

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Kathleen Lynch Simpson

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: May 11, 2012

[Portions Redacted at Request of Interviewee]

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is May 11, 2012. This is Therese Strohmer. I am actually at—over in Jackson Library in Greensboro, North Carolina to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I'm with Kathy Simpson. Kathy, why don't you go ahead and state your name the way you'd like it on the collection?

KS: Okay. Kathleen Lynch Simpson.

TS: Okay.

KS: But please call me Kathy.

TS: Alright, I'd be happy to. Well, thanks again, Kathy, for coming and visiting with us today. Why don't we start off by you telling me when and where you were born?

KS: Okay. I was born at Fort Bragg, in the—not Womack, not the one before it, but the one before that; an old cantonment hospital. I tell people when they say, "Oh, you were born at Womack," which is the hospital there now, I said, "No, I'm three hospitals old."

TS: Oh, yeah. [chuckles]

KS: My dad was in the military, but shortly after I was born—he had pretty bad heart disease, and so he retired shortly after I was born. In fact, he had three heart attacks between the time I was born and the time he died. He actually was buried in Arlington on my fourth birthday.

TS: Oh my goodness.

KS: And we had moved to Washington, which is my mother's hometown. My mother met my dad at the Pentagon back in—probably right after the war.

TS: Right.

KS: She was a civil servant. She had left town—left Washington and moved to D.C., and I bring this up only because I kind of followed suit.

TS: Now, was she from Washington, North Carolina?

KS: North Carolina, yeah, yeah. And she realized she wanted to leave her small town, and so she went to the big city; from little Washington to big Washington.

TS: Well, that's kind of neat.

KS: And so I grew up in Washington, North Carolina.

TS: Okay.

KS: Wasn't born there, but I was raised there.

TS: From the age of four?

KS: Yeah. I was an only child, and so it was just my mom and me, growing up.

TS: How did she do after your father died?

KS: Well, she went to work, for one thing. And she really did put her—dedicated her entire life to raising me. She was, I say, one of the pioneer working women. I never wanted for anything. I didn't get everything I wanted, but she provided well for me.

TS: What's her name?

KS: Elizabeth. And she—I realize now, at times when she didn't want to go to a football game, or a basketball game, or a Friday night, it was because she was tired. But she put everything into raising me, and I am eternally grateful for that.

TS: Where did she work at?

KS: She worked at a bank. She had been a secretary up in D.C., and from what I understand was a pretty good one. And so, she went to work first for the superintendents of schools, there in Beaufort County, but then moved over to a bank and was the secretary to the president of the bank for years and years.

TS: Now, did she ever remarry?

KS: Nope.

TS: No?

KS: No, never dated.

TS: No?

KS: Never; no. She—It was she and I.

TS: Yeah.

KS: We were—Now, we had our struggles every—our conflicts, just like everybody, particularly as a teenager.

TS: Sure.

KS: But it—I had a wonderful life. I had lots of cousins. I never felt lonely, and I grew up in a neighborhood where there were—I think I counted it one time—thirteen children in my grade within a two-block radius.

TS: In your neighborhood?

KS: Yes.

TS: What kind of things did you do at that time growing up, for play-wise?

KS: Oh, I always say it takes a village to raise children, you know? We kind of—Like a flock of birds, we'd go from house to the other, playing outside a lot. TV really wasn't the thing to do then. We just—We were always up to something; Barbie dolls, or at night, if we got to stay out at night, it was playing hub cap; [laughs] throwing tin cans at cars.

TS: Now, you're playing hub cap? Wait, wait a second, I don't know that game. What is that?

KS: Oh, we'd throw a tin can out in the street and we'd holler, "We lost—You lost your hub cap!" We probably never stopped a car, but it was—

TS: Oh, to make the sound of it.

KS: Getting into trouble—yeah, yeah, yeah. Getting into trouble, and playing tag at night.

TS: Yeah.

KS: It was a wonderful childhood.

TS: Lots of running around?

KS: Yeah, lots of running around.

TS: Did you play any sports at all?

KS: No, and this was before—what is it, Title IX?

TS: Title IX.

[Title IX refers to a portion of the Education Amendments of 1972 that states (in part) that: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity, including athletics, receiving federal financial assistance...]

KS: I grew up in the Washington city schools, graduated from Washington High School, and we didn't have any—the county schools had women's sports, the city schools didn't. But I was a cheerleader in high school—

TS: Oh, were you?

KS: —and so I followed sports in that respect.

TS: Right.

KS: But didn't play them myself.

TS: No? Well, did you—So what was it—So Washington, North Carolina, for somebody who's not familiar with that part of North Carolina, kind of describe.

KS: It's a town not on the ocean coast, but on the river coast; on the Pamlico River. A pretty little town, I think it had probably nine or ten thousand when I was growing up there; several factories, Hamilton Beach [National Spinning Company – KS added later] [Brands, Inc.], some other manufacturing plants. And now, present day, all the manufacturing is gone. The town has actually decreased in size, but it's a beautiful little town; it goes by Little Washington. Some people get crazy about calling it Little Washington, but that's what it is. And one high school at the time, a downtown section, and then the big mall came, which in—compared to these days, it wasn't more than just a strip shopping center.

TS: Sure. But it was different; it's new.

KS: A great way—it was a wonderful place to grow up.

TS: Now—Well, how were you with school? Did you like school?

KS: I was a—I was a good student.

TS: Yeah?

KS: I did well in school, and it came easy to me.

TS: Did you have a favorite teacher or subject?

KS: Interestingly enough, I really wasn't into—crazy about the sciences. I did well, I made As in everything. But I think if I had a favorite subject of all, it was my journalism class my senior year in high school. I had a great teacher who not only appreciated the written word—Well, it was journalism and he was also my English teacher.

TS: Okay.

KS: And now I'm kind of mixing them up. In the journalism class, he really taught me to write in a journalistic style, which served me so well all the way through the military, in terms of writing evaluation reports, or staff reports, or whatnot.

TS: What kind of style was it that he helped you—

KS: The who, what, when, where, how; very, very objective. He also was my English teacher; his name was James Farrell. And he was my English teacher and he taught me—not only did he teach me how to write, but he knew that I was interested in music, Broadway, theater, and so he really, kind of, let me expand in that respect too. I really do—I miss him. Interestingly enough, his widow lives right across the street from me now.

TS: Oh, is that right?

KS: And one day when I was grading exams and I was so frustrated with the way my students write, we were outside on the sidewalk talking about that and I told her how much I appreciated what I learned from him, because it really did me serve me throughout my lifetime.

TS: Yeah. Well what—You said something about how you had these other—kind of a worldview sort of interest in some way.

KS: Yeah.

TS: How did you get those?

KS: It's funny because my mother certainly couldn't afford to take me to New York to go see Broadway plays or whatnot. We would go to East Carolina in the summertime to the summer theaters. They'd put on, like, five or six plays in the summertime; it was the summer playhouse. And so I got to see all the classics; *My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, *Brigadoon*, and I just really learned the—I just fell in love with the Broadway musicals. And to this day still love to go.

TS: Did you ever do any acting?

KS: No—Well, no, not really.

TS: Just a little bit?

KS: We had something in high school called stunt night, a class had to put on a—

TS: A little skit or something?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: —a little play, a skit, and musical, and I—I was involved in that.

TS: So you dabbled in it.

KS: Dabbled, yeah.

TS: Okay. [both laugh]

KS: Never ready for prime time.

TS: You say—You had said your mother, kind of, really supported you and like—did you have a sense then of—like, did you always think you were going to go to college, or what did you—did you—

KS: There was never a doubt.

TS: No?

KS: There was never a doubt, from the time I was young. And it was that generation. She grew up during the Depression and she said, "I was never able to go to college." I think she took a night time shorthand and typing, secretarial-type course. But she wanted me to do the things that she was never able to do. The top two things I can think about: piano. She paid for lessons for me from the time—the summer after my first grade until I graduated from high school.

TS: Do you still play?

KS: I—At the time, when I was a senior in high school, there was part of me that wanted to major in music, but I also wanted to be a nurse. So it was probably good that I—because I wasn't artistically talented.

TS: But you enjoyed playing?

KS: I did enjoy playing, but then when I left home I didn't have a piano for a long time, and I kind of lost a lot. Then of course I got my piano from her and I still didn't play, so I've lost a lot, but I certainly do appreciate it.

TS: Yeah.

KS: The other thing, she wanted me take piano lessons because she was never able to do anything like that. And there was never a doubt that I was going to college. I don't know if it's because she instilled it; I mean, she never demanded, she just planted the seed and watered it and fertilized it and cultivated it and I never thought otherwise.

TS: Well now, like, in high school they take like college prep classes. Did—At that point did you have that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: Yeah. I don't remember. I guess there was a college preparatory path, and so I took the advanced English, advanced science; those—algebra—

TS: To be ready for college?

KS: —geometry, yeah.

TS: Also at this time, you're in the sixties.

KS: Yes, graduated from high school in '71, so it was the sixties.

TS: The sixties, and so you had—we have a lot of changes going on.

KS: Social uprisings.

TS: Did you—Was it an integrated school?

KS: In the sixth grade, the very first black student sat right across from me in the aisle. His name was Ernest Bailey.

TS: Yeah?

KS: And I remember feeling so bad for him because I knew that he felt out of place. He was a great guy. In fact [chuckles], I see him at the gym every once in a while; we're on the treadmills right side-by-side.

TS: To—Even today?

KS: Yes.

TS: He still lives there?

KS: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Do you remember any conflict with that in your school? [clears throat] Excuse me.

KS: Not really. I think for the most part we—Oh, I'm sure there was some ugliness, but I don't remember any overt ugliness. I think we were almost ultra-cautious that we didn't want to offend anybody or make anybody mad. And of course that was in the sixth grade. By the time I was in high school, it was—they were our classmates, and we had a real good basketball team, I remember; a really good football team, but everybody was—we were fully integrated then.

TS: By that time?

KS: Yes.

TS: So you had a number of years; you said you graduated high school in '71?

KS: Yes.

TS: What other kind of—

KS: I do remember one time when Martin Luther King was assassinated, and people were afraid that all of the racial violence was going to hit our town. It didn't.

TS: No?

KS: No.

TS: When you say you remember that it was going to hit your town, what—so—

KS: Well, we'd see on TV, we'd see on the nightly news, how people were rioting and carrying on, and we didn't know—and it was mainly a factor of ignorance on our part.

TS: Do you remember personally how you felt at that time?

KS: I remember—I remember feeling incredibly sad, and a little afraid, because I saw what was on television. I didn't know if that was going to spill over into small towns or not.

TS: Yes.

KS: But it went—I probably was afraid for one or two days and then—or for one day, and then got involved in something else totally irrelevant.

TS: Well, you would have been a little girl, too, when JFK [President John Fitzgerald Kennedy] was assassinated.

KS: I remember exactly where I was.

TS: Tell me about that.

KS: I was in library class—or in the library. One of my second cousins, who's much, much, much older than me, was the librarian, and her sister, my other cousin, was the secretary to the president—I mean, to the principal of the school. And it came over the intercom that John F. Kennedy had been shot, and they actually started airing the radio into the library. And I—I remember the whole nation just kind of stopped. We were so scared. If I remember correctly it was on a Thursday, and—or maybe a Friday, I can't remember, but I was in library class. And then, I went that afternoon—I think I went to get my haircut or my hair fixed at this beauty school where you could have it done for fifty cents, and when I got out they said that—that he was dead. Because it took a while for us to find out that he was dead.

TS: Well, it took a while, I think, for him to actually be declared dead.

KS: Right.

TS: So what—Do you remember having any—Did you have any feeling about him, because you would have been, like, about eight years old or so, maybe, then.

KS: Well, he was our president.

TS: Yeah.

KS: I remember when the inauguration—when he was inaugurated, our high school band played in the inaugural parade. I mean, it was a big deal; John F. Kennedy. Even in the fifth grade I felt that Camelot. I mean, it was the closest thing to royalty we ever had, I do

believe. And I remember—I didn't know the political implications or anything like that, but I just remember it was real sad.

TS: Did you—Before he was—Well, in that time period, I guess, before he was assassinated, they had a lot of issues with the Cold War where they did Duck and Cover. Did you guys do anything like that?

KS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

TS: Do you remember that?

KS: Our neighborhood—I didn't come from a real rich neighborhood. There were—Let me put it back—take that back. There were very rich people in our neighborhood; we were not one of them. We lived in the neighborhood, but we were much, much, much, much less well off than them. Our neighborhood built a fallout shelter in the middle of the block; like at the back of everybody's backyards, because it was a square block.

TS: Okay.

KS: In that area right in the middle of it. We lived, actually, across the street from that block, but we—everybody put in—I believe it was a hundred dollars a person, and that was a lot of money then. And they built this big, concrete block. I mean—

TS: A bunker, sort of?

KS: I never—Like a bunker, with dirt on the top of it. I remember, maybe in the fourth grade—I would have been—What?—nine, probably—we had a fallout drill, and I remember seeing the yellow-and-black fallout shelter designations, like, in the basement of our church. We had one fallout drill where they dismissed class and we had to get home as fast as we could, and I remember I lived about—let me think, that's about—Eighth Street, I lived on Thirteenth Street, and about four blocks over—I remember running just about the entire way home, about twelve blocks.

TS: Were you afraid?

KS: Yeah, and I—it was just a drill, but just the thought of it. It was the adrenaline rush.

TS: The adrenaline, sure. Wonder if that fallout shelter's still there?

KS: No, it's not.

TS: No?

KS: They—When my mother died in 2000 I sold the house, but I had been gone all during that time, and in the meantime they had torn it down.

TS: Oh, wow.

KS: They had bulldozed it. I never got to go in it; I never saw what it looked like on the inside. I just knew that—And I remember one of the men in our neighborhood, my mother quoted him, I never heard it first, because they were afraid that people that—had a bomb gone off, people that hadn't paid—

TS: Would want to come in?

KS: Would want to come in. And I remember him—him being quoted as saying, "I shot people in World War II and I'll shoot them again."

And I remember thinking, "Oh my God." I don't think I ever looked at that man the same since. [chuckles]

TS: After hearing that. [chuckles]

KS: Of course now, they—it was something that I'd probably come out of my mouth, even though I haven't shot anybody. But I remember it was almost a feeling of security, knowing that at least my mother and I were going to be safe.

TS: Yeah. Why do you say that it would come out of your mouth now?

KS: Because that's something that I would probably say and not mean; that, "You come in my house, I'll shoot you." [both laugh]

TS: So you have in your—your protected space.

KS: Exactly.

TS: When you—Back to school, then.

KS: Yes.

TS: You're going to graduate. At what point did you decide where you were going—what you were going to do after high school?

KS: My uncle, my mother's brother, was a physician there in town; he was an obstetrician. And I've told this before in speeches and whatnot. I remember going to doctor's—to his office—because for the most part I got treated by an obstetrician, from the time that I was a little girl on up, because it was free and he took care of me. But even when I went to my pediatrician's office, I loved the smell of the—of the doctor's offices. And it was the alcohol; it was that ultra-clean smell. I remember several nurses that made an impact on me, and seeing them with those white hose—

TS: The hose?

KS: —and that crisp white dress, and I knew I wanted to go into the health care fields. My mother said, “If you want to be a doctor, we’ll find out a way,” and I never—I’m not even sure if I ever even told her that I wanted to do that. I kind of just settled on I wanted to be a nurse. I’m not saying I settled, but I decided I wanted to be a nurse probably my sophomore or junior year in college, and knew that I wanted to be a nurse. The issue came more as to where I was going to go to school. East Carolina University had a nursing school, but my mother said it was too close to home.

TS: Why didn’t she—

KS: She didn’t want me to be that close to home, and my boyfriend at the time was going—No, he was already at East Carolina, and she didn’t want me that close to him or to home, which was very, very smart, and much smarter than me. And I’ll tell you why in a few minutes.

TS: Okay.

KS: She wanted me to go to Duke [University], but Duke was just too expensive. She found out by researching that since my father had died of a service-connected disability—they attributed his heart condition to a service-connected disability—that I would be eligible for a veteran’s scholarship. So we started all of the paperwork and going to the VA [Veterans Affairs] offices to see about that, and so we found out that if I went to a state-supported school I would get my tuition paid for and my room and board. So all at once Duke got knocked off the table—

TS: Right.

KS: —which left UNC [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill], and she said that’s too big, and UNCG [University of North Carolina at Greensboro]. And so, we came up here one weekend—or one Thursday or Friday, and I looked at the campus. I liked it. I never applied anywhere else. That’s the only school I applied to.

TS: It fit all the criteria that you had.

KS: It fit the criteria, so why look further? So I applied on the—I don’t remember if it was called the early admission or whatnot, but—

TS: From high school?

KS: Yeah, and got—and got accepted. I should have; I had very, very good grades. I was, like, ranked three in the class. But as a high school student applying for something for the first time in my life, I didn’t know I was going to get accepted or not.

TS: Right.

KS: And so, I remember when the mail came—I came home from the school and the letter was—she has propped it up on the dining room table.

TS: Was it unopened?

KS: Yes, it was unopened.

TS: Okay.

KS: And—

TS: Maybe she steamed it.

KS: And that was—that was probably a really happy moment, but that wasn't the happiest moment. It was the summer before my senior year. I said we had been going to the VA office, to apply for it? This veteran scholarship was mainly for veterans from North Carolina. My dad was not from North Carolina; he was from New York. But as soon as he met my mother and came to Washington for the first time, he said, "This is where we're going to settle." I mean, he fell in love with the city; he was a big fisherman, so being right on the coast—

TS: On the river.

KS: But there was a phrase in the paragraph about the qualifications that said if you're father—if you were born in North Carolina, and if you're father wasn't from North Carolina but had spent certain amount of time there, and the mother—I remember she had to write out a an affidavit. She picked me up from cheerleading practice one afternoon and I knew something had happened. It was like the weight of the world was off her shoulders. She says, "You've been accepted for that scholarship." And I think now, looking back, as a working mother, who probably—I mean, she owned the house. She took Daddy's death benefits and paid off the house, but probably as a secretary, not knowing where—where—if there were any major expenses, where they were going to come from, whether she was going to have to borrow money or whatnot, it was a huge load off her shoulders.

TS: Sure.

KS: And I remember her feeling just so happy, and she—later in years she said it was the best moment of her life, knowing that her kid was going to be able to go to college.

TS: Well, that's terrific.

KS: Yeah.

TS: That's great. So you're off to UNCG then—or actually it was Woman's College, wasn't it then?

KS: No, it was UNCG.

TS: Was it? Okay.

KS: Yeah, and there were males on campus. It was—

TS: Because it was '71?

