.

Fortunately, I did well in school, got an ROTC scholarship, would have liked to have gone to Florida but no Navy ROTC so I ended up going to Auburn University which I was very happy about as well. I did ROTC there for four years. I was fortunate enough to get in to the flight program and went down to Pensacola and did my time there. I graduated in December of '75 so it was in '76 that I went down there. Then I was there for about a year and of course went to Meridian, Mississippi for jet training. Then I was fortunate to be selected for the A-7.



A-7 Corsair
Cecil Field, Florida



Then I came down to Cecil Field to VA-174 which is the Replacement Air Group, the RAG we called it. So I went down there. In fact I believe I think my first or second skipper was John McCain. So, John McCain just got back from being in the Hanoi Hilton for five years so he was there.



I flew out of Cecil Field but then got selected when I finished that training I was selected for VA-105. In fact it was actually 1977, February 14th that I appeared on the flight schedule for VA-105 and they thought it was a joke that Lt. Love was on the flight schedule on Valentine/s Day. They didn't think it was real but it was real. I was there.

Then about three years in VA-105, the Gunslingers. There we made two cruises. Of course the work-ups were harder than the cruises it seemed like. The work-ups you do about three months out in the Caribbean and also out, you practice dropping, you practice weapons in the fields around here and of course a lot of night-time carrier landing training at Whitehouse, near Cecil Field. Then eventually maybe cruise out to the Mediterranean. I think it was 1978 to '79 and

then '79 to '80 made a second cruise. I met my wife here in Jacksonville at London Town Apartments.



Jim Love with his wife
Robin Lynn Carter Love

LYN-Her name.

JIM-Her name was Robin Carter, Robin Lynn Carter and then what was funny was, the apartment that I was in was 105. [Jim was serving VA-105 at Cecil] I think she may have been in 205 above me or something like that but she was there too. Back then London Town Apartments was new and was filled with Naval officers. It had five pools. It was the cat's meow back then. It wasn't too far from Cecil Field.

LYN-Now what was she doing when you met her.

JIM-She was a nurse, she was a RN. She grew up in Jacksonville, went to high school in Jacksonville, got her nursing degree at FSCJ, and so she was a Jacksonville native. We met and prior to, and then I went on the cruise, so we wrote a whole lot while I was on the cruises. That gave me somebody to look forward to to come back and she wrote me a lot as well because back then there was no...

LYN-Internet or cell phones.

JIM-No cell phones. Aboard ship mail day, mail call they called it was very, very exciting and I was always hoping I would get one or two or three letters. A lot of times there would be more than that because we might not get mail for a week because we would be out at sea. So it was very exciting.

When I came back I actually got married in between the cruises and then for the second cruise she actually followed the ship around for about three months. We were of course in Europe and she would stay a lot in Naples because the ship went to Naples a lot. Also, we went to Barcelona, we went to Palma, Minorca you know it wasn't a very hard cruise location wise as compared to the people after me that went to the Middle East where they would go ninety days at sea you know without pulling in. We pulled in every two weeks.

LYN-Pay day.

JIM-Yeah, probably pay day. To get gas or to get the ship fixed or whatever. Naples was a very popular port that we went to. But it was a great time.

After Cecil Field, after my tour there I got selected to be a flight instructor in Beeville, Texas. That was quite a shock. Then we had our first, it was a shock because it was a little, tiny town compared to Jacksonville. Texas, which I had never lived in before, the temperatures were about the same but it seemed to be a lot drier. But the flying was great. The people were great but the town wasn't the same as Jacksonville, just to put it that way.

I spent two years there, while I was there a lot of good things happened. I had my first son, Jimmy Love, and actually it's James Russell Love. He was named, his middle name is Russell named after Russ Pearson. Russ Pearson was the only man to successfully eject out of a A-7 under water. He was my hero. He could play the guitar. He was so much fun. He was my skipper, my last skipper in 105 and he was just a fantastic person and so I named my first son, his middle name is named after him.

But, he unfortunately had an accident over there, somebody broad-sided him and he had a concussion that caused him to lose his short-term memory. He was probably bound to be an admiral but it never happened after he had, he lost his short-term memory. It was very sad.

So after I did two years there my father-in-law was a State Farm agent, decided he would like for me to get in the business and I always wanted to own my own business. I didn't want to go back to sea as a non-pilot and that was the next years of dis-associated tour which I was not really keen on that. I liked flying so I said...

LYN-What would you have done on tour?

JIM-Well, I would have probably been a strike assistant strike ops, a catapult officer, a hanger deck officer, something like that on a carrier of course as a non-flying officer and that, I was not interested in doing that. If that had kept me flying I would have stayed in active duty but it didn't so I said, "Well, it's time for me to look at owning my own business. It's time for me to do that." So I did and then one of the State Farm agents whose name is Frank Talley and he was a reserve Navy captain. I went into his office one day and he said in his deep voice, "Jim, you need to join the reserves." I got into the reserves but I wasn't active. He said, "You need to be

active.” So I did that. It was the best advice I ever got. I really enjoyed the time. A lot of it was spent at Cecil Field. A lot of it was in the trailers out there. They sent to the reserves, Teeny McDonald ran the reserves out there. She was awesome. She was a retired master chief but she was a civilian that ran the reserve program out there and she was amazing.

LYN-What was her first name?

JIM-Teeny. I don't even know her real first name but she was hard-nose and, but she had a sense of humor and she ran the Navy Reserve program out there very well and did a great job. As a retired master chief you know that she knew what she was doing it. But I did time out at Cecil in a lot of different units you know and then actually became, eventually became the XO of VA something. We didn't have airplanes but we had pilots and the pilots that would come out of the F-18 squadrons the RAG's, replacement Air Group out there, and they would go probably in the airlines but they wanted to continue the reserve duty and continue to fly and they were good pilots but they would come in on the week-ends and fly for the Gladiators, VFA but it was the replacement air group for F-18's out there. So I did that for a couple of years. Actually I got one more flight in the Navy. They kept asking me if I wanted to fly in the back seat of a F-18 T-model that had a back seat. So I said, “Yes.” I had been practicing in the simulator so I thought I was a pretty good pilot, I could fly that thing.

So, I got my flight. It was with one of my students from Beeville, Texas. I think I had maybe one or two flights with him. His name was Scott Speicher. Scott as we know was the first pilot, the first person I think killed in Desert Storm which is very poignant. So, we went out, we took off, I was surprised at how fast it accelerated compared to the A-7. To me the A-7 was more like a pick-up truck and the F-18 was like a Ferrari.



