

**WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT**  
**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE:     Therese Strohmer

INTERVIEWER:     Paulette “Pat” Smith Sweeney

DATE:               October 29, 2013

[Begin Interview]

TS:     Today is October 29. This is Therese Strohmer. I’m at the home of Pat Sweeney in Cary, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Pat, could you state your name the way that you’d like it to be on your collection?

PS:     Absolutely. Paulette “Pat” Smith Sweeney.

TS:     Okay. Well, Pat, thanks so much for letting me join you here in your home. It’s very nice.

PS:     Well, I’m—I’m honored to have an opportunity to share these experiences with you.

TS:     I look forward to hearing about it. Well, why don’t we start out first by having you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

PS:     Okay. I was born in 1942, in the cold months of winter, February, in a little town in southeastern North Carolina, home of the Lumbee Indian, of which I am part. Pembroke—Pembroke, North Carolina, by Lumberton, Fort Bragg, as we are now relating military experiences. I did grow up with a real sense of the military because Fort Bragg was only thirty miles away.

TS:     Oh, okay, I didn’t realize it was that close.

PS:     Yeah. And during the second World War my father and two uncles were in service, and so I was always really very much aware.

TS:     Of the military?

PS:     Of the military.

TS:     What service were they in?

PS: My father was a GI Joe; army.

TS: Okay.

PS: I think Uncle Roger was in the air force, and I know Uncle Henry was in the navy.

TS: I see.

PS: Yeah.

TS: So they—they got a wide variety of experiences in the military.

PS: They did. They really did.

TS: What was it like growing up in Pembroke?

PS: In Pembroke—

TS: I see you were born in '42?

PS: In '42. It was really an interesting situation. I don't know how familiar you are with the history of the Lumbee.

TS: Not at all actually.

PS: Well, it's a mysterious history. It's not really a clear cut history. A mixed tribe. I subscribe to the story that we are really the legacy of Sir Walter Raleigh's Lost Colony.

TS: Okay.

PS: Because many of the family names are old English names. Like my mother's maiden name of Locklear, and then there's Lowery, and there's Oxendine, and these names are really not found anywhere else in the country, except in Robeson County. And at the time of my birth and life there, which was until I was ten years old, it was a segregated, tri-racial community. Three public school systems were supported by state tax dollars.

TS: Is that right?

PS: Yeah.

TS: So you had white, black, and American Indian?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: And Indian. Yes, with different campuses, faculty, school buses, the whole [negela?]. It was really an expensive way to educate the kids of Robeson County.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So that's where, like, a reflection—looking back, but at the time it was—

PS: The law of the land.

TS: Yeah.

PS: Segregation prevailed everywhere. It was black and white everywhere, and where there were Indians, of course, reservations, but this was not really a reservation.

TS: No?

PS: The Lumbee have never really been federally recognized.

TS: Oh, they're not? Okay.

PS: Because, again, of not being pure blood. The pure bloods, like Cherokee or Iroquois or Apache have a sense of history and purity—

TS: Right.

PS: —that they want preserved, and so they have a hands off kind of attitude about people of mixed Indian—white, black—that they don't want to acknowledge as true American Indian.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I wonder if they can do that—

PS: [both chuckle]

TS: I wonder if they can do that DNA testing that they do now to see—

PS: They did—

TS: Did they?

PS: —some of that at one point in time. Yes, but it's really—it's been impossible to trace back to the specific Indian tribe.

TS: Oh, sure.

PS: Because at the time of exploration before the newcomers—as I call the Europeans—before they really—

TS: That's a polite way to put it.

PS: Yes, it is—found the new world, American Indians had been pretty mobile, and actually, it turns out, that the coasts have always—and rivers are transportation systems, so they had—a lot of different groups had been in and out of the North Carolina area where Sir Walter Raleigh and Portuguese people were [unclear], lots of explorers, so really it's—it's—we can—I don't think there'll ever be proof positive of what native tribes are intermingled in the Lumbee, but for sure it seems like—that there were—there was intermarriage out of the early colonists and perhaps the Lost Colony; that they really were lost to the newcomer but they did survive with the natives.

TS: I see. That's a—That's a—I've never heard that before. That's very curious; the story.

PS: Isn't it?

TS: It is. It's interesting, too, that if—even though they weren't federally recognized, they were discriminated against.

PS: Yes.

TS: As if—

PS: Yes.

TS: —the same way that other Native Americans were.

PS: Exactly. And blacks. I mean, you're either Caucasian—the chosen people—or you're lesser. I mean, that was the feeling for so long; the white man's burden and the white man's destiny, and you really see it played out in the New World.

TS: So what—So you're just a little girl, though, growing up in Pembroke.

PS: I'm just a happy-go-lucky little tomboy girl who's favorite place to be was my mulberry tree in my backyard. I climbed it and lived in it all the summers I was able to.

TS: How big—How tall was it?

PS: The mulberry tree? It was humongous. It's canopy covered most of—or a good half of our backyard, so—

TS: Oh, wow.