KS: I think so.

TS: Somewhere in there?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Did you live on campus then?

KS: I did, and I lived in Cotton Hall, and yesterday at the alumni association board meeting, I was able to tour what they're doing with the quad right now.

TS: What do you think about all of that?

KS: Oh my god, it's fabulous. It's just—I cannot believe the transformation; it's going to be wonderful. Not only that, but this university has changed so much since I graduated here. I mean, the bones were here, Jackson Library was here, but this university has grown and has become such a beautiful campus since I graduated here. And just even walking around here, there's such an identity and there's such a spirit because there was not an identity—

TS: No?

KS: —in the seventies. Everybody left campus on the weekends. Not only that, but—I mean, I don't know about enrollment, but a lot of the girls that I was in the dorm with, after their sophomore year they transferred to Carolina [UNC].

TS: Why?

KS: Because they didn't get in as freshmen, so they came here and then transferred. A lot of people left after the first two years.

TS: So it was a conduit to a different school?

KS: Yes, a means to another end.

TS: Okay.

KS: I stayed here; I lived in the dorm all four years. I had no choice. I mean, if I'm getting a free ride if I stay in the dorms, there was never, ever, not even a mention of me moving into an apartment or anything.

TS: Because it was paid for if you were in the dorms.

KS: Exactly, exactly.

TS: In other ways, it wouldn't have been.

KS: Right.

TS: I see.

KS: And now, looking back, that's the reason I stayed in the dorms. It would have been the smartest thing anyhow because everything was so close—close by.

TS: What did you think about not being close to your—the college that was in your—near your home town and the boyfriend that you had and—

KS: Well, I went home a lot. I didn't have a car my first year. I would hitch a ride with a girl from Washington. [chuckles] It's a wonder we all weren't killed. She had a car. She parked it off campus. Her name was Joan. And we would—She had, like, a midsize, old model Ford, I believe. And sometimes there would be eight girls and luggage in that car, and we would drive three and half hours to Washington. We'd all get in the car, coming back, and—

TS: She'd drop off people on the way or something?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

KS: Yeah, and my—I mean, I was a little afraid to ride that crowded, but evidently my mother was terrified because my sophomore year I got a car. And once again, she scraped and scrimped and bought me a—an old Dodge Dart that was, ironically, army green.
[chuckles]

TS: Was it?

KS: It looked like the MP [Military Police] cars when I joined the army. Because she wanted me to be safe.

TS: Okay.

KS: And so, I had a car my sophomore year. And then I needed one for my junior year for nursing school, but I got it a year early.

TS: Yeah?

KS: And I look back and I think, "That woman, she did so much for me."

TS: Yeah. So tell me the story about why it was good that she kept you away from your boyfriend and the—

KS: Oh, okay. Well, the boyfriend. Herbie and I dated from my freshman year of high school, and we got engaged, maybe, my sophomore year in college. And we got engaged my sophomore year in college—

TS: Here, let me stop for just a second.

KS: Okay.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Sorry about that; we had a little interruption. Okay, well they got the chairs they wanted.

KS: Yeah. I guess we got engaged maybe my sophomore year in college. That was probably the only contention between my mother and I, because she thought—I mean, she liked him, but she didn't think that he and I were made for each other. She wanted me to see the world. She didn't want me to go right out and graduate from college and get married and settle in Washington. And she—Because she really did—She had—To back up a little bit, when she left Washington, North Carolina, and went to D.C., she worked there in a civil service job. But then she asked for overseas assignments. She lived a year in Tunisia.

TS: Wow.

KS: So she was able to travel the North African area. Then she worked in Korea; She lived in Korea for a year. So of course, she was able to see a lot of the Orient. So she had sand in her shoes, and she wanted for me to be able to see the world.

TS: I see where this worldview is coming in.

KS: Yeah, yeah, it's a thing. And so, but I was hell-bent on getting married.

TS: Okay.

KS: Because I thought I was in love. And so, we were engaged. I had already planned on moving back to Washington. I already had a job at the local hospital; Beaufort County Hospital. I tell my nursing students I got a sign-on bonus of two hundred dollars. That was big—big bucks. Wouldn't you know, the weekend before my final exams, my final semester in nursing school, he broke the engagement. Oh my God, I was heartbroken.

TS: Just before your final exams?

KS: My world had ended. Now, interestingly enough, those final—that final semester I made a 4.0, don't know how, because I didn't crack a book for any of the exams. And so here, my best-laid plans; I thought I had my life planned out; up in smoke. And I'm sure that behind my back, she was praying and looking up saying, "Thank you, Lord." But she never—

TS: Never said a word?

KS: Never said a word. She was probably much wiser as a mother than I have been. So I went back to Beaufort County after I graduated and worked for that year, because I had that two-hundred-dollar sign-on bonus. But in the meantime, all those little suggestions that she had made along the way, I'm like, "Well, why don't I want to go see the world?" I knew I had to get out of town. It was a—I mean we—everybody in town knew that we were engaged and everybody knew that—

TS: Small town talk and everything.

KS: —we had broken—that he had broken up with me, he had jilted me, and he immediately started dating the wife of one of his best friends that we used to double date with. So it was nasty.

TS: Oh my, okay.

KS: It was nasty. And so—I didn't realize at that time what a favor he had done to me, but, nevertheless, I went back to the town, had a—lived at home, had a miserable year; loved working. I liked my job, but I knew I had to get out of town. Started looking at different—Now, this was long before the Internet, so you would look in magazines and advertisements and type things, and I thought, "Well, wait a minute, if I'm going to move out of town, why don't I consider the military?"

So I called the army recruiter and he came down to see me. He came to my house and told me all about it. Well, I had also called the air force recruiter, and that office was in Greenville, and I had—I think Captain Cox was his name, and he was supposed to see

me at one o'clock in the afternoon. I'd gone to Greenville that morning and talked to the air force recruiter, who wanted to sign me up just like that.

TS: The air force or the army one?

KS: The air—I went to the air force in the morning.

TS: First? Okay.

KS: Yeah, who wanted to sign me up. Well, Captain Cox came and told me about the Army Nurse Corps, and whatnot, and—okay, let's just put a pause on that because I've got to back up.

TS: Okay.

KS: I graduated from nursing school heartbroken; cried the whole weekend. In the meantime, my best friend, Betty, had talked me into going to Europe as soon as I graduated. And I'm like, "No, no, no, we can't afford it.

My mother's said, "You're going to Europe. You're going with Betty and Karen." Betty—Karen was a friend of Betty's from school.

TS: Okay.

KS: But Betty talked me into going. So the three of us got—we flew Icelandair, which was the cheapest way to get to Europe, had a train pass, a Eurail pass, or student rail pass, and spent six—six weeks. Now, the thing about two's company, three's a crowd? Karen and I did not get along at all; just an immediate dislike for each other.

TS: Had you known her before?

KS: No.

TS: Okay.

KS: And Betty took Karen's side because they had been closer during college and everything; Betty was my childhood friend; still is. And so, after about two weeks of traveling with them I left one morning; got on a train by myself and traveled all through Italy and France, by myself. My mother had said, "Well, Kathy, if you don't like what they're doing, just leave and you'll meet people along the way."

TS: Oh, she was fine with it?

KS: And I remember thinking, "That is the stupidest thing I have ever heard. I will never do anything like that." Well, she knew me better than I knew myself, because I was so miserable with the three of them, and they really treated me ugly. I finally said, "That's it,

I've had enough of this s—, and I'm outta here.” And that was a turning point in my life, because I realized I really can do whatever I want to do. And got on a train from France to Rome, got off at the Rome train station, and men really do prey on tourists there. This one man wanted to take me and show me Rome and these two sisters started watching me.

TS: Sisters, as in nuns?

KS: Travelers. No, no, no, not sisters.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Just regular sisters?

KS: Just two sisters about my age, and they, kind of, came over and they said, “You need to stay with us.” So we actually—they were hitchhiking. At least I had a train pass. We—We sightseed [sic] Rome together. Then I took the train and we went to Florence and they met me at the train station. They hitched. And then we did—

TS: And then you met up?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: —Rome, Florence, Venice; —

TS: Do you remember their names?

KS: [Cincy, or something – KS added later] like that. I probably have it written down somewhere.

TS: Yeah?

KS: But the funny—They were Canadians, and we just had a ball. And they were—I mean, they were—I had more money. This was the only time that I felt like I had more money than somebody else, because I was always the one that didn't have money in my pocket. But we walked by stores and they'd say, “Look!” In the window they'd see some like Fabergé perfume, which—Tigress perfume and all these old perfumes. And I never thought anything about it until the very last night. I met them—They had gone back to France. I don't know where I went in the meantime, but they'd gone back to France. One of them had been studying there for a year and the sister had come over, and that's why they were hitchhiking.

TS: I see, okay.

KS: Come to find out their father was the—like, the CEO for Fabergé Canada; [laughs] shock of my life. We did not keep up with each other. I wish we had.

TS: Yeah.

KS: Because we really did have a good time. But nevertheless, my time in Europe came to a close. I made it back to Luxembourg where the plane was going to take off; got on the plane. My college roommate, who lived—who was working in New York City, met me at the airport, and I happened to see Betty and Karen.

TS: I was just going to say, did you run back into them ever on the—

KS: I saw. I didn't even speak to them. I made sure that they didn't see me. And it was several years before Betty and I resolved that. I didn't speak to her for years. And her mother knew why I had left, because her mother and my mother—we were neighbors. My mother went out of town, so she had told Betty's mother to go over and get the mail and read the postcards that I was sending home, and I had written how I was leaving because they were being so ugly to me. [chuckles] But, I mean, there were years that we didn't speak.

TS: Yeah.

KS: And we are best of friends now, in my home town. She's been in Washington the whole time. I've been everywhere but Washington, North Carolina. And even these days she'll say, "Let's go to so-and-so."

And I'm like, "I'm not traveling with you anywhere." And she still says that she wasn't being mean to me. And I still say, "Yes, you were." But we've—We can talk about it now. But that did get sand in my shoes.

TS: Okay

KS: And when I came home—I came home, maybe, July fourth or so; July—the middle of July. No, it wasn't July fourth. It was—Because I was in Paris on July fourth. Middle of July, took my nursing boards, and that's when I called the army recruiter.

TS: Okay.

KS: As soon as I got home from Europe.

TS: Well, I'm going to back you up, before we go into the army, a little bit.

KS: Okay. Alright.

TS: Because I want to talk a little bit more about UNCG and the nurses training you had there.

KS: Okay. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

TS: So you had—

KS: I'm so glad you're keeping me on track.

TS: No, you're doing—it's great. There's no way I was going to stop it. Have you ever seen Karen again from the—the Betty and Karen?

KS: Yeah, we were—we were both bridesmaids in her wedding.

TS: In Betty's wedding?

KS: Yes. And it was, "Hello."
"Hello." I don't even know where she is now. [both laugh]

TS: So you're living on campus and it's in the early—well, what is it, the early seventies?

KS: Yeah, it was '71 to '75.

TS: Okay. Do you remember the culture of the university at that time?

KS: Like I said, it was a suitcase college.

TS: Okay.

KS: There really wasn't a sense of identity for UNCG.

TS: Okay.

KS: Sadly enough. There—There were people that were real involved in campus life, but most of us weren't, in terms of, like, a university-centric life. Of course, when I got in nursing school we were very busy and I was certainly involved with the nursing school. I loved my education that I got. It was so the right decision to make, even though it was almost by—I disqualified UNC; disqualified Duke; East Carolina wasn't—

TS: Right.

KS: But—

TS: Somehow you ended up here.

KS: It was absolutely the perfect place. Our dean, Dean [Eloise R.] Lewis, is still one of the most unbelievable people that I've ever—she made every student feel like we were her only student, but I knew that she treated everybody like that. There was a sense of identity within the school, and appreciation. My advisor from the time I was a freshman—because I had declared nursing as a major—from the time I was a freshman until I graduated Miss Anne Landon was my advisor. And she was just bigger than life. She was very quiet, kind of a heavyset lady. Very quiet and very sweet, but when she talked everybody listened. And Dean Lewis had been in the army, years and years before.

TS: Did she every talk about it?

KS: Not that I—I found out afterwards.

TS: I see.

KS: No, but she just—everybody wanted to be like her.

TS: She was a great role model?

KS: Absolutely. It was a great nursing education. I really—I appreciated it in the rearview mirror.

TS: Not necessarily at the time?

KS: Right. Ugliest student nursing uniforms in the entire nation.

TS: Why?

KS: And had I known what they looked like when I applied to UNCG, I wouldn't have come here. They were gold and they had a yellow pinafore, but you didn't wear the yellow pinafore unless you were in the hospital.

TS: What's a pinafore?

KS: It was like an apron, it buttoned on the shoulders, and I do not have one of those. I got rid of those as soon as I could. The worst part—The uniform would have been okay. The worst part was that we didn't get to wear those white hose, which was—One of the reasons I went in to nursing is I liked those white hose. We wore brown tie-up oxfords, not even the white nursing shoes that everybody wanted to wear. So I had—As a college junior I had to buy Hush Puppies, which, trust me, they were not in style then. So I wore brown hush puppies.

TS: The tone of your voice right now [both laugh] carries from that time, I think.

KS: Absolutely.

TS: If someone's reading this transcript I want them to know the tone that you have about the Hush Puppies.

KS: There was no doubt that I did not love that uniform.

TS: Now, somebody told me about the hat too.

KS: The hat as well; I was going to that.

TS: Oh, okay.

KS: The hat was a miniature Paul Revere hat; a tri-cornered hat. It was white with gold in the corners.

TS: Okay.

KS: And we wore it right on the very top of our head, which—I do not have a flat head, which meant the hat was always going one way or the other. Now, we didn't wear the hat till we graduated, so we were glad to get the cap, but we didn't—we just didn't like wearing it.
So I went to work in eastern North Carolina where there were no UNCG graduates, so I took that cap and I wore it on the back of my head like most nurses wore their caps. Everybody liked it then. At the time, I was a light redhead so that gold actually was about the color of my hair. And so, when I wore it on the back of my head it was okay, but Dean Lewis would have had a fit had she known the way I was wearing that nursing cap.

TS: So when you went to your job you had to wear the uniform of where you graduated from?

KS: No, just the cap.

TS: Oh, you wear the cap from where you—

KS: From where you graduated.

TS: I never knew that.

KS: Every school had their own cap, and UNCG's was quite unlike everybody else's. But once I put it on the back of my head it was okay.

TS: But until then—

[speaking simultaneously]

KS: But wearing it on the top—

TS: —until you got off campus. [laughs]

KS: Exactly.

TS: I see.

KS: Exactly; out of the Greensboro area.

TS: Okay. So what got you into the nursing program then? When did you—You said you didn't really decide till later on that that was what you wanted to do.

KS: Well, I—I knew I wanted to be a nurse by the time I came to UNCG.

TS: Okay.

KS: So I declared nursing as a major. I don't remember whether you had to be admitted in to the program like—

TS: The nursing program?

KS: —like you do now. But I just—I started taking the preparatory classes for that as a freshman.

TS: I see.

KS: And that was quite interesting. All my classes I did fine in, but when I had to take Modern European history, I nearly flunked that course. Luckily, UNCG allowed you to take one course on a pass/fail basis and that one was one I chose, and this way before FERPA [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act]. They post the grades or they would—if you wanted to send a self-addressed postcard—stamped postcard, to the instructor he would mail you what you made on it, and I'll never forget getting that postcard that just had a 'P' on it. His name was, I think, Dr. Booler, and I nearly flunked that course.

TS: But you didn't.

KS: I didn't. I pulled through. And that was really the only course that I had trouble with. And it was because I had anticipated what he was going to ask for the midterm, in terms of an essay, and he didn't ask that question. So I had—

TS: That would make it troublesome.

KS: Yes, it was. It was quite troublesome [both chuckle]. So I took one introductory nursing course my sophomore year and then junior and seniors years was all nursing. My best friend in nursing school ended up being my maid of honor at my wedding, and she married one of my husband's roommates; one of the groomsmen.

TS: Small world there, yeah.

KS: Yeah, small world.

TS: Now, is there anything else you remember about—on campus here, like, I know in the sixties they said they had like a hippie—hippie hill over by—on Tate Street or something. Did they still have that when you were here?

KS: Oh, Tate Street was—that was pretty ultra-bohemian. Yeah, it's where the hippies hung out. I was here the night that we had the first streaker—

TS: Oh!

KS: —on UNCG. And every—It went through the dorms that they were going to streak. This must have been 1974. I was studying for my pediatrics exam, and they said they were going to streak. And so—

TS: Did they say where?

KS: —we all went outside. Yeah, right in front of—on the main drag. I can't remember what the name of the buildings were right—You know the T where Long Dorm is? Anyhow, they were going to streak right out there. So we were all out there watching.

TS: You're all ready for it.

KS: And sure enough, there was one female and several males that went running naked through there. Well, the university police—

TS: Had heard about it, too, apparently.

KS: Yeah, and got the female. And put her in the cop car, and people got so mad they started beating on the car. I don't think they turned it over, but they pretty much trashed it. That was my closest involvement with any civil disobedience that there was. I didn't—wouldn't have dared; I was a goody two-shoes. I wouldn't have dared jumped on that car, or anything. But I certainly sat there and watched.

TS: You watched it?

KS: Yeah.

TS: You didn't prevent them from doing it?

KS: Yeah, yeah, and I think it's because they were mad that those guys had grabbed the female. In hindsight they were probably doing it for her own safety, but they grabbed her and put her in the car.

TS: You know what happened to her?

KS: No, no. The thrill was gone, I was on to something else.

TS: So you walked away?

KS: I had to go back and study for my peds exam. [both chuckle]

TS: What other kind of things were happening in the—Well, in the time you were in there, we had Kent State happen.

[The Kent State incident involved the shooting of unarmed college students by the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970. Four students were killed and nine others wounded.]

KS: Yeah, we had Kent State. We actually had—I'm trying to think—Vietnam. I'm trying to remember when Vietnam—when they—they called a halt to—What was that, '73?

TS: Seventy-two, I think. Seventy-one or '72 was Kent State.

KS: I think it might have been '71. Some—Something puts me in one of my friend's dorm rooms and hearing that they were going to call a halt to it.

TS: You mean to end Vietnam?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Because that—the real end didn't come till '75, I think, but Nixon was involved with trying to get it to stop.

KS: Right. There was something, yeah.

TS: But what did—

KS: I do remember the Kent State. I don't remember a lot of demonstrations or anything here.

TS: Not here?

KS: No.

TS: Did they have any sit-ins or anything like that?

KS: They could have, but I kind of stayed in the straight and narrow.