We took off and he flew it out to the warning area which is out in the water, out in the ocean. We did tracking the banner you know a gun pattern. Now the gun pattern, I was a gun instructor in Beeville, Texas so I would pull the banner and I would teach the kids how to pretend they were shooting the banner. So we flew a pattern that was, would go back and forth in a parallel fashion where they would fly the banner in a circle which was different. I hadn't done that before. The reason is, I think they flew it in a circle because it was the F-18 goes faster so it would keep a much smaller area compared to going in a straight line with the banner.

So we did that a number of times, probably eight or nine times tracking the banner you know, shooting at it with a camera. Then you would come back and look to see how you did. I said, "Scott, Scott, I think I've got a hand of this you know this gun pattern. Let me try." No, no, no, Commander Love, you can't do this. I have to do this." I said, "OK, OK."

So, finally coming back from the warning area he said, "OK you can have the stick now." We were driving straight and level, coming back to Cecil Field. So, we were coming into the landing pattern and I had practiced my landings in the simulator and I was ready to land. He calls whatever, "Gladiator 174 whatever it was. Full stop." I said, "Full stop, we've got two thousand pounds of gas left." In an A-7 I could get three or four more touch-and-go's. He said, "No, that's kind of low fuel for a F-18. We've got to stop right now." I was so looking forward to trying my hand at doing a touch-and-go in an F-18 but I didn't get it. So anyway we came back and that was my last flight in a Navy air craft, my last time to fly. I probably flew it straight and level for five minutes coming back from the warning area.

LYN-When do you think that was?

JIM-When? Oh, I was a commander, so let's see, I retired in 2003, so that was probably about 1998. Yeah I would say roughly 1998. Actually, I have my retirement brochure. So, I would tell me approximately. It was a lot of fun doing that. I was very proud of all the students that I had.



JIM-That's when I retired exactly. I had twenty-six years in and retired as a Navy captain fortunately. In fact I can remember the day that I appeared on the list. It was a Sunday morning. I had a chief call me, "Commander Love, Commander Love, you're on the list." I go, "Oh man, what list did I made?" "You made captain." I thought I was in the zone for the next year not that year so I made captain actually a year earlier than I expected so the bad news was I had to do a couple more years in the Navy so I could keep it.

So, I did two or three more years in the Navy Reserves and actually picked commanding officer of VTU-7474 which is a volunteer training unit which we didn't get paid. So, I actually did volunteer training unit for about six years so six years I didn't get paid but I was collecting the points so that was important to do that. Then I finally did get paid as a captain and that was NAS Jacksonville at 0274. That's the name of the unit.

What we did is we augmented the base. We had, I had about a hundred troops that worked for me. A lot of them were MP's, military police that during the air show they would all do their active duty so they would help out there. They would help on the week-ends with security. I had wrench-turners, I had the mechanics and they would come out to AIMD and help with fixing the airplanes. I had some cooks that would come out to the galley. They would basically do the things like the NAS skipper's people would do, military cooking and some wrench-turning for the AIMD.

That was my last big command and then I went back to be the skipper of the VTU as a non-pay until I reached twenty-six years. But it was a wonderful career. I'm so glad that I got to do it. I'm very proud to serve my county seven active years and nineteen reserve.

Then finally when I turned sixty I was able to get my retirement and am collecting it today and very, actually I didn't really realize I was going to get Tri Care too so I get health benefits and then my wife gets those as well.

So, it's been a great Navy career and Cecil is a big part of that. You know I spent, roughly over three, probably three and a half years with the RAG VA-174 and VA-105. Of course with 105 I was gone of the three years, I was gone over a year over seas on the Saratoga. So, it wasn't like you were there all the time. In fact when you came back you were in a different hanger because they moved the hangers depending on who was there at what time.

Then nineteen reserve, I was certainly, I was so glad that Captain Frank Talley the State Farm agent convinced me to do that. That wasn't on my radar but actually Jacksonville is a wonderful place to do reserve duty. There are a lot of choices. I actually even did reserve duty at Mayport. I did reserve duty at NAS JAX because they shut down Cecil so we had to go someplace else.

Fortunately, I had lot of choices. I was very fortunate to do all the reserve duty that I did and very fortunate to serve the Navy and the fly single-seat jet aircraft, the A-7 which later you know the F-18 took it place and is still flying today. Now they have the Super Hornet which is a little bigger and holds more gas and goes I think a little fast but it's a better aircraft and of course some day they may transition the Lightning F-35 which I actually have a couple of simulator hops in it as well. They had, they bring in the sort of un-classified F-35 simulators and they set them up and people can fly them.

But, of course that aircraft is stealth as opposed to the F-18 and the A-7 which gives it a huge advantage in wartime and that's why we're going with that. There's three variants, the Air Force version, the Navy version which has beefed up landing gear, and then the Marine version which is vertical take-off. So, we're waiting, hopefully we'll get the F-35 at the National Guard. I've been there. I've written two resolutions to urge the federal government to bring the F-35's here to Jacksonville. We didn't make the first time, it went to someplace up North. I think we're going to make the second cut tough. I think we're going to get the F-35's. I'm hoping we will get them the second time. We really are, we have a great National Guard base here. We call them "FANG", Florida Air National Guard and they are great pilots. Of course, they are flying a very old aircraft, the F-15 and they need to upgrade it to the F-35. Eventually they will.



F-35 Lightning II

I can't think of any other Navy stories but you probably have some questions.

LYN-I do have some questions. Let's go back to your father. What did he do in the military?

JIM-Well, he did a couple of things. In the Marine Corps, he went to Parris Island just like everybody does. It was World War II and he went with Pappy Boyington, he was in Bougainville and Guadalcanal. Of course they had already taken the islands. Then they had an

air strip and he would go out there and you know fill the plane with gas, chock it, clean the windshield, whatever they needed to do to help with the aircraft. That's what he did.

Then when he got out of World War II he was a reservist but he actually became a MP, a military police officer. You've heard the expression "Buy the Farm", well my father when the plane would crash and it would land in a farm field he would go out there with a check and say, "OK, we'll buy this little piece of land." Of course, if the pilot died they would say that he, "He bought the farm." My dad would write the check to the farmer and buy that little piece of dirt that the plane crashed in.

He was with the Judge Advocate Corp and he worked with the judges in the military. He did twenty years of service and got out and became a parole officer after that. So, he was fairly strict but he was a good father he passed away when he was sixty-seven. Now, I'm sixty-three and I hope to make it a lot longer than that. He smoked which was the thing to do back then and unfortunately I think that had a lot to do with his early demise. But I don't smoke and don't ever plan on doing it either. My mother actually was also, she was a GS, she was civil service so she when he got transferred it was very easy for her to find another job.

LYN-What did she do?

JIM-Well, she was secretary you know she would work for a colonel or she would work, I remember one time she worked at McCoy Air Force Base when my dad came back from Vietnam he got a choice so he chose Florida, Orlando. He was actually Orlando Air Force Base and my mom was at McCoy because that was where the job was.

LYN-Is that Tampa?

JIM-McCoy is in Orlando, Florida. It is now the International Airport because they had big B-52's flying there. Very long run ways and now it is the International Airport. But they did have the SR-71's so she let me, they let me come out there and get a sneak peak of the SR-71 which is a very high-tech spy aircraft. So I got to see one when I was probably twelve or thirteen years old so made me want to fly and of course my dad was a big lover of JFK, John F. Kennedy. He, my dad was Catholic and he was Catholic. My dad was in the Marine Corp and he was in the Navy so he really wanted me, even though my dad was in the Air Force he really wanted me to be in the Navy because he thought they were the best.

Of course, as far as landing on air craft I mean that's a tough skill that most Navy pilots have to do and many Navy pilots think that puts them above the Air Force pilots. (Laugh) I mean the landing on an Air Force base is kind of easy compared to landing on a carrier. Of course the Air Force people will say, the pilots will say, "Well that give us more time because we don't have to practice landing so much to do air combat maneuvering, ACM's." Maybe they're right. I did spend a lot of time in a landing pattern at Whitehouse out near Cecil Field which it's still there

and in fact we just passed a bill here at City Hall not long ago to buy, to have some more money to buy some more land around there to make sure that it never has a problem with the neighbors. So far Whitehouse will become a place where we can always practice our nighttime carrier landing training from. So, I made, oh man, I made a couple hundred or three hundred touch-and-go's out there. It was a lot of fun being in the Navy. You probably have another question for me.

LYN-So, you lived in Orlando and not in Jacksonville so you may have known about Cecil but to me it was a big shock when I first saw Cecil and how isolated it was. Did you have the same experience or did you know?

JIM-Well, being from Orlando and being single you know I wanted to actually spread my wings a little bit and go a little further away. When I got, I actually came to Jacksonville for my Navy physical. So I came up here and to tell you the truth, I drove up here in a little red Fiat that had a bad, not a very good alternator. I had to be up here at like eight or nine o'clock to get my physical so I left at like four in the morning or you know dark from Orlando and it's not a tough drive but when your alternator sometimes doesn't work it becomes a little tough.

I made it up here and to tell you the truth I saw, this is 1971, this is just as Disney was just starting and Jacksonville really to me compared to Orlando was a big city. When I saw the Independent Life Building I thought, "Wow, this a great big building."



Downtown Skyline-Jacksonville, Florida
Independent Life Building near center of photo

LYN-It was brand new then.

JIM-It was brand new. I thought it was a big city.

LYN-It was the tallest building in Florida at that time. Did you know that?

JIM-No, I did not know that. But certainly I thought this was a big city. In fact, the place I did my physical I think was right on Roosevelt so now I don't live very far from Roosevelt. So, in fact it's part of my district as a City Councilman, it's part of my district, that side of Jacksonville, NAS JAX is part of my district. So, the Navy is through me not only as a career but as a City Councilman I have a Navy base as part of my district. So, it means a lot to me. I think it means a lot to the City of Jacksonville.

The veterans provide a lot of great talent and I believe that the veterans are a very giving people. They were willing to give their life to serve their country so to give their time to serve the USO or their church or their favorite charity is like falling off a log to them. It's natural, it's not hard. They're willing to give, give, give so Jacksonville has really benefited from all the men and women who have come here whether they retired or not, as long as they are a veteran they have it in their blood to give their life for the country if they have to so giving of themselves to all the charities and all the churches and their time, talents, and treasures to the City of Jacksonville is very easy to do. I believe that Jacksonville will continue to grow and prosper because of the military presence in this city.

LYN-That's interesting you said that. I thought about Scott Speicher. He was very involved in his church, the Methodist church near here. Tell us a little bit about Scott. He had been your student and you got to fly with him your last flight. Do you remember much about Scott?

JIM-Oh, yeah. No, I didn't because I actually flew once, maybe once because I was since I was the Navy, flew the A-7 I did a lot of FCLP, Flight Carrier Landing Training Flights so I might have a student for ten touch-and-go's and wouldn't see them again. So, back then he was just one of the students that was just trying to make it through and do a great job because if you did a great job you know in flight school then you got your pick of what you wanted to fly. Usually the pick was first you pick jets, then you pick props, and then you pick helo. So the top people got the jets and the medium people got the props and the folks that didn't get quite what they wanted they ended up with helicopters. So, not the helicopter is easy to fly now but they weren't the choice usually coming out of flight school.

So Scott obviously did a good job because he got F-18's. You have to be talented to fly a single-seat jet because you're not only flying it you're navigating it, you're talking, you're the communicator, you're the bombardier, you're all of that all rolled into one. So, it's the toughest aircraft to fly, the single-seat aircraft. So he did that.

Scott, when I met him before, he was a very confident pilot. He did a great job, you're only talking about one flight, but he certainly was aggressive in the F-18. He would pull that nose around and of course in an A-7 you could never do what you can do with a F-18, pull six, six and a half G's and hold it for a little while but he very precise, very good pilot, very confident, very happy. Of course this was probably a year before he went to Desert Storm. I can tell you that as a Navy captain, one of my buddies Wilton Holmes, who is also, he is a helo pilot, he is a captain

retired, he was friend of mine and who lived in Avondale as well, he asked me if I wanted to go on a special trip out to the Middle East to Kuwait called "Mucky Sentinel". He said, "Wilton, what are they going to put us up in up Quonset huts or tents or what are we going to do for those two weeks?" He said, "No, no they are going to put you in a nice hotel." I said, "OK, I'll sign up. Two weeks I can do that. I can serve our country for two weeks." So later on he told me, "Jim, you know that nice hotel, it looks like Quonset huts." I said, "You dog." But it ended up we stayed in a nice hotel.