TS: Right, you said you were a goody two-shoes.

KS: I didn't get social—I wasn't socially connected. I mean, in terms of social issues. I was just oblivious. Me and my life, that's all that mattered.

TS: That's not quite so unusual.

KS: No, it's not.

TS: That's pretty common.

KS: Particularly as a professor now, when I ask my students about current events of the week and they're like, "Huh?"

TS: It's the same.

KS: Yes.

TS: But did you have a particular—You knew the war was going on. Did you have any feelings about it at all?

KS: Not really. I remember—I remember very little about it.

TS: Did you have any friends that got drafted?

KS: There was one guy that was one year ahead of me in high school, and I remember him going. There were a few that were killed in action from my home town. My uncle's housekeeper's husband was killed, and I remember that being an incredibly sad time. And then a member—one of my high school—she was a year behind me; her brother was killed in Vietnam. But it was—I really hadn't—I didn't have that military focus at that time.

TS: Right, right. Well, is there anything—

KS: I do remember how badly the returning veterans were treated.

TS: You do?

KS: Yes.

TS: Anything—

KS: No, I just remember hearing about it.

TS: People talking about it.

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: Did you—So you had a good experience here.

KS: Wonderful experience.

TS: Anything that you want to say in particular? Any memorable event or—

KS: Yeah. At graduation, that was the weekend that I had broken my engagement. I mean, I didn't break it, he broke it. That was the weekend I got dumped, let me make it—The weekend after I got dumped.

TS: Okay.

KS: My best friend's family came down from New Jersey, my mother came up, we stayed in a hotel; that was a big deal. We went to the university graduation out at the [Greensboro] Coliseum, and that was okay, but then we had our pinning ceremony over here in the Elliot University Center. And I remember the dean just speaking to us, and I got the Wesley Long Scholarship at graduation, and I remember just being—having been so sad and distraught for about a week. I remember I got my nursing pin. I had—I had a green dress on, I got my nursing pin, I got my picture taken with the dean, and I thought, "It's going to be okay. I'm going to hold my head up."

TS: So you started feeling a little better?

KS: Yeah, yeah.

TS: And then—so you—so—

KS: About a week later is when we went to Europe—when I went to Europe.

TS: Okay, then we had that and then you came back.

KS: And that's when I realized I wanted to see the world.

TS: Okay.

KS: So I went and saw the army recruiter.

TS: But did you think of any—Did you feel like you had any other options to see the world, like the Peace Corps or other things like that?

KS: Never even thought of anything. And I think—And I really went to see the air force just to, kind of, bounce—not to put all my eggs in one basket. But I’m not sure I was ever really truly interested in the air force because my dad had been in the army. Even though I’d never really experienced any military life other than going to the PX to buy—and that was down at Cherry Point, which was [U.S.] Marines. But I think because he had been army I just naturally went that way.

TS: To have that same connection that your father had?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Interesting.

KS: Yeah, and so I—I called the recruiter. I was a little off put by him when he came that day, because he left a lot of information, and I said that that morning I’d gone to the air force recruiter. They wanted to start signing me up right away. He didn’t. He said, “I want to leave this stuff. I want you to read over it. I want you to think about it.”

And I remember kind of putting my nose up, thinking, “Well, you know the air force wants me. He doesn’t even want me.” I had already taken my boards, and of course, this was long before anything was automated. So it took about—maybe six or eight weeks to get board results.

TS: To show that you passed?

KS: And he actually called me the day before. And I don’t know how he did this, but he called me the day before I got my board results in the mail, and he said, “I want you in the army. Are you still thinking about it?”

And I’m like, “Yeah! Finally you realize my worth.” I think he had seen the board scores; I don’t know how, but—

TS: You don’t think that maybe it might have had something to do with he had met his quota at the time, originally, and then maybe later he needed to, like, tap into his pipeline?

KS: It could—And I didn’t even think about that. It could have been; it could very well have been. But I immediately started the application process, and that was, like, in September. And I didn’t hear until the spring, and I remember thinking, “What’s taking so long?” but it was the way the accession boards were meeting. I realize now that was the end of the fiscal year, so they had to start the new fiscal year, and I heard in the spring, and I

went—It was kind of neat because I finished out my year at Beaufort so I wouldn't have to pay that two hundred dollar—

TS: Right.

KS: —sign-on bonus. Oh by the way, when I first started working as a graduate nurse—this was before I had my boards—that I passed my boards—I was making \$3.96 an hour. And then when I passed boards it went to \$4.02 an hour. And I remember my first paycheck. I got it on a Friday afternoon, and the first thing I did was go to the fish market there in town and bought shrimp and went home and fixed my mother a shrimp dinner. Even then shrimp were expensive, and went home and fixed my mother a shrimp dinner, and I was so proud of that, and I thought, “I have made some money, and now it's time to pay her back.” And I'm sure she was proud too.

TS: Oh that's real sweet too.

KS: But—So I went in in '76, but I think I had to—June twenty-eighth I went up to Raleigh and took my oath and got my commission. I had to report to Fort Sam [Houston] the seventh of July. Well, that July fourth weekend—I think the fourth landed on a Sunday—that was the bicentennial.

TS: I was just thinking—I was just thinking that's the bicentennial.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: It was the bicentennial, and our church had this magnificent musical service, all patriotic and everything, and I considered that my send-off. [chuckles]

TS: Sure, why not?

KS: It was the celebration of the bicentennial, but what better way, you know?

TS: Because that was real big deal in small communities everywhere.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: It was a huge—All the church—The church bells all over the nation rang and everything, and to think that I was getting ready to join the army. It was quite a—a perfect send-off.

TS: Yes, I guess it was. When you decided to join—

KS: Yes.

TS: —what kind of sense did you have about how long you thought maybe you might stick it out in the—

KS: Well, I knew I'd have to go in for three years.

TS: Okay.

KS: It's funny because I never looked back.

TS: No?

KS: Never looked back; never thought about whether I would just do my initial obligation or what. I just—

TS: Just went in it with both feet?

KS: Just went in with both feet and never, ever looked back.

TS: Well, tell—

KS: Years later people would say, "How long are you going to stay in?"
I'm like, "When I decide what I want to do when I grow up I'll get out." [both chuckle] That was my pat answer.

TS: Well, now, you had been—you'd been away from home before, so you went to—

KS: Fort Sam.

TS: Fort Sam.

KS: Fort Sam, San Antonio, Texas.

TS: So how was the military culture as you were, like, put into it initially? What was that like?

KS: Well, I remember flying in and I had flown, I think, once before, and that was—No, a couple of times, and overseas, but I was still pretty much a novice in this traveling thing. Flew to Fort—to San Antonio. They told us where to go and report in at the airport so that they would take you to Fort Sam, and I was clueless. I just did whatever they told me to do.

TS: And how old were you at this time? Like twenty-two?

KS: Twenty-two.

TS: Okay.

KS: Twenty-two, let me think. Seventy-six; yeah, twenty-two. No! I was twenty—wait a minute—'76—yeah, yeah, I was twenty-two. And I can't add or subtract.

TS: Neither can I, so that's why I had to ask. [laughs]

KS: I remember going and signing in to some building and then they said, "Go over there and get your keys," and I really had a mindset that I was going into a place like Gomer Pyle; a room with cots and—I mean bunk beds and everything. Well, they sent me to this room and it was like a—a suite. It was a bedroom with a little table and a shared kitchen and a private bath, and I'm like, "Wow, this is pretty good."

TS: Was it like a BOQ [Bachelor Officer Quarters]?

KS: It was a—It was a BOQ. But at the time I didn't even know what BOQ stood for. [laughs]

TS: So you're thinking more like the—what the enlisted had to go and—

KS: Exactly.

TS: —and we're not even understanding the difference between the officers and the enlisted.

KS: No. Did not understand that at all, and so—and I remember thinking, "Wow, this basic training isn't so bad." I mean, we wore heels the whole time.

TS: Oh, you did?

KS: We weren't in boots except for about three days when we went out to Camp Bullis, which is a local, bivouac area; local training area. But we were in heels and stockings the rest of the time. Never had to run—

TS: No?

KS: —while I was in basic, because see, I thought that I was—have to start running and everything. Never did it a single time.

TS: Well, some others nurses had told me that with—they were mostly acclimating the nurses to, like, military terminology and things like that.

KS: Exactly.

TS: How to salute and customs.

KS: They said you already know how to be a nurse, but you need to learn how to be an army nurse, so it was ranks, platoon, company, and even that, they didn't spend much time on because we were going to be in a hospital environment. We were—Nurses have always—Well, nurses were considered different than the rest of the army back in the seventies. During that time—which we've made a valiant—as the nurse corps—valiant effort to go back to being soldiers as well as nurses. But when I first came in we were kind of set apart.

TS: You're more nurses first?

KS: Yes.

TS: I have had some women tell me that they really didn't feel like part of the army until they walked out of the hospital and had to put their hat on—

KS: Yeah.

TS: —on the military base, but in the hospital it didn't seem so much to them at the time that it was military.

KS: Right.

TS: It was just a job as a nurse.

KS: Yeah, and I feel that way—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did that change over time?

KS: Oh absolutely, it changed over time, and of course it culminated when I was working at the Pentagon where I wasn't doing any nursing; it was all—I was on the Department of the Army staff and I held my own with all the other different corps, in terms of policy and planning and that type of thing.

TS: That's all army?

KS: That's all army, yeah.

TS: What—Tell me a little bit about, then, your first assignment. Where were you sent to after basic that you—

KS: Well, the—

TS: Did you have a choice?

KS: —the recruiter—Yeah, I did have a choice. I got to put three things down and of course the recruiter has all of these beautiful glossy books about where you can ask to go to. Well, Little Miss I'm-going-to-be-the-best-thing-since-the-army-was-invented, I said, "Well, I have to go Walter Reed [Army Medical Center]." I mean, that's the flagship hospital. And then I got there, and then I'm like, "Oh, I could just kill my recruiter."

Well, guess who showed up about a month later? He was on the ward right above me, because he was a nurse recruiter, and I thought, "Well, you deserve that," because it was hard work. It was an ultra-bureaucratic organization, particularly when you're at the very bottom.

When I first got to Walter Reed I had an apartment. I had gone up before I went to basic and secured an apartment off post. And I—My mother met me—My mother and my cousins met me at the airport, because I had flown to San Antonio. See, I didn't—I didn't even know who to ask. If I had known, I would have driven there, where I'd had a car.

TS: I see.

KS: But I—Clueless; flew into D.C. that night, and my cousins and my mother met me. They had already gotten my household goods—accepted my household goods in—in the apartment. So I got everything squared away that weekend. They left to go back to North Carolina and I went and signed in to the hospital. And I remember going in—and they had practiced that you have to go in and salute the chief nurse—and went in and they—the chief nurse said, "Now, Lieutenant Lynch, I want you to cherish your days on Ward Thirty-Six because you'll never see anything else again like it."

Well, that was for true. I was assigned to Ward Thirty-Six; it was an orthopedics and neurosurgery unit, enlisted; they divided up the enlisted and the officer—

TS: Wards?

KS: —units; wards. It was fifty beds all in one room; an open bay. Well, forty in one room and then ten on the porch, and that was the hardest work I've ever done. I learned fast to set priorities.

TS: Yeah?

KS: I figured if all the airways were open by the time I left work, then it had been a good night.

TS: You were in charge of all fifty?

KS: Well, I was usually one of two nurses, one gave medicines and one did everything else, and it was an orthopedics unit so a lot of the guys stayed there for a long, long time. They were either in traction or just waiting to heal. Well, the good old GI can always find some kind of trouble to get into when they're not feeling bad. And we had—we had people going out in the middle of Georgia Avenue, going down to the bars and coming back drunk and all sorts of things. But it was a lot of fun; it was a lot of fun.

TS: Yeah. What kind of things did you learn that surprised you?

KS: This sounds kind of funny, but remember I grew up with—without a dad and it was just my mother and I. I was a little leery of the male gender and—and a little self-conscious—just don't feel good in my own skin around men—and here I have forty men yakking all day long; "LT, come here! LT!" And it was a lot of teasing.

Well, I learned to get a real thick skin and to give it back, and I—then I realized how soldiers do appreciate their nurses. I mean, I wasn't a beauty queen by any stretch of the imagination, but it didn't matter; they just loved their nurses, you know? And that teasing. I got over the teasing when I—when my skin thickened up, and that was a matter of survival more than anything.

TS: Yeah?

KS: There was one night they were all just cutting up and I—there was some big fight that was going to come up.

TS: Like on the TV or something?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

KS: And these days it—this kind of ward would never exist. Forty beds, five feet in between—not even five feet in between each bed. And we would have the old metal Balkan frames that the traction would hang from? We would have extension cords over those metal frames with little portable TVs, and it was just—

TS: A little fire code hazard. [chuckles]

KS: Oh my God, it's a wonder we all didn't get electrocuted. And I remember one night they were just really cutting up something, and I hollered from one end of the floor; I said, "If y'all don't shut up right now, I'm turning every television off. You're not going to watch the fight tonight," Well, they straightened up for a little while. Not only were they teasing me because I was a female but they always teased me about my southern accent.

TS: Oh sure, "y'all" probably got—

KS: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Fast forward to about 1995, one of the patients that was on that floor the entire time that I was on that floor ended up being a serg—one of the command sergeant majors in the Army Medical Department; his femur finally healed. He had broken his femur in a jump accident. And we were out at Fort Riley [Kansas] and we were having a hospital run, and I hated to run. I always hated to run. Don't you know, that Roy was visiting that day. His name was Roy Needham; Command Sergeant Major Roy Needham. And he started teasing me immediately and started telling everybody that I had been his nurse. And I was in a bad mood because I don't like running. I said, "I should have made sure your leg never healed so you couldn't run." [both chuckle] But it was kind of nice to see that.

TS: Sure; jovial.

KS: And I mean, he was a big deal, because he was like—

TS: Command sergeant major, sure.

KS: He was command sergeant major of, like, the whole medical command, and he comes up to visit all the soldiers at Fort Riley and comes to find out their assistant chief nurse had been his lieutenant nurse, and so it was—it was kind of fun.

TS: Oh, sure, they had a lot of fun on both sides of that.

KS: But they really had a good time when I turned around and said, "I should have done something that your leg never healed. I wouldn't have to be out here running with you." Probably with a "dammit" mixed in. [both chuckle]

But I only stayed on that floor from September until December. I guess—

TS: Like three months?

KS: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

KS: I guess I did a good job because they chose me to go be one of the nurses on the VIP ward—

TS: Oh yeah?

KS: —at Walter Reed. The supervisor at the time, who was over several different sections of the hospital, told me that [President James Earl "Jimmy"] Carter was coming into office and that they needed somebody that spoke his language on the floor, but for whatever reason, I got selected—I got interviewed and got selected to go to work on the VIP suite.

TS: They wanted a southerner? [laughs]

KS: Yeah. Well, that's what he said, but I don't know what—I don't think that was the real reason, because he never showed up. He went to navy; he went to Bethesda.

TS: Oh, that's right, because he had been in the navy.

KS: Yes.

TS: That's right.

KS: But I spent a year on that floor, and it was—it was really interesting. I mean, I got to take care of three-, four-, five-star generals, and I did take care of [General of the Army] Omar Bradley—

TS: Oh, you did?

KS: —who was our last five-star general.

TS: Sure.

KS: [KS redacted name later] Some of the senators and congressmen—

TS: Do you remember any of them?

KS: —generals. I remember a senator from Mississippi [KS redacted name later], who'd been shot in [Washington] D.C.

TS: Really?

KS: And—

TS: By who?

KS: Some bad guy; I don't know. I think he got robbed or something—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Like he got robbed or something? Okay.

KS: And they brought him to Walter Reed and it was one of the surgeons at Walter Reed that saved his life, from what I was told. And he was on the floor. I didn't like him. He didn't like women.

TS: You mean as a nurse?

KS: Yeah. He liked the male corpsmen. He didn't have one thing to do with any of the female nurses.

TS: No?

KS: But he loved the—the male corpsmen. I—I was working with one, one day, named Pete.

TS: A corpsman?

KS: Yes, and he and I went into his room together at the beginning of the shift.

TS: [KS redacted name later]?

KS: Yeah. First thing he said, "Pete! How are your dogs?" because he had been there before; didn't say anything to me.

TS: Like, "Who's this?" [chuckles]

KS: [KS redacted later]

TS: [KS redacted later]

KS: [KS redacted later]

TS: [KS redacted later]

KS: [KS redacted later]

TS: [KS redacted later]

KS: [KS redacted later]

TS: No?

KS: Who uses twenty towels to get ready to go to someplace? She was over the top.
One day he was a patient on the floor, and they called me in there—and his aide called me in there, and he says, "I feel hot. I've just had my nap and I feel hot." And he said, "I don't know if I have a fever or not."
So I went and got the thermometer and took his temperature, and he said—I said, "Well you don't have any fever." I said, "General Bradley, is there anything that you think would help?"
He said, "Well, lieutenant, do you think some ice cream would help?"

And at that point in time, I was standing over him in the wheelchair, petting his head, and I said, “General Bradley, I think that’s a great idea.” But at the time, I’m having an out-of-body experience, because I’m thinking, “What would my father say if he knew that I was petting the five-star general who was one of the masterminds in the—in World War II?” My daddy served in World War II. But I realized I’m petting his head! He was a very sweet man.

TS: Yeah.

KS: Ms. [Mamie Geneva Doud] Eisenhower used to come in on a regular basis.

TS: How was she?

KS: She was very [KS edited later] fuddy-duddy, but she was a dear, sweet, sweet lady. The first time that I met her, people—the other nurses got me real nervous because—

TS: Was this Mamie?

KS: Mamie.

TS: Okay.

KS: Because they—[Ike had died on Ward Eight – KS edited later].

TS: Was that before you came?

KS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Years before I came. But Mamie would never stay in that suite, because that’s where Ike died; she’d stay in another room. And the other nurses had gotten me all aflutter about when she was coming in because we had, like, almost a notebook full of protocols. Everything had to be pink; we had to have pink Dove soap; we had a pink bathmat; we had a pink this, that, and the other. And I just [assumed – KS changed later] that it was because she was very demanding, because she’d been the first lady. It wasn’t. It was just because she was an eighty-some-odd-year-old lady who had grown up with a silver spoon in her mouth. She was one of the Dowds of Denver, and she thought everybody was treated that way. But they told me—they said, “Don’t ever say ‘okay’ to Ms. Eisenhower. She doesn’t like ‘okay.’”

TS: So of course you said it.

KS: No!

TS: No? [laughs]

KS: No—

TS: I don't mean intentionally.

KS: I said—I said, “Okeedokee,” and I thought, “Oh, God, my military career is just over.”
But she actually just said, “Lieutenant, I just don't know what in the world y'all have to use language like that for when there's a perfectly appropriate term; alright.”

I went, okay, “I'm sorry, Ms. Eisenhower.” [both laugh]

TS: Okay?

KS: One night she said, “Lieutenant Lynch, sit down, and watch *The Waltons* with me.”

And I said, “Ms. Eisenhower, I'm on duty.”

And she said, “What's your job tonight? To take care of me?”

I said, “Yes, ma'm.”

She said, “Sit down.”

I sat down and watched *The Waltons* with her, and I took my shoes off. She had a little sitting room off from the bed. And I took my shoes off. Well, about that time the front door buzzed; it was a locked unit. Well, I thought it was the corpsmen coming back from supper, so I just went running to the door without my shoes on. [chuckles] I opened the door, it was the Surgeon General of the Army, and—because his wife, I think, was—was there. And I think, “Oh, I am dead meat.” He didn't—I don't even think he noticed or he just didn't—

TS: Say anything?

KS: He had—I'm sure that he had much bigger issues in his mind other than whether lieutenant had her shoes on. [laughs]

TS: That's fun.

KS: But it was a fun year, but it was very boring, nursing-wise, because we had everything we needed at our fingertips. None of the patients were really sick.

TS: No?

KS: No. If they were really sick they went to the ICU [Intensive Care Unit].

TS: I see.

KS: But I did get to meet a lot of interesting people. General [Lewis Blaine] Hershey, who I didn't know at the time because I wasn't good in history, he was the father of the selective service. And you know, we weren't supposed to talk about things like that outside, but I'd always told my mother who I was taking care of and she said, “Oh my God, General Hershey!”

He had had a stroke, and he—he also was just a very wonderful man. By the time you get to three stars, it's because you're a really wonderful person. I've seen some

one-stars that have faded along the way, but by the time you get to three it's because you are a great man or woman. And General Hershey's son, who was a retired Marine colonel, came up the back elevator one day. I buzzed him in, and when I went in the room—he had a grocery sack in his arms, but when I went in the room later to check on him, there sat the biggest damn cat you have ever seen in your life. [laughs]

TS: Brought it with him?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: He had snuck General Hershey's cat onto the floor. And I'm like, "Well, what the hell!" I'm not going—The son is a retired full colonel, General Hershey's a four-star, and I'm a lieutenant. I am not saying a word about this cat.

Well, wouldn't you know it, the commander of the hospital—the deputy commander of the hospital decides to make rounds during that time. So here comes General [Baker – KS corrected later]. He came to the floor and so he said, "Let me go see General Hershey."

And I said, "Well, before you go in there I have to tell you something. There's a cat in there." And when little things like that—as a senior officer I wouldn't have thought anything about it, because I'd been known to sneak a dog onto a floor. But as a lieutenant, your first thing is, "I'm going to get in trouble."

TS: Right, for allowing it?

KS: Yeah, "What are they going to do to me?"

TS: Right.

KS: So we went—we went in to see him and [General Baker – KS corrected later], he went in and spoke to General Hershey and right before he left he nodded and said, "Nice cat." [both chuckle] So as we left, I realized I was okay.

I said, "Okay, when I become a general I'm bringing my horse!"

He said, "Don't push it, lieutenant." Of course, needless to say, I was never general nor did I have a horse. But a lot fun times, but it was boring nursing-wise.

TS: Yeah. What, though, did you learn about the, like—You're on a ward where you've got these GIs who have a certain kind of care, and then you're on this ward for VIPs. What did you think about that; the differences?

KS: At first I was kind of put off by the difference. But then I realized that they have to be closeted away, for their—not necessarily for security, but it just—it's such a distraction when you have somebody of a higher rank. It just doesn't work putting them together. Not that they don't want to go down there and visit the GIs, because every one of them were—they still considered themselves a soldier first, and they'd love to go.

In fact, we had one guy—one general, who found out on a bulletin board that they were going to have a trip to the circus while he was a patient there. He wasn't sick; I mean, he was able to get up and about. So he asked if he could go to the circus. So the nurse came back in and said, "Ok, sir, we've arranged for you to have a car."

And he went, "Whoa, I want to go with the guys." So he put on his navy corduroy bathrobe with his GI pajamas and his—what all the other guys went in, and he went with the soldiers.

And I remember thinking, "He's a good guy. He's a good guy." He's also the one that called one of my friends who was working on the floor, and told him that he had—he was in his room, but he was a jokester. He called him and told him that he had snuck down the back elevator and was down at a bar on Georgia Avenue, and that he had lost his wallet and the bar wouldn't let him leave because he owed a tab, and could they please come down and pay for it? Just to see what would happen. And of course it sent this nurse into a total tizzy. He was sitting in his room the whole time.

TS: [chuckles] Did he go down to the bar; the other nurse?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: No, he called them before they went down the elevator. He said, "Ha, ha, ha," soldiers first. They love to tease, they love the camaraderie.

TS: Yeah.

KS: Yeah.

TS: Kathy, you've got, like—we've got thirty years here—

KS: [laughs]

TS: —and it's—this first assignment is really interesting.

KS: It was one of the—I remember thinking, "How do you top this?"

TS: Yeah. Well, you—I'm going to ask you some general questions about—

KS: Okay.

TS: —your—your service, and what—Okay, so you—and you retired as a colonel. So you went as this—a green lieutenant—

KS: Yes.

TS: —to—and then from a—a nurse working in the Pentagon as a colonel. So you experienced a lot of change.

KS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Both probably in the nursing—

KS: In the nursing profession—

TS: In the army.

KS: And the army, and me personally.

TS: Okay.

KS: I grew up.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you got—when you went to Walter Reed, and you’d—because you—just your personality just from talking to you briefly, it seems like you have a—kind of a independent streak.

KS: Yes, yeah.

TS: When you went there, did you think, “Well, I—I’ve had my nurse’s training, I’m—I pretty much know everything there is to know;” that sort of mentality or no?

KS: No. No. I questioned everything.

TS: Did you?

KS: I not only questioned the nursing part in my head, but—every—every nurse does that, but then working, like, on the VIP suite, it was always, “What if I make somebody mad?” I was still kind of cautious, and it took me a while to get used to being comfortable and having the confidence.

TS: Right.

KS: The professional and the personal confidence.

TS: How long did that take, do you think?

KS: Probably a couple of years.

TS: And do you think that you—because a lot of times I—when I’m talking with other women, I find that they’re given a really large responsibility that they don’t necessarily

feel like they can fill those shoes, and then that, kind of, gives them that confidence. Like the person who is mentoring them or putting them in a position, feel that they can really do the job, whereas you're like, "Well, I don't—this—really, you want me to run a whole ward by myself," sort of thing.

KS: I think that is almost the secret to any successful officer—or let me talk nurse right now—or any officer. That's the secret to success, is two things, like you say: Give someone a job that might be just a degree more than what they think they can handle, but the mentoring; and you said mentoring. I've had such wonderful mentors. I always had somebody there to say, "Yes, you can do it, and we're going to be there to help you do it." And I had that all the way through, and that—and I just scream and shout when I'm teaching nursing students now. I said, "If you want to be successful, you go find a mentor. You go find somebody that you think, 'I want to be like you when I grow up.'" It helps.

TS: Do you think it works the other way, too, that sometimes people see something in someone that they're like, "I want to help this person succeed"?

KS: Absolutely, and I think I had some people that—that recognized something in me, and really either rode me hard because of it, or made me feel like I—instilled the confidence in me that I could do it.

TS: Do you want to give me any examples of those people; talk about them?

KS: Yeah, in that first—in that first job, Oswald Ferry was the supervisor that jokingly said they needed somebody to speak Carter's language; Lieutenant Colonel Oswald Ferry. The other one was Colonel Charles Reddy, even though at that point in time we didn't have a lot of daily—

TS: Contact?

KS: Yeah, and Reddy is R-E-D-D-Y. He always made me feel like I was a part of Walter Reed and that I was part of the nurse corps. I worked with him years later, and—just one other anecdote about Walter Reed. Shortly after I got there my mother didn't have my correct phone number. This was long before cell phones or anything. She kept calling my house and calling, but she was calling the wrong number. So she finally calls the chief nurse's office at Walter Reed on a Friday afternoon and says, "I can't find my baby. I don't know where she is."

And so they tracked me down, and Colonel Reddy was the one that got the phone number, and he said, "Well, I'll call you back." These are long-distance phone calls and what not.

And they called down to the unit and the corpsman said, "Well, I just saw her leave about an hour ago; she's fine." So he called my mother back to tell her that.

Years later we were joking about this. He said, “Well, what kind of nurse are you? You don’t even call your mother to let her know where you are.” [both chuckle] So he had never forgotten that.

TS: Yeah. That’s right.

KS: And he actually has been recognized by the entire nurse corps as an ultimate mentor, because they have named the junior leadership conference the [Colonel] Charles [J.] Reddy Leadership Conference. But he was.

Lieutenant Colonel Sheila McCann. She was a Vietnam veteran, and rode me hard. I couldn’t get away with anything.

TS: Where were you at there?

KS: She was my chief nurse when I was at Fort Stewart.

TS: Okay.

KS: I was head nurse of the ER most of that time, and she really took an interest in my whole family. She took an interest in us on a personal basis, and also on a professional basis. She definitely—She rode me hard. It wasn’t fun working for her.

TS: What kind of things would she do?

KS: She was always after me about something, and the ER is a place where nobody’s ever happy. Going into the ER nobody’s ever happy. Leaving the ER—And it was always—and I like to wander around the hospital, and she would get mad if I wasn’t in the ER every waking moment when I was on duty.

TS: What kind of things do you think you learned from her?

KS: I learned what not to do. And that was to have pets, because I was her pet, and I suffered from my peers because of it, who were jealous. Although I do have pets, I just learned to—if I have favorites, I learned to keep it to myself or not make it just as obvious.

TS: To be fair to everyone?

KS: Yeah. Colonel Martha Bell, she lives in Chapel Hill now. She probably did more, unknowingly, to boost my confidence and set me on a path for senior levels than she—She had no idea, and we’ve talked about this in the past few years. I never felt—I never knew where I stood with her, so I would always, kind of, ask her permission before I did something. And I was a mid-level manager at that time; I was in charge of all the clinics and the emergency room at Fort Campbell. And I didn’t even realize what I was doing, but I couldn’t tell whether she liked me or whether she didn’t like me.

TS: So you'd been in about fifteen years or so at this point?

KS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

KS: Yes, this was 1989. She called me in her office one day. She said, "Come to my office at one o'clock," so I went in not knowing what was going on, sat down, and she was fiddling with her printer, and I didn't really know what she was doing, so finally she printed off what she had written about me on my last OER [Officer Evaluation Report], and she said, "Do you know what this is?"

I said, "Well, yeah, I recognize it."

And she said, "Read it out loud."

Well, that really touched something inside and by the time I had read it—it was very glowing remarks—I was crying. I was so uncomfortable reading it out loud. She said, "I don't know what else I can do. You are constantly coming asking permission to do things." She says, "I've written here I have confidence in you; go out and make decisions and quit second-guessing yourself and quit asking for my permission ahead of time."

That really made a difference in the—from—that—'89 or '90 to the end of my career, because then I realized that's what they pay me to do; are make the hard decisions. I remember—I told her that at a—We have an Army Nurse Corps Association, we have conventions every two years, and I told her that back in 2010. I said, "Marty, you remember that day you called me in there?" I mean, it took me a while to even be able to call her by her first name. And it was—We were standing around and I said, "Man, that really did make a difference in my career and in my life." I had no idea how that touched her, but she wrote me a letter later saying how much she appreciated that. So—

TS: Sure, because you don't necessarily get that kind of feedback on your—

KS: Exactly, exactly. And I tried to remember things like that as I supervised and mentored those junior to me.

TS: Was it—What was the hardest part about being a nurse in the army?

KS: I don't know if this was the hardest part, but this is the first thing that comes to mind. As I became more senior, there are reasons why we do things. And when I was a junior nurse it was like, "What in the world? What do they do all day long thinking up these stupid things for us to do?" And as I—And then I'm like, "I can't wait to be a lieutenant colonel; then I won't have to work at all. They just sit back and do nothing," and being able to look at things from two sides. I think as a senior officer, one of the hardest things was to get the junior ones to realize that there is a purpose for everything. And that we're making these decisions for a reason. Not just—

TS: Check it off on a piece of paper.

KS: Exactly, exactly.

TS: But you didn't necessarily realize it as a junior officer?

KS: Exactly.

TS: I see.

KS: It's that transformation; Joni Mitchell, "From Both Sides, Now."

TS: Right.

KS: And to make them—Oh, the other thing is, nursing is nursing, whether it's in the military, whether it's in a private hospital, a non-profit of whatever. Nursing is nursing. And a lot of nurses go through a culture shock when they first start their practice because they're overwhelmed. I was. I was completely overwhelmed. It's like there's not enough hours in the day, or people on this unit, to do what we need to do and to do it well. And a lot of the military nurses would want to just get out. And I would always say, "It's nursing. It's not military nursing. You're going to find that you've got—got it better—" I mean, I was a big recruiter for army nursing, and they'd want to get out after their first assignment, and I would always say, "A thirty-year career, a twenty-year career is not for everybody, but don't make your decisions based on one assignment. Go to at least two assignments so you can see what is the frustrations of nursing and what are the frustrations of the military, because sometimes it's two different things."

TS: What were the frustrations of the army, military, for you?

KS: The frustrations of the army were the PT test, for one. I was never a—a world-class runner. I mean, I had to fight for every point on the PT test.

TS: You didn't have to do anything for a while?

KS: Well, I didn't, and that was the problem. I was not—They really didn't stress the height and weight until I was in for about two years, and I've always been on the heavy side and had to fight for it, so I had to get right quick. And push-ups, I've never been good at them, never—and I said when I retired I would never do another push-up, and I haven't. Now, I do yoga now and when you get into a plank position and then lower yourself into chaturanga, that's a whole lot like a push-up, and I'm like, "We're getting awfully close."

TS: [chuckles] "Let's call it something different so I can do it"?

KS: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

KS: But I much preferred nursing in the military to civilian nursing.

TS: Why?

KS: Well, for one thing, you know what the rules are. You know what the structure is in the military.

TS: In the military?

KS: You know what the structure is, you know what the standards are, and I think in the military everybody has the same shared values. We have a common sense of purpose, and we have standards. In the civilian life there's a lot more latitude, in terms of bad performers, good performers. I used to tell people that the good thing about—in the military, is if you don't like your boss, either you or he are going to leave soon.

TS: Because of the rotation of assignments?

KS: Because of the rotation. Whereas in the civilian sector, you've got the same nurse manager for sometimes twenty, thirty years. The pay's better in the military, but that was never an issue, the pay. It was—It was mainly the standards. I felt like I worked with—Well, for one thing, the Army Nurse Corps was all baccalaureate prepared. And it makes a difference. It makes a difference.

TS: In what way?

KS: In terms of professional nursing practice. Feeling like there's not such a stratification between doctor and nurse. We were all by rank or just the fact that we were all members of the same team. I think—And I think it's that sense of mission; that one purpose. We're all in it for the same thing.

TS: When you—You'd said something about a same sense of values. What kind of values would be different?

KS: Well, we're not just in it for the buck. We're not just in it to see how much money we can make. We—We all make the same thing based on our rank and years of service, that's—and the other thing—so it's more of a professional duty; a responsibility. The army has—has their shared values that you are evaluated against; leadership—I mean, loyalty, duty, responsibility, selfless service, honesty, integrity, personal courage. And they take those very seriously. Not that I'm saying the civilian sector doesn't have the same values, but I think they're more articulated in the military.

TS: Well, some—One thing somebody told me that wasn't a nurse but was in the military—I don't remember what service—said when you have a job to do in the military, you do the job, mission, whatever it is—

KS: Yes.

TS: —and it doesn't matter if the clock strikes five o'clock, you stay and you finish—

KS: That's exactly right.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —even if it's after your shift, or whatever.

KS: Yes.

TS: And in the civilian, it's like, "Well, we'll get that—we'll finish that tomorrow." Even if it's, like, another—

KS: "Well, they're not paying me extra to do this, so why should I have to do it?" There's a commitment that is far-reaching in the military. I miss that. The commitment and the camaraderie, because we knew we were all on the same team.

TS: Yes. Well, tell me about—So you were at quite a few different places over the years. What was your favorite place to be stationed at; favorite assignment?

KS: That's kind of like asking, "Who's my favorite child?" Fort Campbell was—I was there for a long—longer time, but it was probably the most significant. I signed in in May of '90. I had been working as head nurse of a cancer unit, which was very, very rewarding work, but it was hard work. I had been in the hospital all up until this time; till '90. And I said—The assignments officer called and said, "You want to do something different?" He said, "Why don't you go be chief nurse of a field unit; a field hospital?"

I thought, "Oh, that'd be fun. You get to go in the woods, you get to go to the field, you get to go play in the woods and put up tents," and, well, I signed in to the 86th Evac.[uation Hospital] in May of '90, and Iraq invaded Kuwait in August. I had spent a month up in Michigan, as the only female with the team of a hundred guys from Fort Campbell doing an evaluation of a National Guard unit.

TS: Where did you go in Michigan?

KS: Camp Grayling. And that was—I mean, I was clueless, because this was actual field-type stuff, maneuvers, and I was the one—the medical element; my two sergeants and I, whereas everything else was grading the whole operations of the National Guard. So I

was kind of like—I mean, thank God my sergeant was so good; I did rely on the NCOs so heavily.

And then we got home. I took a little bit of vacation. Iraq invaded Kuwait and the next thing I knew we were planning a war, and the 86th was going. Now, a lot of the Vietnam—there was some Vietnam veterans, but we'd gone for what, fourteen—I mean, I'd been in the military for fourteen years and there hadn't been a conflict other than a skirmish here, a skirmish there. And now we're getting ready for what they told us was going to be the war of all wars, and that was a scary thought. And I was chief nurse of the hospital unit. And so, all the planning and everything that went in to that, it was a very significant time. Now, luckily—Or maybe that's why we had to go back. Luckily, it ended up not being anywhere near what we thought; of a magnitude of what we thought it was going to be. But we were busy while we were there. Not with combat casualties, but with everything else that happens.

TS: Lots of injuries and accidents?

KS: Injuries and accidents, and one of my fellow officers in the unit—not a nurse, but somebody I'd worked with—shot himself in the head. So it was quite an emotional time as well.

TS: Self-inflicted?