We were out there and this is after we kicked Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait but he was still there. Remember, some people said, "George Bush, you should have finished the job." Well, so when I went to Kuwait I could feel the tension you know. Iraq is right there. Saddam Hussein is still in power. We were doing a, Lucky Sentinel was training for communication purposes or just in case Saddam Hussein comes back across again we would know how to call in the F-18 strikes. We would know who to talk to whether it be the carrier or the admirals or whatever.

So it was a training exercise but it wasn't, I left there after two weeks and it wasn't long after that, a month or two when they went after Saddam Hussein and they took him out and finally found him and he was convicted. But, it was probably the closest I had come, besides flying over Soviet SAG's where the, war time you know. During my time flying A-7's, the real excitement was the Iranians had taken the hostages and so it was a pretty long way from the Mediterranean to get to Tehran but we had some folks that were planning on how to do it, with a lot of tanking, how we could go in and bomb this or that. Now, I wasn't part of the planning but the skippers of the attack squadrons which you had two A-7 squadrons and a A-6 squadron and of course the fighter squadron or two, F-4's squadrons they were planning who they going to make to make it all the way over there and back and can we do it.

As it turns out, they tried doing the helicopter extraction and of course it was a fiasco, it didn't work. Of course the day that Ronald Ragan got elected that's when the Iranian hostages got released.

LYN-Right after the inauguration actually.

JIM-So, anyway, that was the only war-time experience that we had. Of course, I fly over Soviet ships all the time and take pictures of them. It was during the Cold War and they would take pictures of us and light us up with the radar. We would take pictures of them. But it wasn't too scary. I think it was a little more scary being in Kuwait even in, you know the Kuwaitis were very happy that we liberator them and I had meals in Kuwaiti officer's homes and of course it is a very rich country that's why Saddam Hussein wanted it, rich with money, rich with people, rich with oil of course. But, in fact when I went over there I thought, "You know, this looks just like Miami." You know it was very nice. The only difference is more people in Kuwait speak English.

LYN-Than in Miami.

JIM-Yeah, than Miami. I mean they all speak English in Kuwait but it was a very modern town, very hot. But we wore our, they gave me a whole fresh suit of camouflage and you know the dessert camis. We wore those every day to work during the exercise. In fact I only wore them really for two weeks and at the end of the two weeks I gave them all back. I said, "I'm not going to use these any more, I'm retiring soon." So, I gave about three uniforms back.

But, yes, Scott Speicher was a very nice young man. I was hoping they would name my wife's high school which was Forest High School after Scott Speicher because I believe he went there.

LYN-I think he did.

JIM-But they didn't. I was saddened by that.

LYN-Westside High School.

JIM-Yes, it's Westside High. But maybe, who knows, maybe they're change their mind in the future, maybe they won't but we'll see.

LYN-During our time at Cecil we lived near there, Colonial Forest Apartments. I don't know if you know those during your Navy time but it was lovely.

JIM-Near Forest?

LYN-We stayed on the Westside too. I guess Cecil Field people did live really on the Westside.

JIM-Almost all of them.

LYN-It was so isolated from town. So, let's go back to the other famous name you have mentioned, John McCain. He did come back. When he was captured in Vietnam had he been stationed at Cecil already?

JIM-I believe the story goes he was stationed at Cecil. He was actually not flying the A-7. The A-7 replaced the A-4. He flew the A-4. In fact he was on the Forrestal when the fire broke out. He was in an A-4, a Huffer, which is a little vehicle which blows air which helps start the engines was parked underneath some Zuni rockets. The Zuni rockets are, you know, they come in two sizes but the Huffer was shooting the exhaust up on the Zuni rockets and it shot the rocket across the flight deck. I think it hit the aircraft next to John McCain. He got out of his aircraft, he survived but it started cooking off a lot of other ammunition. Of course, they were off the coast of Vietnam and they had a lot of weapons on board on the flight deck at the time. It caused a terrible fire. That fire afterwards was one that they used for training to show how to do it and how not to do it. It was a terrible thing but John McCain made it through that but later on got shot down, I believe about five years in the Hanoi Hilton in Vietnam. [Hanoi Hilton refers to a famous prison in North Vietnam]

Then he came back, I think he came back as a captain. He may have been a commander when he went over there but he came back as a captain and he was our skipper. I don't know if it was his first job but it may have. Certainly he was beat up, stooped over. You know fatigued it seemed to me. Happy to be home of course but glad to be back and it was a tough transition for him at that time. I was glad to see that the Navy made him the skipper of VA-174 back then. I think he got out shortly thereafter. His father was an admiral but he had bigger and better things to do to be a senator later on from Arizona.

LYN-So, you had bigger and better things to do. I admire very much what our City Council does in Jacksonville, Florida and at some point you decided you would like to serve as the district councilman from Riverside-Avondale. So how did that come about.



Councilman Jim Love (4th from left) with the other eighteen members of the Jacksonville City Council-2015

JIM-Oh, that's pretty interesting. Actually Matt Carlucci who is a State Farm agent is a good friend of mine. In fact one of the first times I met him he came by my house, I lived over here on Forbes Street which is just a couple of blocks from my office here in Riverside. He said, "Would you mind if I put a sign in your yard for Joe Carlucci, he's running for senator in Tallahassee." I said, "Sure Matt, you're a State Farm agent, I'm a brand new State Farm agent. Who am I to tell you no? Yeah, go ahead and put a sign in my yard."

OK, that's how I got to meet Matt. [Matt Carlucci served eight years on Jacksonville City Council] Then later on, this is probably a lot later on maybe ten or fifteen years later on, his son Matthew and my son Jason are both going to Stanton together. Stanton just started their football team, both our sons are on the football team. We're building a platform for the cameras, the video cameras so they can take videos of the boys playing football. So, we're swinging hammers and Matt had already been a city councilman and he was considering running for mayor and he looked at me and said, "Jim, you'd make a great city councilman. Why don't you run for city

council?" To tell you the truth it had never crossed my mind. I had never run for anything in my life not class president, not anything.

I was pretty politically neutral because in the Navy you should be because you never know who your new boss might be, the commander-in-chief, so you stay fairly neutral. So, you know I felt good that he asked me but I had a problem. I had three teen-age boys, I was still in the Navy reserve and so it just wasn't a good time. A third job would be impossible.