KS: Yes. I don't think it was an intentional suicide; he was playing with his pistol. And he was playing with the dummy safety on the end of a .45, like that, and his head bobbed, and he was killed. But it was—We were almost having to relearn how to be combat nurses. We had been very complacent for fourteen years and so all at once, now I'm in the military. I'm going to war. And that was—It was quite emotional for my mother, having to send her only daughter off, not knowing if she was coming back. I had to leave two little boys behind. My husband, who was in the military, was not in a unit that was deploying, so all the things that he had always trained and planned for, he didn't get to go. But I was so thankful for that, because at least my kids had one parent, and he was a good dad and mother combined, and they did fine. Children are very resilient.

TS: How old were they then?

KS: They were five and ten. Five—Yeah, five and ten. And I—I mean, we were all in such a shocked state. They really—They did fine.

TS: Well, tell me about—Where did you deploy to?

KS: We went to—I'm trying to think—we ended up in King Khalid Military City, but we—we staged—we were first set up with the 101st Airborne at [the Dhahran International – KS added later] airport that was under construction.

TS: It's in Saudi Arabia?

KS: Yeah, and I'll get you the name of that, I just can't remember it right now.

TS: That's okay.

KS: And so, of course we had to set up our hospitals; a 408-bed hospital. Three hundred—Four—Two hundred under air-controlled canvas; we called it DEPMEDS [deployable medical systems]. And then two hundred beds were going to be minimal care units under canvas; under tentage. Right around—We just got the hospital set up in December, and then they said, "You need to tear it down and move forward." So—

TS: Closer to the border?

KS: Yeah, and so we were up at King Khalid Military City, and a lot of it had to do with the 101st. It went against any sort of [military doctrine – KS clarified later] to move like that, but we did it anyhow. And you know the war was over very quickly.

TS: Well, what was it like? Describe what it was like over there for people who wonder how it was.

KS: Very sandy. [laughs]

TS: Well, you had sand in your shoes for a long time.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: I have—Yeah, I got more sand than I ever wanted to. In fact, I never really cared about lying on the beach ever since.

TS: No?

KS: It was just too much sand. At first we were just scrambling. We just didn't know what—we didn't have the supplies we needed. We, of course, had no creature comforts. We got very creative.

TS: So what were your living conditions like?

KS: We were living in tents.

TS: How many people in the tent?

KS: Twenty to a tent.

TS: And you, too, for the officers as well?

KS: Yeah, and we had—I was the chief nurse and then there was a lieutenant colonel that was the commander of the hospital. However, during the war, when they're mobilized, a senior physician comes in and becomes the commander. And a pre-designated—I was a major at the time—a pre-designated lieutenant colonel comes to be the chief nurse.

Well, it was very frustrating for me because the one that had been designated and who had trained with us for a bit, did not go. And so, they just plucked another one to be the chief nurse, and she was really in over her head. Very frustrating for me, who knew the NCOs, who knew what was going on, but I had to step back out of my role while she was there.

TS: Why did they do that, for the—

KS: That was policy at the time, and it has since, after this—after the Gulf War, they've never done that since. They made a change in the—in the policy that the chief nurse stays the chief nurse.

TS: For unit cohesion and things like that?

KS: Yeah, and for continuity and just a smoother operation. A lot of conflict of loyalties, too—

TS: In what way?

KS: —because people knew me, but yet I was not the boss anymore. It was very frustrating.

Now, that lieutenant colonel commander, I had great bosses through my entire career, except for him. He was hateful. And he was very frustrated, too, because he had had to relinquish his command to the senior surgeon. I got along great with the senior surgeon. This guy was—was a bad—a bad officer; a bad commander; very self-righteous, and very “me first.”

TS: Did that make it more difficult to—

KS: Yeah.

TS: For the whole operation?

KS: Before and then even after we got back.

TS: Yeah?

KS: But the—the cardiac surgeon that came in to become the commander, he—he was good because he knew what a hospital was. He knew the goings-on of a—taking care of patients. This other commander didn't.

TS: Hadn't—Why wouldn't he have known what went on in a hospital?

KS: Because he had been—he was a Medical Service Corps officer and he had spent most of his time in infantry-type units and Special Forces. He had never been assigned to a hospital.

TS: He was more army?

KS: He was more army, yeah.

TS: I see.

KS: And it was a very frustrating time. He—The way we housed our unit were enlisted were in tents, female—we were segregated—company-grade nurses, field-grade nurses—and so I was in the tent with all the field-grade nurses; majors and lieutenant colonels. The company-grade officers called us the Premarin Palace, because we had a whole bunch of fuddy-duddies that just made it hard for everybody.

TS: And what would they do to make it hard?

KS: Well, for instance, we were taking turns working nights, because some people had to work night shifts. And a few, when they worked nights—if we would come in the tent in the daytime, which you had to; I mean, if you had to get away from the hospital there was nowhere to go except your tent. Even just moving the tent flaps, they'd wake up and just get all bitchy about it; a lot of bitchiness and sniping. So finally, I volunteered to work all the nights, because I can sleep in the day. I'm a good sleeper; I can work night shift. And I told them that I would work all of the nights except I would need a day off to do my laundry every once in a while. I also did it because I didn't want to get involved in all of the—the politics of what was going on with this other chief nurse—

TS: During the day?

KS: —who didn't know what she was doing. Yeah, so I kind of closeted myself off working night shift, and so I was the only field-grade officer on at night, and we had a ball. And I told them, I said, “These are the stipulations. If you come in the tent, for lunch or whatnot, speak at a normal voice. Don't whisper, because when I'm sleeping if I can hear you, I can tune it out. But if you're whispering, I'm going to have to come out of my consciousness to hear it.”

TS: Well, that's interesting.

KS: So it worked out. It worked out fine. So I—I tell people I slept through the war, because I worked nights the whole time. [both chuckle]

TS: And this one tragic incident that happened with the one man.

KS: Yes.

TS: What were other kinds of things that you had to treat at the hospital?

KS: We had several really bad car accidents. We had—Or truck—vehicle accidents. There were—There were cars, but a lot of them were big vehicles.

TS: Right.

KS: I remember one guy who came in, the neurosurgeons were working on his head. Colonel Davies, who was the commander, was working on his chest, and the orthopedists were working on his legs—all in one operating room. And about a year or so later—I was also working night shift then—back at Fort Campbell, and Colonel Davies called me and he said, “I just have to tell you who just left my office.” He was stationed at Fort Gordon at the time. This patient had come to see him.

TS: He’d survived?

KS: And yeah, that was just amazing. It’s amazing what can be done in these field hospitals. People see *M*A*S*H* on the television, and it’s a lot like *M*A*S*H*, except now with the technology. I mean, we had a CAT [Computer Assisted Tomography] scan, which was a big deal then. We didn’t have telemedicine; that came, after that.

TS: What kind of medicine?

KS: Telemedicine.

TS: What’s that?

KS: Cameras.

TS: Okay.

KS: From—

TS: Like scoping, things like that?

KS: Yes, yes. [But also treating patients by video remotely. – KS added later]

TS: Okay.

KS: But we did some really good things. We—I was working one night where they brought in—they had done a rescue of some people that were caught behind the Iraqi border, and

they brought them in, and I remember this guy had been captured—or had been in the airplane that—the helicopter or the airplane had gone down. And we got him in. He had suffered—I'm trying to think. I think he had a gunshot wound to his leg. He was Special Forces, and I don't even remember the particulars. But we knew he was coming; we'd gotten radio communications that he was coming, so we were all there waiting. The first thing he wanted was a toothbrush. It wasn't his leg that was badly injured. He wanted a toothbrush.

The doctor that had gone in with the special operations group to bring him out ended up being the commander of the Southeast region, he ended up being a two-star. And I remember when he was a one-star, I talked to him one day; I said, "Do you remember when you brought that POW [prisoner of war] guy?" And I said, "You know what fascinated me more than anything was, here's this guy that's been through hell, but all he wanted was a toothbrush." I remember running to the tent to get him a toothbrush, because I had some extra ones, and toothpaste.

TS: Yeah. That's something you could do, right?

KS: Because he wanted to brush his teeth.

TS: Right. Well, that's interesting. Well, what—Oh, I know what I was going to ask you about this too. There's always this—Thinking of the right word. The issue of preg—women and pregnancy in the military really came to a fever pitch during the—during and after the Gulf War.

KS: Yes.

TS: What is your recollection of that?

KS: Oh, that's funny you should ask, because when I was at the Pentagon I was—I had women's health issues. I was in charge of women health—women's health issues for the Office of the Surgeon General of the Army. And we've had a lot of discussion on this. Women are in the army. They get pregnant. And we did have to send home a fair number of women from the Gulf War and later on. And it happens.

Now, when we were getting ready to go into Iraq, it really—that's when it really reached its fever pitch. Congress was saying all these women—and it's like it's all the woman's fault. They forget that there have to be—that it takes two. And they wanted to punish women for getting pregnant, and that's a real policy issue, because if you're going to punish the goose, you better punish the gander as well.

I was a colonel, I was a staff officer working for the Surgeon General of the Army, and all at once, he decided that the policy was going to be that every female had to have a pregnancy test before they deployed. Well, there's some flaws in that, and I loved General [James Benjamin] Peake. I respected him to the nth degree, but I vehemently disagreed with this policy.

And for several reasons; number one, I said pregnancy testing is not a contraceptive. Unless you're going to test them, and then test them probably a week later,

and then put them in a paddock, or a closed space where no men are around, you're still going to have some pregnancies that crop up. And there was—there was a—a sense that they were going to start punishing women if they were pregnant and had to be sent home because of that. And I said, "It happens." If I'm at home sleeping with my husband the night before I deploy, there's a chance I could get pregnant then, even though I had just had a negative pregnancy test.

And I remember going in to talk to him about that, and I said, "You're really telling me that at my age—middle age,—you're going to make me—if I deploy, you're going to make me take a pregnancy test?"

And he said, "Yes."

And I said, "Well, you're the general and I'm the colonel, but I don't like it."

He said, "Okay, well you've shared that with me."

Yeah, it was a very contentious, contentious—and that's what they did; that's what they did. But when it came to punishing, that's when everybody started—all the women started to scream and said, "Well, then you're going to punish the father of the baby as well as the mother of the baby." Women—That's when women really started taking a more active—we didn't have any women—mothers who were generals at that point. We had some female generals, but not very many. It was almost like right before the wave broke where women really did—that's when [women – KS clarified later] started getting our two-stars, our three-stars, and now we have a four-star general in the army who's a female.

TS: You mean at this time that this discussion's going on?

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: It's right before the wave broke—

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: —where women start to be promoted to the senior level.

KS: Yes. I mean, we had some but not very many. I mean, one of my good friends is a nurse and is the Surgeon General of the Army now, three-stars.

TS: And is she a mother?

KS: She is a mother. She has two children.

TS: What's her name?

KS: Patty Horoho; Patricia [D.] Horoho. It would be wonderful if you could get her. She's so busy right now, but maybe when she retires.

TS: Oh, sure.

KS: Yeah. But, oh yeah, it was—it was like it was all the woman's fault. And why—Women don't need to be going into combat areas; it's all flawed because there's no front line anymore. I was just as likely to get hurt in a hospital unit as one of the field medics who's with the infantry unit because things were [coming in – KS corrected later] from above, down.

TS: Right.

KS: It was an air—an air war more than man-to-man combat. It was a hard time to try to articulate the woman's position on this.

TS: What do you think is the—Do you think this issue of motherhood and pregnancy and women in combat is—is—it's certainly changed since 1976 when you went in.

KS: Oh, absolutely.

TS: Where do you think it's headed?

KS: Hopefully people are coming around and evolving to, "Let's choose the right person for the job. Let's don't get into women are the weaker sex, or they have children and we shouldn't send them into battle because if they die then the children won't have a mother." [It's the] same with men.

TS: But do you think sometimes that conversation is outside the military and within—

KS: Oh, absolutely outside the military.

TS: And then within the military they are choosing the right person for the job?

KS: Yes.

TS: And so, it's this external pressure—political pressure maybe in some ways.

KS: Absolutely; political and non-military social pressure. The same with the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." For the most part, I think most of the people in the military, we don't care if somebody is gay or straight, just do the job. My husband and I argue about this all the time in terms of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." There's a lot of male homophobia. As a woman I don't want to get hit on by another woman but I don't want to get hit on by another man either. Just leave your sexuality at home, we'll all be fine. And I guess it's just—as long as we're different, males and females, there's going to be some of that.

TS: What's the difference that you have with your husband on it? If you don't mind me asking.

KS: He, every once and a while, would get into that homophobic-type mindset, and all I would have to do is remind him of a couple of soldiers that worked for him that were—everybody knew they were gay. Nobody would say anything. But it was the best NCO he had. And then he'd say, "Yeah, you're right. Yeah, you're right." So it's kind of like—

TS: It's like a knee-jerk reaction in some—

KS: If Congress and everybody else that aren't in the military would just shut up and let the military do their work [laughs], but that's not going to happen, so. Yeah, females have had a rough—a rough time, and I owe my success to a lot of those that preceded me. The day that one of my former nurses called me to tell me that General Horoho had been selected to be the Surgeon General, I cried. I cried on the phone. Not only the fact that she's a female but the fact that she's not a physician. Because, see, we—it used to be—

TS: Is she a nurse, then?

KS: She's a nurse.

TS: Oh, okay.

KS: And she's the Surgeon General of the Army.

TS: That's terrific.

KS: Which meant they really did have to look even further to get the most qualified person. Because I'm sure there was a lot of behind-the—behind-the-scenes gnashing of teeth, the fact that the physicians weren't—that was preceded by—when they went to, what we call, a branch immaterial command. It used to be only doctors could command hospitals, but then they said, "No, it's the most qualified," so it could be a nurse, it could be a pharmacist, it could be a—a health care operator, it could be a medical records-type specialist, or whatnot. It was the best qualified. With that came a whole lot more female commanders because—

TS: But when did that change?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: In the early nineties.

TS: Okay. I'm sorry, so you were saying—

KS: No, in the mid-nineties.

TS: Mid-nineties, okay.

KS: In the mid-nineties. And so, a lot of the hospitals now are commanded by females.

TS: And so a lot by nurses too?

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: Because there's probably much more percentage of women nurses than there are women physicians in the army.

KS: Yes, yes. But even those are [coming closer to even – KS clarified later].

TS: Well, what about the—so the issue of sexual harassment. Did you see that at all in your time?

KS: I've answered this question before. I never felt like I was sexually harassed. Now, was I sexually discriminated against? Yeah, back when some of the rules were in place, or sometimes I think people maybe didn't consider females' opinions, perhaps, in a very insidious—not a way you can really put your finger on. Was I ever sexually harassed? No. And it's probably because of my personality.

TS: Which is—How would you describe your personality?

KS: People don't pick on me. I think if somebody exudes a confidence or is willing to—I mean, I will not back down from an argument or a discussion or a fight. And I think sexual harassment's a power issue more than a gender issue, and I think maybe the weaker are the ones that are harassed; or the ones that can't fight against themselves. Or maybe I was just so oblivious I didn't even know it was going on.

TS: Well, could it also have something to do, too, with the people that you surrounded yourself with?

KS: It could be, yeah, because I was—I was always in a safe haven. Females were the majority, as—In the hospitals nurses we were the majority. Then when I got to play with the big guys—meaning at the Pentagon or whatnot—it was a different—I was married. I was comfortable in my own skin. And maybe I didn't give people the opportunity to harass me.

TS: And maybe the quality of people around you—

KS: Exactly.

TS: —might not have—

KS: Exactly. I do think it exists. I know it exists; people that are taken advantage of, and it's a power—a power thing.

TS: Well, because, I mean, you are almost thirty years in. Did you know any other women, like, either in your command or that you were supervising that came to you, or you'd had to be on a board to—

KS: No, but I will tell you one time where I had to address the subject, but it was—it was with my boss at the time. I was the next-to-the-top nurse in a hospital. And the deputy commander, who was actually my senior rater, which meant he wrote my evaluation, was just, for the lack of a better word, the biggest dork you ever wanted to meet. He wanted to be well-liked. He had no filter, and he just was the most socially immature person. He was a [physician – KS corrected later], which meant he had to be a smart man, but he was just so inappropriate.

One of my male nurses—he was the head nurse of the recovery room—came to my office one day and said, “Colonel Simpson, you have got to do something about Colonel [Name Redacted]. He is up in the recovery room talking about boobs.”

Now, here's a male coming to me; not a female, but a male coming to me. And he said, “He's being so inappropriate. I've got people coming out of anesthesia, and here's this colonel up there talking about boob jobs and—and breasts. I don't even know what—” He says, “I've asked him not to do it before.”

And so I realized—I'm like, “Oh my goodness, he's the one that writes my report card,” but then I remembered, when you are told of something going on, you have the responsibility to act on it. So I went into his office, and I said, “I need to talk to you about something very seriously.”

And he said, “What?”

And I said, “You've got to quit talking about boobs in the recovery room.”

And his reaction was, “Well, can't anybody take a joke anymore?”

So anyhow, I said, “Well, stop it, because you can't do it, and this is serious. And you can get in a lot of trouble for it.”

Well, I don't think he really listened to me, because I heard years later that he got relieved of command for making racially inappropriate comments. So he moved from sexually inappropriate to racially inappropriate. So does sexual harassment, does sexual assault exist? It does. I just never experienced any of it.

TS: Well, you just mentioned racial; how about that? How was that? Was there any racial discrimination that you were aware of, or tension in any of the places that you were at?

KS: Well, the military is a microcosm of society. I'm sure that there was some. I was accused one time of being racially prejudiced. I had a nurse who was black, who was very, very ineffective as a head nurse. Not only was she ineffective, she was mean. And several of her staff members, black and white, had come to me. Had nothing to do with race, but they had come to me so upset because the way that she was treating her people. I finally took her out of her job. And she went running to the commander of the hospital at the

time—who happened to be a nurse—a male nurse, and—Don't let me forget to talk about [Brigadier General William T.] Bill Bester. But she went to him and complained about me. I was the chief nurse at the time; this was at Fort Jackson. And I knew she was going to see him, because he had asked me, "Do you know what she's coming to me about?"

And I said, "Probably because I took her out of her job." And so, that afternoon I said, "Hey boss, how was your conversation with this nurse," who I really don't want to name.

TS: That's fine.

KS: In fact, I can't remember her name right now. He said, "Kathy, it's serious." He said, "She's accused you of calling her a [Redacted]," which I would never have used that word. First of all, I would have never said it to her. She was a lot of things; it wasn't her race. She was just mean. I'd have called her a lot of other words if I could have, but that wouldn't have been one of them. "She also says that you're racially prejudiced."

I said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

He says, "I told her to go to the equal opportunity office and lodge a formal complaint."

And my first reaction was, "You did what?" And then I realized that's exactly what we need to do. And I was waiting for her to go, because as a—as a senior officer, we have what we call the senior rater profile, and it's the people—not the immediate evaluator, but the next evaluator, which really holds the most weight in an evaluation. We have—It's almost like a pyramid; the top block and then the ones that come next and the ones that come next. And you have your profile of the ones that you have rated tops, and then the ones that are with peers and then below peers. I couldn't wait. I could not wait for her to EO because every one of my top-block officers that I had evaluated were black. So I had quantitative evidence that I was not being racially prejudiced.

TS: Right.

KS: She was just a bad officer that used the race—that pulled the race card.

TS: Right.

KS: It didn't work.

TS: Right.

KS: And she was smart enough—she was dumb, but she was smart enough not to go to EO, because it would have been—

TS: It wouldn't look good for her.

KS: —thrown out. Yeah. I mean, I would have said, "Okay, here they are."

TS: Right.

KS: But I have seen a lot of people use race as a defense when they've been called on the carpet for something. But blatant racial prejudice, maybe I'm oblivious to it, but I haven't witnessed it.

TS: Did you ever see—and probably less so, I guess, maybe in the nurses—nursing corps, but women using gender as excuses to get out things.

KS: Yeah.

TS: You have seen that?

KS: Oh yeah.

TS: Okay.

KS: Oh yeah. I mean, there—I've seen—I've heard of women buying urine from a pregnant female.

TS: Really?

KS: To say that they're pregnant. I don't know if it really happened or not. To get out of going—or people purposely getting pregnant to keep from going on a deployment, which just doesn't do any of us any good.

TS: Right.

KS: And then every time there's a high-profile case, it really does set women back. When [someone says – KS corrected later], "Oh, she's having to leave her children." None of us got drafted. Every one of us signed up on our own volition. And, I mean, I had to leave my kids, too, so when this kind of stuff would arise I would just want to gnash my teeth.

TS: Because even the weakest woman reflects on the whole—

KS: Everybody.

TS: All of the women in the military.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: Everybody.

TS: But not the weakest man, necessarily.

KS: No. No. It's kind of a pulling down rather than a raising up.

TS: Yes. How would you say that attitudes towards women changed in the—over the time that you were in the—between '76 and 2005? Just sum that up.

KS: Well, numbers alone. Not just women—Nursing's always been female-dominant. Although in the military, when I left the percentage was approaching 47 percent males in the Army Nurse Corps.

TS: Is that right?

KS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

KS: So it's much more equal in the Army Nurse Corps than it is in the civilian sector. As a matter of fact, when my son decided to major in nursing, I said, "Well, you can do that, but you've got to go into the military, because you really do need to go in the military. If you're going to be a nurse, I want you to be a military nurse." And he took my advice.

TS: Why did you think that was necessary?

KS: For one thing, the standard of nursing care, and the acceptance of men into army nursing. As opposed to—I mean, in the civilian sector, it's less than 10 percent still, I think. And I just thought that he would appreciate it more, and I think he has.

TS: How long has he been in?

KS: He went in in 2003.

TS: Oh, okay. [unclear]

KS: And he's a nurse anesthetist now. I'm very proud of him; very proud of him. I didn't like the fact that he was going into nursing. When he told me he was going to change his major and move out to Kansas, he had already secured an ROTC scholarship without me knowing about it. He wanted to go back out to Kansas because his girlfriend was out there, because that's where he graduated from high school. I thought his reasons for going into nursing weren't quite noble enough. I mean, I went in to nursing; I thought I was going to save the world, and I thought he was doing it for much more practical purposes. But he's actually become a good nurse. And to get through anesthesia training is very, very hard. So I'm very proud of him. In fact I just read in *U.S. News & World Report* that the army anesthesia program that he went through is ranked number one of anesthesia programs in the United States.

TS: Wow; pretty impressive.

KS: So he can at least say he's from number one. I forgot what you asked me about.

TS: Changes for women.

KS: For women? Well, the numbers alone have—have changed, but we have consistently been able to take on the higher positions. I think the number of nurse—of females entering the other medical fields, particularly physicians, we're just—there's more of us now. And I think it's more accepting.

TS: What difference—Do you think the numbers make a difference in acceptance?

KS: It's got too. It's got too. And it's kind of an evolution, that—It used to be, “A boy nurse? What are you talking about?” or, “A girl doctor?” But it's much more equal now. And I think it—just by having our predecessors succeed, it just glides—it just smoothes the path for those coming behind them.

TS: Do you think that the attitudes of men have changed?

KS: Yeah. I think there's probably still a good ol' boys club that you can't really put your finger on, and probably just not vocalized as much.

TS: Well, when you talked about mentors—I was trying to remember—you had men and women in that—on that list.

KS: Yes, yes. I think the Army Nurse Corps has always had strong male representatives. And one of the things I asked you to remind me of was Bill Bester. Bill Bester was several years senior to me in the Nurse Corps. I had heard his name but I had never worked with him. I was the Chief Nurse at Fort Jackson; I got there in '98—no, in '97, and we heard—this was right when they allowed nurses to compete for commands of hospital. He was the first nurse commander of a hospital, and guess where he got assigned? Fort Jackson. So they were like, “Oh my gosh, Bill Bester's coming to Fort Jackson. How do you feel about that?”

Well, I didn't know how to feel about it. First of all, I didn't know him. Second of all, all at once the commander's going to know more about nursing than I do. So it was a little threatening at first, until I met him. And then we had a nice understanding. He tells people that we have an understanding because I said as long as he did what I told him to do it would be alright, which he's a jokester so I—I play right into it. When nurses would go to him to complain about things, he would say, “You know you have a Chief Nurse down the hall. You need to go discuss it with her.” He was real supportive.

He was at Jackson for probably more than a year at the time, and it was time for a new Chief of the Army Nurse Corps to be selected. Now, that's a two-star—I mean, it was a one-star position at the time; it's two-star now, but it was a one-star at the time.

And several of the big candidates—those that have qualified, that have war college, and—and have had stellar careers and everything, their—It’s a board process, but it also has to go through Secretary of the Army and there’s a huge vetting process. Well, the rumor started as to who was in the running, and he was one of them.

“Never happen.” It—And this was his answer. He said, “Never happen.” He said, “There will never be a male Chief of the Nurse Corps, because the army needs to have a certain number of female generals to keep Congress quiet, and it’s too easy to pluck a female out of the nurse corps.” So he said, “Not going to happen.” Guess who got selected? And he said that when he went to interview at—with the Secretary of the Army, he said, “I can’t believe you’re even interviewing me.” He said, “Wouldn’t you want—It’s too easy to—to fill one of your star billets from the nurse corps, as a female.”

And the Secretary of the Army said, “We want the most qualified.” And he—So he was the first male chief of any of the branches. I think he’s actually the first and only, and he took over in 2000.

TS: Was there any resentment from the women about that?

KS: There—There probably was among the ones that wanted—

TS: Sure.

KS: —the job.

TS: And got passed over for it, right.

KS: It was more just individuals.

TS: Yes.

KS: I mean, we got a lot of air time, publicity, out of the fact that it was a male. And I think it helped the army. I mean, the males realized, “Well, now we’ve got a chance,” just as the females have always said, “We love it when we see a senior officer because that means we have a chance.” Well, the male nurses all at once had somebody that they could look to as well.

TS: Right. Gender discrimination goes both ways.

KS: Exactly, exactly. And he was—He did a sterling job, and everybody loves him.

TS: It sounds like it.

KS: And he was the best qualified, I think, at the time.

TS: Do you feel like you personally were treated fairly during your career—

KS: I was.

TS: —for like promotions, pay, all the—

KS: I was.

TS: Yeah?

KS: I was. I never—I was never one of the—we call—it's tongue in cheek, but some nurses get tabbed at an early stage to have the—what we call, the glory jobs; the recruiting jobs, the instructor jobs, staff officer jobs. I never had any of those. I worked in a hospital. I was a head nurse for ten years of my career, which I didn't think I was ever going to get out of that. I did nothing but work, work, work, work, work. I didn't have all the real high-profile jobs. I never got selected from, what we call, below the zone for promotion, but I always got selected when I was in the zone of consideration. And—But I was never—Oh, this is going to sound so self-righteous. I never did my job thinking about how it was going to get me promoted. I just liked doing what I was doing. And that—And I did a good job, evidently, and I just kind of got—I didn't feel like I had to manage my career. I did whatever they told me to do. And it served me well.

TS: As far as when—So that's an issue of ambition, in some sense, right?

KS: Yeah, and maybe I had a blind ambition. I just—I always said the army made better choices for me than I would have made for myself. I would have never asked to go work on an oncology unit, because I thought that would have been real depressing. It was the most spiritually fulfilling job I ever had.

TS: Where was that at?

KS: That was at Fort Jackson, the first time I was there. There was a lot of death, but it was—I felt so appreciated. Sometimes when I felt like we had neglected our patients because there was so much to do and we would have wanted to do more, they were so appreciative.

TS: When you say that the army made better choices for you, it's not like some arbitrary thing happening on you, right?

KS: No.

TS: People are making decisions—

KS: Yeah, it was—it was the assignments officers, and that was their job; to look out over all of the officers and to figure out who needed what kind of jobs. “This job's open, who's the best qualified?” It's kind of like moving pieces on a chessboard.

TS: Right.

KS: And every job was—

TS: You never called them up and said, “Hey! I’d really like this job here”?

KS: Well, they would come around. There are officers that would call every week and say, “I need to do this for my career.” I never did that. I would—They would come around. The staff officers would make visits to different hospitals, and they—you’d have an appoint—appointment with them, and they’d sit and they’d say, “You need to do this next, you need to do that next.”

And I’m like, “Okay.”

“Is there anything you’re interested in?”

“Well, I don’t want to be a head nurse anymore.” Of course, I was one for ten years, and I really got kind of selected for some good jobs. Maybe a little ahead of my time, just by sitting back and I guess somebody noticed, but I—I wasn’t one of the pushy kind.

TS: Well, did—What about your—Let’s see, you went to—

KS: I do remember at Fort Campbell—

TS: Okay.

KS: —that the assignment’s officer called my chief nurse and said, “Tell Major Simpson that she needs to call us because it’s time for her to move, and don’t ask to stay at Fort Campbell any longer.” [both chuckle]

TS: Well, you were there the longest, it looks like.

KS: Yeah, but I was at the eighty-sixth [Combat Support Hospital] and then I moved over to the hospital, so it was like two different tours, but I loved it. I’d still be there if they hadn’t moved me.

TS: Well, you talk about Fort Campbell the most, I think.

KS: Well, it was a very relevant time, although there were—every place I went had relevancy. Fort Campbell, that was when the war was. Fort Riley [Kansas]—Do you remember the Oklahoma City bombings, and Timothy McVeigh?

TS: Yeah.

KS: He was the—He had just gotten out of the army recently and was stationed at Fort Riley, and was staying at the Dreamland Motel, which was a mile from where I lived. And right after the Oklahoma City bombings, we knew that there was a connection to Fort Riley

because all at once all of these unmarked cars came in and took over a building. It was the FBI.

TS: Oh.

KS: They were looking for—

TS: You were just watching?

KS: Yeah.

TS: I see.

KS: And I remember the day they announced his name, I was standing in the middle of the ob-gyn clinic and I went over and I said, “Pull that name up on the computer,” —the big information system they have—and it said he was active duty, still stationed at Fort Riley, and I’m like, “Oh my gosh.” But luckily the computer system was behind times.

TS: Wrong; it was wrong?

KS: He was already out.

TS: Yeah.

KS: A lot of—Another significant time was—I was in D.C. when the Pentagon got attacked.

TS: I had forgotten that you’d said you’d been in that long.

KS: Yeah, it was Kennedy, the space shuttle [Space Shuttle *Challenger* disaster], and 9/11.

TS: Well, let’s talk about 9/11.

KS: Yeah, that was—of everything, that was probably the most significant. I was stationed—I mean, I was assigned to the Pentagon but my office wasn’t in the Pentagon. It was—

TS: What was your job there?

KS: I was working for the Surgeon General of the Army, in health policy and services, and I had—I was the senior nurse staff officer. I answered nursing policy issues, women’s health issues—not only pregnancy testing, but breastfeeding came up while I was there and several other issues—and the POW desk. I had a couple of other. And then I worked on a plan called “The Army Plan for Well-Being.” It wasn’t just wellness stuff, it was much bigger than that.

Our office was about two or three miles away from the Pentagon. It was in the Skyline Complex, which is about six office buildings that are all DOD [Department of

Defense]. And the surgeon general's office was there. I happened to live in that same Skyline Complex. They had apartment buildings there, too, so I—

TS: You lived and worked in the same—

KS: I lived and worked in the same place, because my husband and kids were still in South Carolina. Every morning I had to go to the Pentagon and be there for a meeting at ten o'clock. It wasn't that big of a deal because we had shuttle buses that ran every twenty minutes; the little buses?

TS: Yes, between?

KS: From these office buildings into the Pentagon. I would usually take the nine o'clock shuttle bus so that I could get—or the 9:20 shuttle bus so that I could get there at twenty 'til, be able to stop and get a cup of coffee, and then walk across the Pentagon to get to the office building where I had to be.

The morning of—on 9/11, I went downstairs—I was wearing glasses at the time, but it was reading glasses, and they usually were on the top of my head or on my desk. I didn't wear them all the time like I do now. And I got down to the bus stop and realized I had forgotten my glasses, and I needed them to read. So I went back upstairs, and as I did I ran into one of my co-workers and she said, "Do you know what just happened?" She said, "A plane just ran into the World Trade Center."

I said, "Get out of here. I was just there two weeks ago." I'd gone up there over Labor Day weekend, and we were down at the World Trade Center waiting for the ticket kiosk to open. And so I said, "Let's go to the general's office and watch it on TV," because the Surgeon General and the Deputy Surgeon General had TVs in their office, and we knew they were at their usual meeting.

So I went down there, Terry did, and the secretaries, and we were standing in the office—in the general's office—watching—the first plane had already hit. About that time the second plane hit, and about that time, General Bester and [Major] General [Patrick D.] Sculley came rushing into the office. And we tried to scatter and they're like, "No, no, no, no, stay." This was a time where it wasn't "General" and "Colonel," it was "we're American citizens and we're soldiers."

And I remember saying, "This is Osama bin Laden; he's already tried to blow it up once."

So the second plane hit, and I thought to myself, "Well, I've missed the meeting, so I might as well walk over to my apartment building and get my portable TV and bring it back to work," so I could sit at my office and watch TV. I walked out of the building and they had a little courtyard. I cleared the trees and all at once I saw a plane. I thought, "What in the world is that plane doing?"

Now, it's not the plane that hit the building, but it was—I lived on the twenty-fifth floor in Falls Church, Virginia, that faced D.C. I was like an air traffic controller; I knew the corridors and I knew that this plane was not in a usual air corridor.

So I went on over to my apartment building and the elevator workmen were there. They'd been there for six months. [Comment Redacted]

As I cleared the building I saw that plane and then I looked over and I could see smoke in the—further in the distance; I didn't know what it was.

And when I walked in they said, "You're going to get really busy."

I said, "Is that the Pentagon?"

They said, "Yeah." And I remember thinking our life is getting ready to change, big time.

So I said, "Well, come on up to my apartment," because I had such a beautiful view. And so we went up there to watch TV; the workmen—I mean, I had my underwear on drying racks all over my bedroom, and it didn't matter, because at that point in time we're all citizens; we're all Americans.

So we got up there and I called my husband in South Carolina. And I said, "I'm okay. Bester's okay," because Bester and I moved to D.C. at the same time. He went as a general, I went as a colonel. And I said, "Call Betsy—" that was my assistant out at Fort Jackson, at the hospital—I said, "Call Betsy and tell her that Bester and I are okay, and call the boys and tell them I'm okay." I got that phone call through and some of the other guys wanted to call their families. We were watching TV as the towers fell.

So about that time, I said, "Guys, you've got to leave. I've got to go back to work. It's going to get incredibly busy where I am." And so I went [back to work – KS corrected later], and I don't think I came home till midnight that night, mainly because we were in that rescue mode. We were missing two or three people out of our office, because we were back and forth to the Pentagon all day long. Two of them—One of them had a dental appointment that day, and what happened was he went out and started triaging. The other one went home.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But nobody knew what he was doing?

KS: Right.

TS: Okay.

KS: The other one that we were concerned with was Lieutenant Colonel—no, she was Major then, Patty Horoho, who's now a three-star general, who was stationed at the Pentagon. Her office was in the Pentagon. Nobody could find her, and we were just worried sick. We couldn't find her. I had put eyes on Bester, so I let headquarters know about that. But we—nobody could find her. She's the one that set up the whole triage line. She was an ER nurse by trade.

TS: She was already there, taking care of things?

KS: And she ended up being one of the Red Cross heroes [and is now the Surgeon General – KS added later]. But I remember walking home that night; it was midnight; all the stores

had closed. I lived in a real congested area. It was quiet as a mouse. And a car rode by with a flag hanging out of it. And I—I think we were all shocked. I got home—This was when we didn't have voicemail on phones, we had answering machines, and I looked and it said thirty-five. I had thirty-five messages on my machine. Now, ten of them were my son from Kansas; "Mom, call me. Mom, I've already heard from Dad. But call me anyhow." And as they got on, they got a little more forceful.

TS: They wanted to hear your voice?

KS: They wanted to hear my voice. We got really busy planning what—actually, the rescue operations. It hit the area of the Pentagon where I went to every day at ten o'clock. That was the corner that it—

TS: What time did it hit?

KS: Nine thirty-six, 9:30. Even if I had gotten on that bus at 9:20, if I'd had my glasses, I wouldn't have gotten to the Pentagon in time, but I think I timed it so that I would have seen it hit the—hit the Pentagon. I wouldn't have been in the Pentagon.

TS: You'd have been in front of it?

KS: Yeah. Now, I had been in a briefing three days—three workdays before, briefing the three-star general that was killed in that same conference room. So I just thought it wasn't my time. The Lord didn't want me yet. I knew four or five vaguely, just by working different [issues – KS corrected later], that were killed. But it took us a long time just to recover the bodies; we couldn't get in there.

I didn't have a job. All my work had burned up, because I was working on this big project and that was the area that got hit. So I started doing other things, and of course we went into a twenty-four operation; manning the desk; not only the recovery, but planning what next in terms of the medical support. So it was a busy time, and I—we were all shaken to our core, but we were all—we really had a sense of purpose at that time.