So, I waited but I thought about it and Michael Corrigan won the race for District 14. Then I thought about it four years later but you know Michael Corrigan, he was a good friend, he worked with the Park and King Area Association which I was president of, and I admired him. I thought if I ran against him I would lose anyway and I didn't want to run against a friend. So, I waited four more years and then I think in 2009 or '10 the Chamber of Commerce started a new program called "PLI" for Political Leadership Institute, I believe that is the name of it. So, I thought "Man, is this like God telling me, 'Jim, we're not only going to let you run, we're going to provide a class to teach you how to run.'" So I thought it was divine intervention there. I thought, "Wow, this is great."

Now I did have, you know eight people wanted to run for that seat and normally when there is an open seat that's not too unusual. I had never run before. Fortunately, I'd asked somebody to run my campaign that was recommended to me by Harrison Conyers, a good friend of mine. I went and asked this fellow if he would do it. He said, "Jim, I would love to be your campaign manager but I'm already representing your opponent." (Laugh) I said, "OK."

So, I went to my second choice and went back to Matt Carlucci and I said, "Matt, what am I going to do now." He said, "If you'll get John Daigle if he can do it for you. He has been helping me and he does a great job." So I called John and John was a x-, he was in the Army and he was a veteran of the Army and he didn't retire like I did or he wasn't reserves but a great guy, a great family man and we, you know we knew it would be an up-hill battle because first of all I had to get through the first wave and finish first or second unless somebody got fifty percent then you have to have a run-off.

The main person I was running against, her name was Jill Dame, she was an attorney from Ortega and well-known, grew up there, president of Junior League. It was going to give me an up-hill battle. John knew it so we worked really hard.

I made the final cut, I got twenty-eight percent and Jill got thirty-two percent and I knew that if I worked really hard I could get, I think I could have gotten fifty, over fifty percent which would be the win. So, thank goodness it was now spring time and I would go out every day after, I found that after work was the best time to work on doors.

As a district councilman, a district you can do that because you have a list of those who are going to vote. In any particular election you are going to have about fourteen thousand people vote in

an off-election for the district, fourteen thousand. So, you can knock on a lot of those and you can sway three or four, five hundred by knocking on doors or maybe even a thousand. You can make a difference no doubt, especially when the race is so close.

So, Kevin Kuzel and I and some of our friends would knock on doors. I would knock, I would help them, I had friends in every neighborhood so Bob Giddings, an Army buddy of mine was actually a Democrat and I'm a Republican, but he didn't care. He liked me and he knocked on the doors in Ortega because that's where he's from, Ortega Forest actually. Then my other friend Ross Kruger, Dr. Kruger, he's an Army guy, he actually has a bronze star from Vietnam. He knocked on doors in Ortega for me.

I knocked on doors in Argyle along with another buddy of mine from Meninak who lived there and he knocked on doors with his baby and his wife. He knocked on doors in Argyle, that's where he lived. I knocked on doors in Argyle because that's where a lot of people lived. Also, of course Riverside and Avondale I knocked on a lot of doors along with Kevin Kuzel. Kevin and I would go together and we knocked on a lot of doors.

Kevin of course is a Navy Reservist too and it worked out after I won the race I thought I would not get an ECA, an executive helper, Executive Council Assistant and so because John Crescimbeni didn't have one. I said, "If John can do it I can do it."

LYN-Save the city some money.

JIM-Yeah, save the city some money. But as it turns out I talked to Michael Corrigan who of course if leaving now who I think he won the race for the Tax Collector maybe in the same race, I can't remember, and so he said, "You are crazy if you don't get an assistant. You won't give the service, you won't be able to do it. John Crescimbeni doesn't have a second job like you, you need an assistant." So, I thought, "Now who am I going to choose?"

Then I was driving around with Kevin and Kevin said, "Well, I can do the job." I had never thought about it. I said, "OK, let's do it." So, we would pretend I was the CO and he was the XO of District 14 and he has done a wonderful job. He's got a degree in psychology and if you think about it with all the different personalities in District 14, that's absolutely the best degree he could possibly have.

So, Kevin does a wonderful job and he will do the entire eight years along with and he handles a lot of the phone calls. But that's how I got into it. It was all because of Matt Carlucci and I can tell you the first year, two, three years it was very, very hard because unfortunately not only was ad valorem going down because we were in a recession but, ad valorem being taxes on real estate so our budget kept getting smaller and smaller. Well, Charlie Christ decided he wanted to run for Senate. [Charlie Christ was the governor of Florida] So, in order to make him look better he added another twenty-five thousand homestead exemption which also took away money so we had a double hit when it came to ad valorem and money for the city.

It was a terrible time. There was a time within the first month that we fired like a hundred people at city hall. It was called "Black Friday". People were leaving with security guards behind them with their boxes and heading out the door. "Give me your card back, you're out of here" because we had no money. It was a very, very sad time in my first year as city council and I wondered "What am I getting myself into?"

But the good news is things are turned finally. Instead of having eleven-point two unemployment rate we are now sub-five. We're in the four's right now which is much, much better. Instead of having to fight for jobs we have companies wanting to come here, Ikea, Amazon, McQuarrie, Douche Bank. We have so many new jobs in Jacksonville now. We have a great new owner of the football. That's not that the old owner was bad, he was great and he lives in my district, Wayne and Delores Weaver are wonderful people but Shad Khan is wanting to make a difference in downtown with the amphitheater and the flex field and some to be Shipyards. Very excited about the future, very excited about serving my City of Jacksonville. About a little over two years left, there's a lot to do but the good news is "I'm gonna get a lot done." I've already done a lot but I'm gonna get a lot more done and I'm going to leave the city in a much better position than when I started six years ago. A lot of that has to do with the economy. We're on the cusp of having a great four years for Jacksonville, Florida. Hope we get a winning football team. I think that's going to help a lot.

LYN-Less humiliating.

JIM-Yeah, absolutely. I think that will be the cherry on top when we have a winning football team.

LYN-I'm going to ask and you don't have to respond to this but I understand that you are sponsoring the effort at Cecil Field to become a memorial for the POW/MIA. Can you talk about that?