We had a new [chief – KS corrected later] to come in to the office about that time. Well, no, a new [colonel – KS corrected later] that came in. He had already been chosen to become a general but wasn't one yet; he was colonel promotable. And I remember he came for the first meeting a couple of days afterwards and I went up to him, I said, "Have you even been to the Pentagon before?"

And he said, "No."

And I said, "Well, it's not a easy place to get around with on a good day, but now that they've got so much of it cordoned off, you'll never find where you need to go." I said, "All my work is burned up." I said, "Give me about fifteen minutes and I'll go with you over there." And so, he had to go the office for generals-to-be; he got special—in-processing. And I was waiting outside on the ramp that goes up to the second floor and I was talking to somebody, I didn't know him, and I said, "Man, what are all these MPs around for?"

And they said, “Well, POTUS [President of the United States] is here.”

And I said, “You mean the POTUS?” I didn’t know anybody else named POTUS, but I’d read [Tom] Clancy novels long enough to know.

So Colonel Granger came out about that time, and I said, “Hey look, I hear that the President’s here.” I said, “Let’s go up this ramp.” Well, as we went up to the ramp, it was full of people. I said, “It must have been like when Jesus walked through the streets;” there’s just a throng of people. And you could tell where the president was because of the way people were facing that way and you could see arms coming up with cameras and things like that. So it was on our side as we were walking up the ramps. We got up there and I pushed Colonel Granger ahead, I said, “Go talk—Go shake his hand, go shake his hand.” And the security were—they were around him but they were letting him be a lot closer than—

TS: A more secure place than—

KS: Because they knew—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —like on the street.

KS: —it was safe haven. So Colonel Granger shook his hand and then he said—then he grabbed me and said, “Well, you get up there.” So I reached out over somebody’s shoulder and shook his hand. The dumbest thing I could have said, but I said, “Thank you for leading us.” And he said three things.

He said, “I’m going to continue to do that, and we’re going to get this thing taken care of.” And then he said something else, and for the life of me I was already in my out-of-body experience thinking, “I am—I am holding the President of the United States’ hand.”

TS: Oh, he hung onto it while he was talking?

KS: Yeah, yeah, I mean—and I was [in shock – KS clarified later]. So after we left I went back to the office and I told everybody. I said, “Y’all don’t have a chance with Colonel Granger.”

TS: [laughs]

KS: And they said, “Why?”

I said, “I walked him right into the president. He shook his hand.” I said, “Y’all will never—I will always be number one.”

And they said, “You did what?”

I’m like [laughs].

And even the Surgeon General, who's a three-star, in the briefing that afternoon, he says, "Simpson, I understand you got Colonel Granger right up to the President."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "I haven't even been able to do that," which was probably a lie. He was saying it for everybody. He said, "I haven't even been able to do that."

And I says, "Stick with me, sir." [both chuckle] But—But we did stay awfully busy during all that time, and—but talk about having a close call.

TS: Yeah, no kidding.

KS: Now, it was bad enough with my kids [worrying about me in D.C. – KS corrected later]. Fast forward a few years. My son is stationed at Fort Hood, and one afternoon I had canceled class for some reason, and so I had taken my dogs to the dog park; didn't take my phone; beautiful day like today. And when I came home I had a message from my daughter-in-law that said, "Just want you to know Glen is okay."

Well, I'm thinking, "Why shouldn't he be okay?"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Why wouldn't he be?

KS: I knew she was on the road that day. She and the baby were going to Kansas, and I thought, "Has she divorced him?" I mean, I'm thinking of all—what the—what possibly could have happened? So I called her and I said, "Why wouldn't he be okay?"

She said, "Oh, it's obvious you haven't been watching television." So we turned on the TV and found out the shootings at Fort Hood.

TS: Right.

KS: He was in anesthesia training at the time and was in the operating room when that happened, and of course they started getting casualties.

TS: Right.

KS: And so he stayed—he was very, very busy. But Glen had called him to let him know that I was okay during the Pentagon attack. He had called his wife to tell her to call, and so at least the family knows that when something bad happens, call home.

TS: Right.

KS: I never tried to call him then, because on TV—

TS: You knew he'd be busy.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: —they were saying the phone—and I knew he would be busy. Now, my friend Betty that I went to Europe with?

TS: Right.

KS: She calls me. She's clueless about the military. She calls me about six o'clock that night; 6:00 or 6:30. She says, "Kathy, Kathy! I just heard about Fort Hood. Is Trey okay? Have you talked to him?"

I said, "I haven't talked to him." I called her back and—I mean—no, I answered it and she—and I said, "I haven't talked to him, but he's okay. He's in the operating room."

She went, "Oh my God, he was shot!"

I said, "No, no, no, no."

TS: It's his job.

KS: "He's working there." But he had to take care some of the casualty victims. So it's almost an exact turnaround.

TS: Right.

KS: So I thought, "Following in Mama's footsteps." [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, wow. That's—

KS: So we're hoping all of our near-misses are—are over with.

TS: You either get close to danger or you get close to the President, one way or the other.
[both laugh]

KS: Exactly.

TS: One or the other.

KS: It's the last time I got that close to the President, that's for sure.

TS: Yeah. Well, what—what do you think about some of the presidents that you served under? Do you want to share any of that?

KS: There was—I don't have any firsthand knowledge, but it was widely known that when [William Jefferson "Bill"] Clinton was the President, that his staff had a disdain for the

military; didn't appreciate the military. Now, that—I mean, that's been publicized when he ended up [naming General Barry McCaffrey to his staff – KS clarified later]. The President's staff treated Barry McCaffrey really ugly one day and it's because none of them had served. We've lost that. There are very few veterans in Congress. There are very few veterans around in terms of the American society now. It used to be every family had their grandfather or uncle or somebody. But now it's not like that, with the loss of the draft and whatnot. And so, with Clinton there was a—definitely that feeling that we weren't appreciated.

[George Walker] Bush, on the other hand, we felt very appreciated. Of course, with 9/11 how could we not?

With—President [Barack] Obama got elected when? 2008? I was already out. I [hope – KS corrected later] Obama's smart enough to listen to his advisors. And of course, I'm not queen of the world, but I think it's time to come home from Afghanistan. I don't think anything we do is going to work. I think we need to just come home. They don't appreciate us. I do—I do think he was listening as much as he could to his senior commanders; General [David] Petraeus, who is very, very smart. Of course, he's out now; he's over in intelligence.

By the way, when he was at Fort Campbell, I was at Fort Campbell. He got shot in the chest on the firing range one day.

TS: Petraeus?

KS: Yes, and was brought to Fort Campbell to stabilize and then flown—helicoptered down to Nashville and Senator [William Harrison “Bill”] Frist was the one that operated on him and saved his life.

TS: How did he get shot in the chest?

KS: Out on the firing range. It was either a ricochet or somebody did something they weren't supposed to do. [chuckles]

TS: Oh my God.

KS: And he was the battalion commander at the time and got shot in the chest.

TS: Oh, dear.

KS: So he—

TS: Never heard that story. Wow.

KS: Yeah, it doesn't get told very often, but yeah, it happened.

TS: You wonder what happened to the person that—

KS: And Senator—For Senator Frist—Or to become Senator Frist to be one that—

TS: So was he—it was before he was senator?

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: I guess it would be.

KS: Yes.

TS: Well that's—Yeah, that's interesting. Well, what did you think about some—like, Colonel Powell—or Colin Powell?

KS: I just wish he'd run for president.

TS: Yeah?

KS: He is magnificent. I mean, when you talk about a man of greatness! Now, there you go, setting a path. Because, I mean, very few black generals—but people don't look him as a black man; they look at him as a great man, which they should. I know he promised his wife he'd never run for president, but—Now, the second time I was at Walter Reed, when I was there as chief of nursing administration, Powell came in—they come in for these long physicals.

TS: Right.

KS: And he was up on—it was the new Walter Reed at the time, Ward 72, and he was a patient up there. I think he was there just either for minor surgery or—or a physical or something. But he would leave and go down and just talk with the troops because he's a soldier first. And that was so appreciative. I had a copy of his bio, and I was really busy that day that he was there, but one of the nurses that worked up on the floor, I said, "If I run home and get my book, will you get him to autograph it?" And it's one of my most cherished books.

TS: So he did?

KS: Yeah, he did.

TS: Well, that's terrific. What about—Let's see, who's the other one; Donald Rumsfeld?

KS: [Don't – KS corrected later] have one good thing to say about him.

TS: No?

KS: I don't like him. I don't like him and I'll tell you why. Yeah, he's a smart man, and he did this and he did that, but there were several things that—[General Shinseki – KS corrected later] was in charge of the army at the time—the Chief of Staff of the Army—and he had started this project, and he used the word 'transformation.' It was going to be the transformation of the army. He was trying to move it from where we were—ground fighting and whatnot, heavy armor—to the army of the future. Rumsfeld came in, took that word 'transformation' and used it for himself. Did not like Shinseki; Eric Shinseki; he's the Secretary of Veterans Affairs now.

TS: Oh, right, okay; Shinseki.

KS: He's the Secretary of the Veterans Administration [sic, Affairs] now. And he didn't like Shinseki, and it was obvious. I mean, he named his—Shinseki's successor a year out; didn't even go to Shinseki's retirement. He probably wasn't invited, but it was a slap in the face to everybody in the military to see our chief treated like that. [Comment Redacted]

TS: Yeah.

KS: [Comment Redacted]

TS: Well, you were also in during—when a bunch of—bunch of other things happened. We talked before the tape got turned on about the Iran hostage crisis.

KS: Oh, yeah. I was—I had just had a baby. It had to have been '80. I just had my son; my first child. We were at Fort Polk, Louisiana. My husband went TDY, a temporary duty, to Fort Sam Houston to go to a course, and that's when it happened. And that was [when the failed rescue happened – KS clarified later]; the rescue attempt—

TS: Right.

KS: —when the two helicopters crashed. And I remember being scared to death that they were going to take all of the people that—the course that my husband was in and send them over there. But they didn't. The—The hostages didn't get rescued, needless to say, but I was stationed in Germany when Carter got defeated, Reagan took over, and the hostages were released right as Reagan took the oath of office. One of the hostages was a medic, and I happened to be at Frankfurt when he got his awards. They had a big ceremony for him. He got an award for heroism. And we had an Iranian doctor, an orthopedist that worked at the hospital; he had lived in Frankfurt for years. And he went home shortly after that, and got detained for several weeks and we were all so—his name was Mir Hasabi, and we were all scared that he had been killed because he worked for the Americans. And I'll never forget how overjoyed we all were when here he came—he was crippled, and here he comes walking down the hall one day, and we just about tackled him we were so glad to see him.

TS: Yeah.

KS: Yeah, that was a significant time too.

TS: And were you still in Germany when the Beirut bombing happened in the barracks?

KS: No, we had left Germany. I was at Fort Stewart, Georgia, when that happened.

TS: How was your—How was Germany? Did you like—

KS: It was hard work. That job at Walter Reed with the fifty beds on the orthopedics unit had prepared me well. I started out in Germany in the neonatal intensive care unit, because I was a critical care nurse by code at that time. I hated every minute of it; that just wasn't my thing.

TS: Neonatal care?

KS: Neonatal [intensive [KS added later] care. But once—Because I didn't feel competent, and once I was beginning to feel capable of taking care of these tiny babies, about that time they said, "We need you to go be the head nurse of an orthopedics unit." This time it was a sixty-bed unit, orthopedics, with the same type of antics; patients that were broken—not sick, just broken—that stayed there for a long time and knew how to get in trouble.

TS: This is in Frankfurt?

KS: In Frankfurt. But it was hard work, but I liked it. I stayed on that unit for two and a half years; had a great—a great staff. We worked so well together. And one medic in particular that always worked nights—I never knew this until at least ten or twelve years later—he ended up being one of the ones that were killed in the Berlin nightclub bombing by the Red Army faction years later.

TS: The one in Berlin?

KS: Yes, yes, and I never knew that until way after it had happened.

TS: Do you remember his name?

KS: Errol Adkins. And I went—I went home the day that—One of my guys that I worked with at the time—I was at Fort Riley, so this was in the mid-nineties before I knew this.

TS: That he had died?

KS: And I went home just rifling through everything, trying to find this picture, because I knew I had promoted him to PFC, and I found the picture and I'm just—I'm so sad I didn't know it at the time.

TS: Yeah. Well, you may not—So when did you get married? At what—

KS: I got married in '79. I had left Walter Reed, gone to Fort Sam [Houston] for a six-month course to become an ICU nurse, and I got assigned to Fort Polk, Louisiana. Everybody laughed at me. I was the laughingstock of my class because everybody considered Fort Polk to be a real podunk assignment.

The day I got there I had to in-process to the different desks in the in-processing station: travel, pay, personnel, shots, and that kind of thing. There was a guy there that was escorting a dentist. Now see, the nurses had to go through it on their own, but this dentist got an escort, and so he was—we were kind of rotating at the same places. And I'm thinking, "This is just the most obnoxious guy," because he kept trying to talk to me and everything and I wasn't interested. Well, six months later we were married. I tell everybody—

TS: The dentist?

KS: No!

TS: Oh, the escort.

KS: The escort.

TS: I got you.

KS: He was a Medical Service Corps officer, and I tell people when they ask how I met him, I said, "Well, at the in-processing station at Fort Polk, Louisiana. He was waiting for the first person with a skirt to walk in the—to walk in the building." But we—we got married pretty quickly and then our son was born the next year. Wasn't planned; one day and one year after our [wedding – KS added later].

TS: You got married?

KS: Yeah, after we got married, Trey came along. That was probably the only time I worried about whether I could handle being in the army and being a mother at the same time. But I had a very, very supportive husband who's always done—well, he's done more than fifty percent of the child raising since I was the one that went off to war.

TS: Yeah. Well now, how long—Did he stay in a career military?

KS: Yeah. He retired in 1998 as a lieutenant colonel.

TS: Okay.

KS: And we were always—We were very lucky in terms of the way we were stationed together. He was in the medical field as well, so usually we could be stationed together. We always would say whoever—we would follow whoever would have the best job opportunity, and sometimes it was him and I followed him, sometimes he followed me. And sometimes it meant maybe a six-month lapse, but we worked as a team. He could not have been any more supportive. In fact, he probably wanted me to stay in the army worse than I wanted to stay in the army at times.

TS: Yeah?

KS: And was very, very supportive. We worked as a team.

TS: Did you get a joint assignment throughout your marriage?

KS: For the most part; for the most part. Then when—I mean, we'd have six-month lapses waiting to finish up a job or whatnot. He—When I moved to Fort Jackson from Fort Riley he stayed out at Fort Riley for another year to get my older son through high school, and then he retired and moved to Fort Jackson.

TS: I see.

KS: And then when I went to D.C., for the first three years he stayed in South Carolina and I was up in D.C. as a geographical bachelor because my other son was in high school. But once he graduated from high school Glen joined me up in D.C.

TS: Oh, so three years you were apart?

KS: Yes, yes.

TS: How was that? Was that tough?

KS: It was okay.

TS: Yeah?

KS: It was okay. He was busy raising kids, because he had—actually he only had one, because the other one had gone off to college in Kansas. And I was busy working at the Surgeon General's office. So I did a lot of the I-95 shuffle. About once a month I'd either go home for three days—I'd go home on the three-day weekends, or he would come up. So it was—it was worth it to keep Kenneth stabilized in—in South Carolina.

TS: One thing I didn't ask you when—because you might have actually covered it—but when you went into the army, what did your mother think? Did—Was she worried at all?

KS: Oh, she was my biggest supporter. I mean, I'm sure she said to herself, "Finally, she's going to see that there is more of the world; that the world does not end at the Beaufort County line." She was extremely supportive. She waved me off and was very, very proud of me, until I had to go to war, and then she kind of fell apart for a while. She was actually up in Kentucky—or we lived in Tennessee, because Kentucky's right—I mean Fort Campbell's right on the state line. She was up there when she found out that I would be deploying, and got real emotional and—and kind of squirrely like I'd never seen her before, because she was a strong woman. So we finally pretty much sent her home. And [chuckles]—And—

TS: Well, nobody knew what was going to happen in that.

KS: Right.

TS: They expected a lot worse.

KS: Right. And—But she got better, and I—she attributes it to her faith. And you'll see it in the letters when I bring them. I told her, "Now Mama, you need to write me every day." We didn't have this phone or email—

TS: Right, like today.

KS: —like today. I said, "You need to write me every day."

She says, "There won't be enough to write you about."

I said, "Well, just write me and tell me what you had for breakfast, or lunch."

The first letter that I got in Saudi [Arabia], I opened it and it said, "Dear Baby, I had Cornflakes, coffee, and a banana." [both chuckling] She had a real wit about her.

About a month, or maybe not even that long, I got a letter from her and she said—she always said, "Dear Baby." She says, "I can't worry about you anymore." She says, "I am coming apart worrying about you. So I have decided that I am just going to give you to the Lord and the Lord can worry about you. I am finished worrying about you."

Now, this sounds kind of silly, but I think she was really getting her words out on paper. What I found out after I got home was everybody saw an absolute change in her demeanor from being very worried and tearful and emotional to stoic and strong. The night that the air war was going to start, Betty called my mother and she said, "Now, I'm going to come over and I'm going to sit with you."

She says, "Well, I'm not. I'm going to bed," so they all were amazed at how—and they had no idea about the letter that I had gotten.

TS: Right.

KS: So her faith got her through that.

TS: Well, that's good. Well now, how were you when you're son said, "I'm going into the army, Mom"?

KS: I never worried about his—I worried more—When he first decided to go in the army, I worried about his reasons for it more than anything, because like I said, I went in it to save the world and I thought he was doing it for other reasons. But he didn't have fourteen years to prepare to go to war. He graduated from nursing school, took his boards, and went right to Fort Sam [Houston], to basic, just like I did.

TS: What year did he go in?

KS: Two thousand and three.

TS: Okay.

KS: Went to his first duty station, which was El Paso. He signed in, they sent him on his ten days of permissive TDY—temporary duty—to find an apartment, to get his household goods delivered. When he came back to the hospital to start his orientation they said, "Pack your bags, you're going to Iraq." He had never practiced a day of nursing in his life, until he was overseas.

Now, I was sitting at Walter Reed sending out my nurses because they'd say, "We need four of yours to go join this unit," or whatnot. Sending out my nurses—And my counterpart at El Paso—who was a good friend of mine—sent me a message and said, "Kathy, we're going to have to send some new nurses; some inexperienced nurses to Iraq." And she said, "Trey's one of them."

And I wrote back and I said, "If you send any of them, you've got to send him."

Now see, I was a senior nurse corps officer at that point in time. He could not have afforded the reputation of having gotten out of a deployment because of his mother.

TS: Right.

KS: So I said, "If you send any of them, you've got to send him." And of course, she did. I was not worried about his safety, intellectually. I was worried about his competence, because—

TS: Because [unclear—speaking simultaneously]

KS: —he was a brand new nurse. And that's what I worried about more than anything. But once again, he had a strong head nurse and mentor that was able to pull him in and help him with that, and I got to meet her years later and I said, "I want to shake your hand." I said, "You will never know how much I appreciate you." Now, this guy has got my same personality, but I didn't have—

TS: Which guy; your son?

KS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

KS: I didn't have whatever comes up—comes out, and feeling kind of cocky. I didn't have that when I was a lieutenant. I grew into it. He's got it now. And one day I was sitting in report—we had nursing report in the morning at Walter Reed, and it was usually a [somber – KS corrected later] time because our boss was a [very serious – KS corrected later] and—so it was always quiet in there. The secretary comes and says, “Colonel Simpson, General Bester has—” now he's the chief of the nurse corps—“He wants to talk to you, he's on the phone.”

So I call—I went out there and said, “Hey, how are you doing?”

He said, “I just want to let you know I got an email from Trey,” because we call him Trey.

I said, “You did?” Now, Trey's in Iraq, Bester's in D.C. And I said, “You did?”

And he said, “Yeah, you want me to read it to you?”

Well, when he started [chuckles]—when he started reading it to me I screamed, “Oh my God!” like that. I hope it didn't mess up your recorder.

TS: No, it's good.

KS: I went, “Oh my God!” Well, everybody in the room knew that Colonel Bester—I mean, General Bester had pulled me out of the thing. They naturally thought something had happened to Trey.

TS: Right.

KS: I was just mortified that my son would send the chief—I mean, he's a second lieutenant, and he'd send the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps—but see, he knew him, because when we were at Jackson and he had said, “Well, I'm—I understand that army nurses eat their young,” which is a term that I hate for nursing. I thought it was just army nursing, but it's nursing. [Comment Redacted]

TS: In the email?

KS: In the email. I walked back into the—the room, and it was a table about like this, and everybody's wide-eyed, and they said, “Is Trey okay?”

I'm like, “What do you mean?” Then it dawned on me, they thought he had been injured in Iraq.

TS: Right.

KS: I said, “Oh, he's fine, but he's not going to be when I get a hold of him.” And I told them what he'd done. They thought it was funny.

TS: Yeah.

KS: But he spent his time in Iraq and did okay; did okay. And I'm very proud of him.

TS: Yeah.

KS: He applied for anesthesia school, made it through, because that's a very, very, rigorous, rigorous—rigorous program, and has done quite well.

TS: If you had—You didn't have any daughters, you had two sons.

KS: Two sons.

TS: But if you'd had a daughter, would you have counseled her any differently about joining the military?

KS: No.

TS: Same?

KS: No, and I would have—I always say that the greatest compliment that I could have ever gotten was the fact that Trey followed in my footsteps. If he—his mother left him at the age of ten to go off to war, and he managed to do okay. I would have done—For a daughter I would have done the same thing.

TS: Did you ever consider yourself a trailblazer?

KS: I guess, maybe in my own little world. This was so foreign to anything that I had grown up in. I mean, my dad had been in the military but he died so early. Everybody in my hometown couldn't believe that I had joined the army. And I love to say it's because I got jilted; I got a "Dear John" letter and—

TS: That's right, I forgot about that.

KS: It's kind of like the men usually get that and run off and join the army, but it makes for a good speech.

TS: Sure.

KS: But I did kind of run away from home, and it was so foreign to anything that anybody would have thought I would have done. And then to come home as a colonel, they thought that was even funnier, and so it was a good—a good, good life. I miss it terribly.

TS: Do you think that having been in the military changed the trajectory of your life at all?

KS: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely. I think it gave me a global perspective. I get very aggravated, particularly with our little local politics and stuff; the absurdity, and what people focus on. There's such a bigger world, we've got so many problems, and it really prepared me to be—for lack of another term—an executive decision maker. Things that some people quibble about; [Comment Redacted].

TS: How are you in those meetings?

KS: Horrible. They're very frustrating; very frustrating. And that's one of the reasons I'm not working anymore, because I just—I love the students. And you know what? The students loved me too. You know why? Because I'd been there, done that. When I was teaching leadership, and they knew that I had been there because I told them what I'd been in. And I said, "And by the way, I'm in a history book." And I'll have to bring that to you too.

TS: Oh, are you? Which one?

KS: There's a—Mary Sarnecky has written a history of the Army Nurse Corps and then she wrote a contemporary history of the Army Nurse Corps, and I happen to be in that. There's a picture of me.

[Mary T. Sarnecky is the author of *A History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps* and *A Contemporary History of the U.S. Army Nurse Corps*.]

TS: Okay.

KS: And I'd show the students the picture. I said, "Yes, I used to be red-headed, and yes, I used to be thin." [both chuckle]

TS: Well, when we go upstairs maybe we can see if we've got—I think we have that one. I think we do.

KS: It might be in there.

TS: I have to see that, so. Well, did you—We talked about that, we talked about that.

KS: I'll share with you a theme that I've used in the past; opportunity. I took the opportunity to join the military, and when I did that, the opportunities just opened at every stage in my life. They just opened. I mean, I grew up a little hometown girl and I ended up working at Walter Reed and having to escort senators, congressman, movie stars, political cartoonists—

TS: You didn't tell me about any movie stars.

KS: Well, at Walter Reed—I don't think we ever got to that last tour, but that's when all the casualties were coming in from Iraq and Afghanistan—mostly Iraq—and that's where I

retired from. It was the perfect place to retire from. I've never felt more relevant as an army nurse, ever, there, but the work was hard. It was before the big scandal at Walter Reed. That never had anything to do with the medical care of the soldiers, because the soldiers get the best that money can buy.

TS: It was the facilities, right?

KS: It was the facilities. When—

TS: That they're kind of old, and—

KS: In a civilian hospital, when somebody gets discharged they go home. And then they're responsible for coming back for their outpatient visits and everything. In the military, you have to feed them and house them, and we had completely outgrown every available space to house soldiers, and that's what that was all about.

TS: Right.

KS: But it was ugly.

TS: It wasn't about the care.

KS: And it hurt; it hurt me terribly. Particularly when I hear people say, "The Walter Reed Syndrome."

TS: Right.

KS: It drives me crazy. There was a lot of—Well, our general at the time, the one that eventually got relieved? He would say, "Nursing, give me three more people to go be platoon leaders for the medical hall unit."

We're like, "We don't have any more."

"Well if you can't give them to me I'll find somebody that can." Meaning your job's on the line.

Well, evidently army was doing that to him; "Take care of these people, take care of these people."

He was saying, "I don't have them," and so there was a lot of hypocrisy—

TS: Right.

KS: —going on. So for that matter I'm glad it all—

TS: Broke out.

KS: —broke out. I just—

TS: But it kind of gave it a black eye—

KS: It did.

TS: —that wasn't necessarily legitimate and all across the board.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

KS: It did, it gave us—exactly. But the miracles that I saw while I was up there.

When I said escorting the senators and congressmen around; two stories. I'm a newspaper reader; I'd have to have the [*Washington*] *Post* read before I went to work in the morning. And one morning I went in to report and I said, "Doonesbury has just written about B.D. getting blown up in Iraq." I said, "He's coming to Walter Reed next, mark my words." Well, sure enough, the story went all the way through Walter Reed.

Well, they said, "You're the one that was talking about Doonesbury. Gary Trudeau is coming tomorrow, and you're going to be his escort." And I was thrilled, because I'd followed him for a long time, and we became quite close. He—I took him through the hospital and through the guest house and everything, and he'd come back and forth getting more material.

TS: Right.

KS: And he sent me some really nice original prints—original cartoons that I've got framed and whatnot. But I held my breath, because I never knew what was going to come out in these cartoons, and some people got [upset – KS corrected later] over it; about the way the nurses were—But it's political satire.

TS: Right.

KS: At least the nurses were commented—I mean, were included in the—the cartoons.

The other one that I remember was Christopher Dodd—and this had to have been in 2003—from Connecticut.

TS: Senator Dodd?

KS: Yes. He wanted to come visit the troops. Everybody wanted to come visit the troops. It almost got to be like it was the zoo; it got over the top. And every time somebody that came like that, they'd have to have a senior officer escort them. Well, I'd have a desk full of work and a whole lot of stuff to do. They'd call me and say, "You've got to meet him—meet So-and-so out in the front lobby and you take them on the—the tour."

Well, the day that I was escorting Senator Dodd, he started teasing me about my southern accent. And he said, "Where are you from?"

And I said, "North Carolina."

He said, “Well, you know your boy’s getting ready to run,” and he’s talking about John Edwards.

And I said—And I was—I’m flippant and if I can get a laugh out anybody I’ll do—from anybody, I’ll do it. And I remember saying to him, “Listen, he sounds like every boy I grew up with and they all lie.” Now, I was just running my mouth. How about that for a prophecy?

TS: [chuckles] The election’s going on in Greensboro today—or not the election, the trial.

KS: Exactly. The trial.

TS: The trial, yeah.

KS: But, I mean, it got to the point—like my husband and I were—because he worked as a civilian at Walter Reed while I was there, and we were going to lunch one day and we had to stop for a big group to go by, and I said, “Glenn, did you see who just went by?”

He said, “No, who?”

I went, “Forrest. Forrest Gump.” You know, Tom Hanks? He would come all the time; Gary Sinise; several of them would come a lot. But it—The troops loved it when somebody would come through. Like the day Michael Jackson came. I didn’t even try to go up to the fifth floor, because it was so—I mean, it was a mob scene.

TS: Yeah.

KS: But they liked—they liked some of them, and then the senators and congressmen they didn’t like.

TS: No; none of them? They just felt like it was a dog-and-pony show sort of thing?

KS: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

KS: A distraction. Because they thought they were coming there not—

TS: But did some of them—

KS: —for the right reasons.

TS: Did some of them come without an entourage and just quietly?

KS: Every once in a while if they could sneak in. We didn’t really want them roaming the halls on their own, because you never knew what they would find or—

TS: Right. Sure. You didn’t want it in the papers.

KS: Exactly. And some of them would come like that. But then some of them would come with photographers and their posse, and that was kind of a turn off.

TS: Yeah.

KS: But I was there during the Jessica Lynch stuff. Not when she first got there; I transferred in.

[Jessica Lynch is a former United States Army soldier who was captured by Iraqi forces in March 2003 after her convoy was ambushed. She was recovered by U.S. Special Forces in April 2003, in the first successful rescue of an American prisoner of war since Vietnam, and the first ever of a woman.]

TS: Yeah.

KS: There—And the patients that I didn't think had a chance of living and survive, it was wonderful. It really was.

TS: If I say, "What does patriotism mean to you," how would you respond to that?

KS: It means commitment; it means service; it means cause; it means others before you. That's a word that really speaks in my heart; patriotism. I think Americans—no, American society could use a little bit more of that.

It was very frustrating leaving Walter Reed, where I never felt more relevant, never felt more patriotic, and coming back to my hometown and realizing that hometown America didn't even know there was a war going on. They had gotten bored by it, and did not realize the cost of the war. That was a very frustrating time for me, because I wanted to shake people and say, "Don't you even realize what's going on?"

TS: And yet, twenty-two-year old Kathy Lynch who went in, wasn't—didn't really know that much about Vietnam.

KS: What a difference a lifetime makes. Exactly; exactly. It—what goes around, comes around. Exactly. I am very, very proud of my service. I'm very proud of having served.

I've had a conversation with a couple of my friends whose sons have gone in. And I remember talking to one of them and she said, "He's a different person. But he won't talk about it. I try to get him to talk about it, but he's not—he won't talk."

And I said, "He's not going to."

She said, "Why?"

I said, "Because you won't understand." I said, "But mark—" I said, "I'll bet you my paycheck that if he and I got alone, he'd spew. He'd talk."

"Well, why to you and not to me?"

I said, "Because I'm one of him." And you know if you haven't served—it's just like I can sit beside somebody in the waiting room at a car dealership waiting for my car, and if we find out we're veterans, [snaps fingers] it's an immediate bond.

TS: Well, what do you think it is that some civilians might have a misperception about; of the military?

KS: Well, unfortunately these days, it's almost like a mercenary—I mean, that the military's mercenary. It's like—It's such a small percentage of Americans that have served. It's just—it's ignorance. They don't really know what's going on. They don't know the sacrifices that are made. And then there are some really bad examples. We've had some bad examples just recently; the marines urinating on the Iraqi—the pictures; Abu Ghraib.

TS: The shooting.

KS: The shootings. Yeah, now, that guy went nuts. I don't think he did that intentionally. He just went absolutely nuts. However, that endangers every single person. The guy that has released all the secrets.

TS: Bradley [Manning]?

KS: I mean, that's—

TS: What's his name, Manning?

KS: Bradley May? Bradley Manning?

TS: Manning, I think.

KS: I'm sorry, he's a traitor. He's an absolute traitor, and punishable by death as far as I'm concerned. I don't think it'll ever happen, but he needs to—And then every once and a while somebody else will do something stupid that endangers everybody over there.

TS: So those things are highlighted in a way that—

KS: And make people think that we're all like that. They think we all—I mean, I took care of POWs. Of course, the ones in my war were so grateful to have warmth and—

TS: Iraqis?

KS: —and food—Yeah, because there were so many of them that were fighting against their will; they were made to do that. It was a completely different war then. But—And I think it's just—it's a factor—it's a matter of ignorance. They just don't understand.

TS: Well, what about the issue of women in combat? What do you think about that?

KS: First of all, there's no front line anymore. And women took the same oath that men did. I mean, I'm all for it. We've—We've been at risk all along, particularly now, it's an air war more than—or long-range war. If you choose to serve, if you're qualified—

TS: So it's back to that?

KS: —and it's qualified, and I don't want to be a ranger. I don't want to be in the Special Forces. I'm not going to try to bust that glass ceiling. That's not—I know my place in the military. But if there is somebody that is qualified, by all means they should be offered an opportunity. Once again, opportunity. I was thinking of something right then. There's so many different things in the military, but it takes us all, you know?

Oh, I know what it was. Back when the boys were little, I would send them to summer camp every summer at the Citadel. Little bit of regimentation, sports; it was a nice—it was the Citadel summer camp for boys. My older son went there three years, my younger son only went one, and they loved it. But that last—The next-to-the-last or the last year that they were there, was when Shannon Faulkner, the first female that was admitted to the Citadel—Well, there was so much hullabaloo about that female trying to get into that college, and then of course, they had bumper stickers that said “Save the Males,” and everybody—it was such hysteria going on. And unfortunately she dropped out. She wasn't the right one to pioneer this. The ones that followed had done very well there.

But I remember that fall, after Trey had been there for summer camp, they interviewed the cadet commander of the corps of cadets there about this one. And—on *60 Minutes*—and Trey was twelve at the time—twelve or thirteen—and he had gotten on this bandwagon: “Yeah, they need to save the males, yeah! They need—Yeah, you go Norm.” I think the guy's name was Norm. It'd been one of his camp counselors and now he's the cadet commander.

And I let him go on for a little while, and then I said, “Whoa, whoa.” I said, “You and I need to talk.” I said, “First of all, just remember what your mother does. I'm a female in a man's army.” I said, “So before you start carrying on like this, this anti-female stuff, you stop and think what your mother does for a living. What puts food on your table.” And I said, “Furthermore, twenty years ago Norm couldn't have gone to the Citadel.”

And this child looked up at me and said, “Well, why not?”

I said, “Because he's black.”

He looked at me with the most innocent look and he said, “But being black isn't like being a female.” [chuckles]

At which point—At which point in time my husband said, “Trey, you need to go on up to your room. [both laughing] You need to—We need to stop this conversation right now,” because Trey and I are the headstrong ones in the—and we're just alike, and we—he knew that this was going to get escalated.

Now, the bad part about it—the good part about it was Trey didn't see the color. He doesn't—He sees in a multicolored world and he doesn't know any of that

discrimination. The bad thing was, at that point in time, we had some work to do with gender. [laughs]

But it just shows how our whole country has evolved. And now the Citadel has female cadets and some of them have been the cadet commanders. West Point's the same way. But we—as Virginia Slims used to say, “We’ve come a long way, baby.”

TS: That’s right, that’s right. Well we have, I think, covered just about everything on my list here—maybe we missed a couple things. But is there—

KS: Is it two o’clock?

TS: I don’t know. I don’t keep a watch when I’m doing this, but—

KS: I cannot believe—I knew I could talk, but I didn’t think I could talk that long. [chuckles]

TS: You did pretty good, Kathy. But is—I mean, it’s a—There’s no way we can cover everything that you’ve done in your career.

KS: Yes.

TS: I’ve tried to catch some themes and things.

KS: No, the chronological stuff, that would have been boring.

TS: Well, there we go. But is there anything maybe that I haven’t asked you or we haven’t talked about that you’d like to add?

KS: I just feel so incredibly grateful and blessed to have had this life, particularly from the point where I was actually joining the army to get out of town. But what a great move that was. And it just proves that when they—when they say—a lot of people think they’re empty words, that America’s the land of opportunity; they’re not empty words as far as I’m concerned because they certainly have rung true in my heart.

TS: Yeah.

KS: I’m trying to think—Oh, that fiancé that dumped me?

TS: Yes?

KS: After about two years, I realized I need to give this a rest, because I still kind of hated him. And I thought, “Look at the—Look at the job—I mean, I’m on the VIP suite at Walter Reed.” So I sat down and I wrote him a letter, and I said, “I’m—I just need you to know that you are completely forgiven; that I have forgiven you. I still think what you did was wrong, but you really did me a favor and I want you to know.” I got an

immediate response. And we became great friends. He died several years later, but we became great friends and he was a wonderful pen pal when I was in Saudi.

TS: Well, that's terrific.

KS: Yeah, and so—people can't harbor things like that.

TS: Well, and you've come full circle.

KS: Full circle.

TS: Because you're back in Washington—

KS: That's exactly right.

TS: —North Carolina.

KS: That's exactly right.

TS: Little Washington, right?

KS: Little Washington. I appreciate it too.

TS: Well, I thank you so much for your time today. It's been great talking with you.

KS: I—I could not think about how long this would last and what I could talk about, but I realized we've just scratched the surface.

TS: I know.

KS: It's been kind of cathartic for me too.

TS: Hopefully in a good way.

KS: Oh, yes, oh absolutely, absolutely.

TS: Well, if you don't have anything to add at this time—

KS: I don't think so.

TS: Alright. I'll go ahead and shut it off.

[End of Interview]