JIM-Absolutely. We are, Councilman Doyle Carter and I are both working on a POW/MIA area, actually what we are working on is a lease. It's a lease agreement with the city for a group, a 501C 3, they have a long name and there are some folks that want to build a very nice memorial out there for them with a serenity lake and some spires and to remember those who were POW/MIA like John McCain. Because you know John McCain won't be on our memorial wall because he won't have died in combat on in the line of duty but there should be another place for John McCain and others and so this would be there and those missing-in-action as well. So a lot, I can remember when I lived out at Cecil Field, I lived in Yellow Water, and my wife can remember seeing a black and white vehicle drive through on Benjamin Court and when they saw that vehicle they knew they were going to visit a wife to say that their husband had passed away in an aircraft accident out at sea. So, those folks could be on the wall, if they're from Jacksonville, if they're not from Jacksonville they won't be on the wall but this way if they are missing in action or POW they can be listed out there.

There's also going to be a history museum as well and it's not going to cost the city anything except the use of this, it's right around thirty acres, twenty-seven acres that's not being used at all right now out at Cecil Field. I think it will include the chapel which is in desperate need of some TLC. This group of folks wants to raise the money. They want to, much like the Adams. You know the Adams is coming to Jacksonville. Millions of dollars had to be raised and they're going to do it. What they are going to try to do is exactly the same thing but different purpose.



Decommissioned Guided Missile Destroyer USS Charles F. Adams

I perceive that they will do it. They will do it in stages. It will be great. It may even stimulate some other businesses going on out there but with the advent of the Adams coming to town I believe that we're going to be a very wonderful reunion place for the military, a great venue. Why, because you can go to so many different places. You can go from the Adams. You could have a banquet aboard the Adams. You can see the Memorial Wall which is the largest memorial wall except for the Vietnam Memorial Wall in D.C.



Veteran's Memorial Wall-Jacksonville, Florida

You can even see the Confederate soldier in Hemming Park if you want.



JIM-You can go to of course this new POW/MIA. You can go to Patriot's Grove which is at NAS JAX which has all the old airplanes of the past. So there are so many, you know they're spread out but if you are going to spend a couple of days it give you something to do.

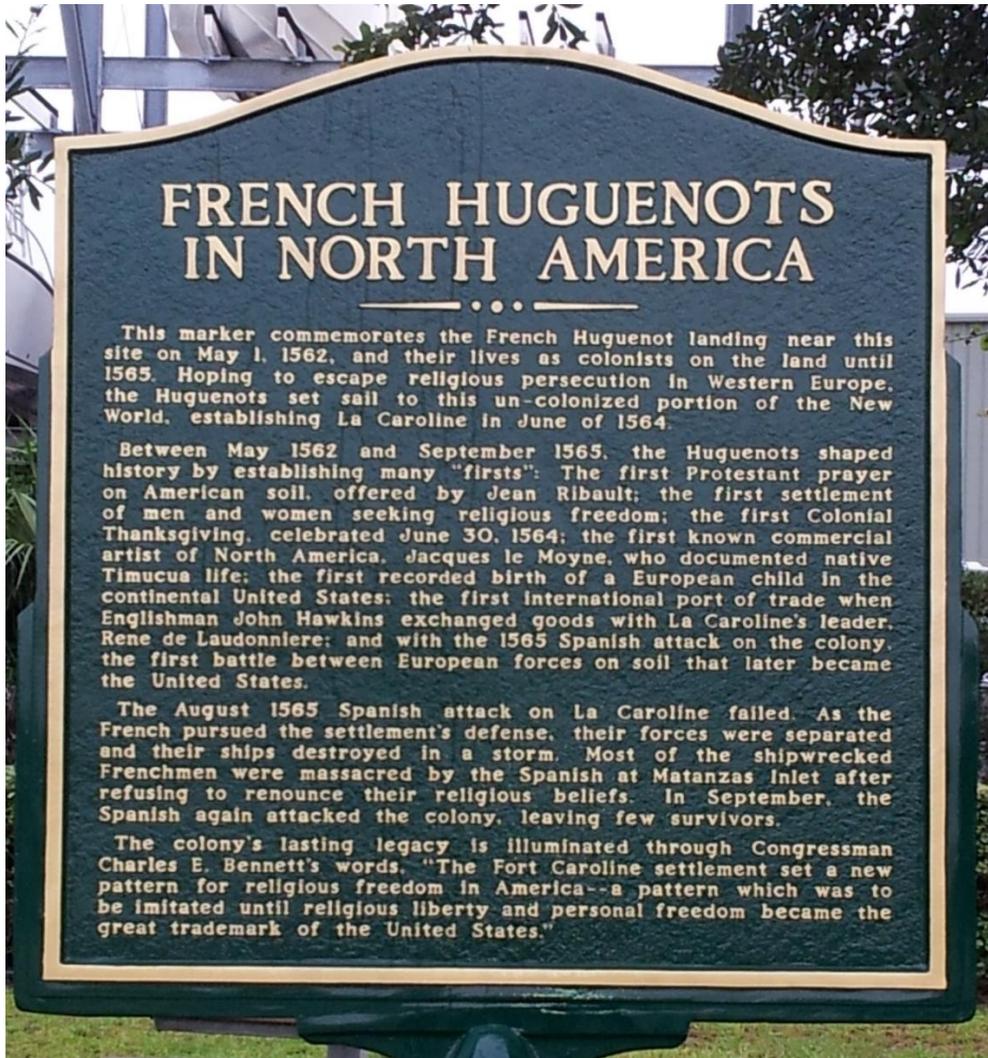
LYN-I want to add to that.

JIM-You want to add to that.

LYN-You know a little about this but the very first navy of this nation was right at Mayport with Jean Ribault when he protected the colony at La Caroline and we do have some little bit of memorial there. We have put a new memorial sign in.

JIM-Now is it at the base itself.

LYN-No, last year we put a marker there at the ferry landing.



Memorial Marker at Mayport Ferry Landing near mouth of St. Johns River

JIM-So, that's another thing. In fact, I can see where we put together a, not a tour, but you know a way to get about but a way to connect the dots.

LYN-I have always wanted that.

JIM-Let's do that. I think that would be a great idea particularly we gonna have a few more dots now and we're going to have the Adams, the POW/MIA memorial, the Jean Ribault, and then we can connect the dots and when people come here they can get a flavor of three or four wars by coming through all these.

LYN-The first international war on American soil, right here in Jacksonville, Florida. Right there wherever La Caroline was, basically by Mayport.

JIM-Sure, I could see a whole tour industry of military tours to go around and then go from Desert Storm all the way to the first international battle in America. That would be wonderful. That's a good idea. In fact, I talked with, he's the head of Visit Jacksonville.

LYN-Astleford.

JIM-Yeah, Paul Astleford, thank you for reminding me, I talked to him and his executive person and they talked to me because I had said some things about what I would like to see on their website and actually after looking at it they have a lot of things on it but it's not very well arranged but they are getting a company to re-do it. But, we need to include military tours so I'm very interested in improving the tourism. We'll never be an Orlando or a St. Augustine but we could certainly increase the tourism in Jacksonville because we have a lot to show. We have a lot of history.

LYN-We have hidden our history. I'm so glad you are saying that.

JIM-We need to show it to people, to explain it to people, and have it on the web better, and the good news is Visit Jacksonville is going to do just that. Paul said that there had already been a RFP, they are already looking a couple of people to up-grade the website to make it more mobile so when people come across the border they can say, "Wow, look at all that Jacksonville has, particularly in the military vein."

LYN-We talked about your father's military duty but when you thought military you thought "flying planes" is that right? Was that a goal from early on?

JIM-Oh, yeah. When I was, you know I lived on Richardson, J-BER Air Force Base on Chili Avenue. I remember the name. We would always go see the Thunderbirds fly. All these planes were flying around and so of course my dad was, back then he was a tech sergeant and my mom was a secretary and I didn't see them for some reason having enough money to send me to college.

Well, I worked very hard to get a scholarship and so I ended getting a Navy ROTC scholarship with their help. Having a dad that had been to Vietnam and Korea and World War II and a chest full of medals, having his son apply, and I had pretty good grades, I think that made it fairly easy for me to get the ROTC.

Back then of course Vietnam was going on. There wasn't a big line to get into ROTC, well maybe there was, but I got a scholarship and went to Auburn and yeah, I always wanted to fly. Actually what happened was, I was at Auburn and I decided, "If I'm getting a free degree here on the tax dollars dime I want to get a good one." I thought mechanical engineering was the top, one of the top four-year degrees that Auburn had. Auburn was called "Alabama Poly Technical

Institute”. So it was a technical, agricultural school. So, it had a very renowned mechanical engineering department so I did that and so that made me the, one of the folks that the submarine, the nuclear power Navy wanted me.

So, my first class cruise I actually went on a submarine and spent, went through Charleston and picked up the sub, went down to Roosevelt Roads and actually spent three weeks in a row underwater. That’s when I realized that I really didn’t want to do that. In fact it was funny that an enlisted nuke-sub guy, sailor, he said, “Midshipman Love, do you have good eyesight?” I said, “Yeah, it’s perfect.” “Why do you want to be on subs? You should be flying.” Then of course not having seen the sun in three weeks and living in those cramped spaces I realized that, “You know, maybe flying would be better.”

So, after that fortunately in the Navy, at Auburn I had went through the FLIP program, Flight Leader Indoctrination Program where I got to fly. I went out to Auburn’s tiny airport and got to learn to fly so I got forty hours in a Cherokee 140 which was a low-wing prop you know, little aircraft. Fortunately, then when I went down to Pensacola that gave me a big jump on the folks that had never flown because I already had forty hours. I already had a pilot’s license.

TAPE 2 SIDE A

LYN-So you went to Pensacola.

JIM-Yeah, when I went down to Pensacola before I started flight school I knew some of the instructors down there. They went to Auburn. I can remember his name, Pat Satillo. Pat Satillo was what they call a “plow back”. He went to the flight training. Here’s what happened, he went to the flight training, he got his wings but instead of going out to fly a P-3 let’s say, he went back to be a flight instructor. They call them “plow backs”. So Pat Satillo was a “plow back”. He was an Auburn graduate and of course I had known him in ROTC. I said, “Pat, what are the chances of you being my instructors?” Since he was in operations he said, “They are really good.” So fortunately I got Pat Satillo as my flight instructor so we had two Auburn guys flying together. That really was fortunate. So I was very, very happy to get that and I got good grades.

Of course going to Meridian, Mississippi to get the jet training, you go from Pensacola to get your basic and then you go to Meridian to get your jet training, I also got some good instructors. I would spend a lot of time in the simulators on my own you know. The simulators would be open and you could if nobody was in them you could fly them. So I would spend an inordinate amount of time doing “S Patterns” where you go up and down at a very controlled rate. “S Turns” and so that’s really instrument flying. So I would work really hard on my instrument flying so I could do it very well and control the power and all that sort of thing.

They did not have landing simulators but they had instrument flight simulators. So, I worked real hard at that and I made good grades and fortunately the top people got to fly the single-seat jets whether it be, of course there were no F-18’s back, there was only four’s, F-14’s, and A-7’s

and A-6's. A-6's were of course two-seaters and A-4's so I was fortunate enough to get the A-7's and that is what brought me to Cecil Field.

LYN-So the A-7's were at Cecil and Oceana? Am I right?

JIM-No, you were right. They are on the west coast but they were in Lemoore. Of course I was already, I could have gone to the west coast but you know the Navy in their wisdom certainly wants to save a little money and put me with an east coast squadron. But certainly, I had two, I had four skippers actually while I was there. Pinky Sauders was the wild man and I don't know how he got his name but he was only my skipper for like maybe two months, three months but VA-105 had the McClusky Award which is named after a pilot, I think a Lt. Commander in World War II during the Battle of Midway. McClusky found the, came out of the clouds and found the Japanese carriers and dropped, these were not computer-aided drops, you just pointed your nose down and pickled the bomb and hoped they hit and they did. He was, his bombers knocked one or two of the air craft carriers in the Battle of Midway.

So, we got the McCulsky Award which is the best, 105, the best attack squadron. We also had the "Battle E" so on our aircraft we had two "E" and "M" on a little shield so we had the top squadron.

LYN-That could make you a big target.

JIM-Yeah, a big target. But I was going into one of the top squadrons in the Navy. Of course Red Bennett was the skipper and he was a Naval Academy guy and of course a lot of the other lieutenants were Naval Academy. I was one of the few ROTC, non-Naval Academy but he ended up making admiral later on. He was the skipper of a ship and made admiral. Bob Nutwell was his XO and then he became skipper. That's the way they did it back then and he became an admiral. I can tell you that one day while you know, and they were excellent, excellent officers, you know of course Academy graduates. They were shooting for admiral from day one. , that's extra duty that you don't have to do but he was doing it to get his time so he would be better prepared to become an admiral. While he was doing that I think I was sleeping because it was the middle of the night. We were re-p replenishing and the Waccamaw which was you know right next to us with the lines going across and such, the Waccamaw had a steering casualty. So, I don't think it was us, it was them which meant that they turned right into us. So, you're going parallel into the water and then the thing bumped us. Of course, we are much bigger than they are so they ran into us.

They damaged some things but they got damaged a lot more than we did. The bell went off and I can tell you that when, I had flown that night, when you fly and you have oxygen, of course you have an oxygen mask on, it puts oxygen in your inner ear. What it does as you sleep because of osmosis the, you have a little different pressure on one side of your ear than the other. You don't hear as well until you can clear the pressure. You can do that but not while you are sleeping of course.

So I was sleeping in a six-man bunk room and in the six-man bunk room of course you know, of course we weren't having flight ops because we were doing underway replenishment, but I was sleeping. The alarms are going off. Of course I'm in a bunk room where normally I can hear the planes landing above me and I never woke up. (Laugh) I never woke up. It was not my fault. Nobody came and got me. But so I thought that was pretty funny that I never woke up. But I was really tired and because of that oxygen, the pressure I just couldn't hear as well.

LYN-So you carrier qualified on the Lexington.

JIM-Yeah, exactly. Back then we did.

LYN-You mentioned the Saratoga. Were you on another ship?

JIM-No, never was on another ship at station but as a flight instructor in Beeville I was, being a pilot with a lot of landings, over three hundred carrier landings, I quickly became the FPLC flight instructor. So, I would sit in the back seat as they did a bunch of touch-and-go's and then when they went out to the ship I would lead them. They would be solo but I would lead them out to the ship. So, we would have, the instructors would lead them out to the carrier which would be in the Gulf of Mexico and it could be any carrier. A lot of times it was the Lexington and sometimes it wasn't. Just what ever ship that they could get out there to the Gulf. In fact one time we couldn't get one to the Gulf. We actually had to fly out to San Diego, North Island. We flew out of there to do some touch-and-go's in the Pacific. So, we went out there and did carrier quals out in the Pacific.

Wherever, when your students come up and they are ready to go you don't want to waste. You find a carrier, which ever one is available. So, I've got, I don't know where all my touch-and-go's are because usually I would get a touch-and-go and go back into the orbit ready for them to finish. Then when they would finish I would take, they called them "chicks", I would take chicks back to North Island and drop them off at the base and they would land.

So, I was fortunate enough to never have any issues with any of my chicks. We did have one time, it wasn't, I wasn't flying this time, we did have a chick that was trying to, you know to join up on the lead, the lead would be in a left-hand bank and then you would pull him side and then you would slowly go underneath and then he would join in the lead. Unfortunately the chick, the student would pull too hard and he departed the aircraft and we lost one student. I think in my entire time at Beeville that was the only student that we ever lost. That was really pretty good but it was sad for him but to lose only one, and it wasn't to engine malfunction.

We had our share of emergencies I'm sure but with a twin-engine T-2 Buckeye if you lost an engine you could fly on one engine. It was a very safe aircraft. In fact, it was the only aircraft in the Navy inventory, jet aircraft, that you could spin on purpose. You could take it up, and I was a spin instructor, so I took them up and you would put it in a spin and say, "OK, get it out." They would get it out of the spin. So I did that a lot. But it was a lot of fun doing it and I did operative

low-levels in the T-2 and again, I did most of the advanced stuff, the guns, what they call “the gun boss” where you would take the chicks out and they would pretend to shoot the banners that we would pull. I would be in the tow aircraft and so I would tow on a long rope the target. It was just a banner with a little red circle on it. They would have cameras and they would see how well they did when they came back with the cameras.

I forgot what the question was that started all this.

LYN-It was about the carriers and you were on the Saratoga.

JIM-We got a lot of landings on the Lex but the, I can’t name all the carriers I was on.

LYN-Did you miss the Forestall? Did you have the honor ever of landing on it?

JIM-No, I don’t know if I got any touch-and-go’s on the Forestall or not but it is a sister ship. It was 59 and we were 60. Their nickname was the “Forest Fire” and our nickname was the “Sinking Sara” because I think we were in Naples when we actually touched bottom. We had some issues. It was nothing major but the Forestall was, the fire there was major. But the Saratoga was in Vietnam as well but it never had the excitement of the Forestall.

I spent, most of my traps, over two hundred, are on the Saratoga. I have another, a total of over three hundred traps in the T-2, A-4, and mostly in the A-7.



T-2 Buckeye
by North American Aviation



A-4 Skyhawk
by Douglas



A-7 Corsair II
By Ling-Temco-Vought

LYN-We have been through your career. I want to thank you Jim for this interview.

JIM-It's a lot fun trying to conger all of that stuff back up.

LYN-And for sponsoring this proposal for Cecil Field. Thank you for co-sponsoring.

JIM-Oh yeah. Of course.

LYN-I hope that we can memorialize.

JIM-I think it will happen. I think the easy part is getting the lease. The hard part will be raising the money, getting people to do it. If they ask me for money I'm going to give it to them of course.

LYN-I'll tell Mike that.

JIM-The city is not going to want to give money like they didn't give money to the Adams. Now we will work out a lease, we'll do what we can, but to actually give cash probably not going to

happen but we can facilitate some, at least give them the property at a dollar a year. So, I think we can work that out and I'm looking forward. The people that are running that are really top-notch so I think there's, if they hurry, there's a lot of us old guys that probably are fairly well-to-do that can help but you've got to get them before they pass on. I mean there may be others but we don't have any more F-18 pilots. They are out of Oceana now. So, we'll see. I think they can do it. I never put anything past anybody to follow their dream whether it be the dog park over there by Riverside or the brand-new fancy playground at Boone Park.

LYN-I haven't seen that.

JIM-Oh well, I would recommend that you go get some lunch. Why don't we go to lunch?

LYN-We can.

JIM-Let me look at my calendar.

LYN-Jacksonville has gotten very large. In the past I could keep up with what was going on in different districts and we have just gotten very large.

JIM-We have. But you know we're still a city of communities.

LYN-We are a city of communities.

JIM-OK, I have a one o'clock phone conversation. We can make it easy.

[Jim shared his visions for his community over lunch at a community lunch spot, Whiteway Grill. Along the way Councilman Love stopped to pick up every piece of debris that we found along the way. It was very obvious to realize his pride in his Avondale-Riverside community]