PS: —it was forty, fifty, and had—feet tall and had wonderful big branches for climbing and hiding and eavesdropping on adult conversations. [chuckles]

TS: Is that right? Did you like to do that?

PS: Because a lot of activity in the summertime was outdoors, even the laundry and canning and all kinds of—and keeping cool, because that was way before air conditioning.

TS: You'd get lost up in the tree and they'd lose track of you and then you'd be—

PS: I tried to. I tried to be very quiet so I could have access to their conversations, and my own daydreams and imaginary games.

TS: Now, did you have any brothers or sisters?

PS: I have one younger brother, four years younger, so it took a while for us to become close. He was just, kind of, a irritant as a kid. [chuckles]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: The age gap was—yeah—a little too much at four, sure. What—So besides playing in your mulberry tree, what other kind of things did you do for fun?

PS: Well, of course, there were neighborhood kids and we did the usual kinds of games. Our swimming was interesting. We had a—a swimming hole on one of the local rivers that we shared on Saturday afternoons, sometimes, with cows. [laughs] It was a—a basic semi-rural kind of existence, but it was very carefree. And we were a large extended family. We lived with my grandparents until I was ten so I had a lot of adult interaction with aunts and uncles and other cousins. As I say, we—it was a big extended family, so all the [unclear] had the one brother. I felt, growing up, like I had lots of—Well, I did have lots of cousins who were like brothers and sisters.

TS: Very close and—and geographically located in that area?

PS: Yes; yeah. We were together every weekend.

TS: Yeah?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Well, what—what did your folks do for a living growing up?

PS: Well, my folks—my mom and dad married as college kids.

TS: Okay.

PS: So they were finishing up their education.

TS: Where were they going to school?

PS: At the local college, Pembroke State College, which now is part of the university system.

TS: Okay.

PS: It was originally a normal school; a college where teacher preparation was offered. My mother became a teacher. My father left college to go—to do his military stint, and when he returned he actually finished up at the University of Indiana.

TS: Did he get to use his GI Bill?

PS: Yes; yes. And then he and my mother both, after we moved here—and they began work—did graduate studies over at Chapel Hill.

TS: What did they study?

PS: Well, my father continued in business; an MBA [Master of Business Administration].

TS: Okay.

PS: And my mom did education.

TS: So they're both graduate students?

PS: Yes, at—

TS: Graduates?

PS: —at Chapel Hill.

TS: Really nice. Was that unusual for people in your community—

PS: Yes, it was.

TS: —to have such a strong educational background?

PS: Well, my grandfather had—was a Methodist minister—circuit riding Methodist minister, and a teacher.

TS: What was his name?

PS: James Walter Smith.

TS: Okay.

PS: He was also the postmaster in Pembroke for a while, but to the education point he actually ran a one room schoolhouse, so he taught—was responsible for primary through, at least, eighth grade.

TS: Is that your paternal or maternal grandfather?

PS: Paternal.

TS: Paternal?

PS: And I can recall going to a school with him a couple of times. It was a tiny [chuckling] —a tiny one room—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Like, a one room—

PS: Yeah, there probably weren't more than a dozen or fifteen students spread out through the grades, and it was before I started school, so—

TS: Is that right?

PS: —I don't really have a lot of recall about the specifics but—

TS: How many Lumbee are there, like, in the—in the area that you were in?

PS: I think it's over a hundred thousand.

TS: A hundred thousand?

PS: It's a big population.

TS: That's a pretty good size.

PS: It's the largest population of Native Americans this side of the Mississippi—

TS: Oh.

PS: —recognized by the state.

TS: So Andrew Jackson didn't push a—

PS: Didn't get everybody out. [both chuckle] A lot of the Cherokee but, however, there is still a large Cherokee reservation by Asheville.

TS: Okay. Well, now, so you left here when you're ten, so before you leave—Pembroke anyhow—

PS: Right.

TS: —what—you were in school and you—you said you were in a segregated school.

PS: Right.

TS: Do you want to describe that a little bit; what that was like?

PS: Well, I wouldn't know anything except what I experienced, and that it—how different it would be. It seemed, though, after we came to Cary that the education that we were experiencing in—in Pembroke was very similar, if not the same—

TS: Okay.

PS: —as what had been happening here in the Cary area, because my—I'm now searching for my word.

TS: That's okay.

PS: My integration into the school classroom was not really that difficult.

TS: No? But it was not segregated anymore in Cary?

PS: No. Well, Cary was segregated, yes, at black and white, but American Indians were—outside of Robeson County were really treated as Caucasian.

TS: Okay.



PS: Accepted as Caucasian.

TS: Except for down in Pembroke.

PS: Robeson County was—I—I—It has to be similar to reservation Indians and their locations, that they would be discriminated against by both the black and the white, but here, and really for most of my life, the—because of the mistreatment of Native Americans by the newcomers there's always been a wellspring of goodwill toward Native Americans. How it really got so testy in Robeson County, the fight over power and resources, I—I'm not sure.

TS: Did you experience anything as a little girl that was upsetting to you, for that kind of discrimination? Do you remember anything like that?

PS: The thing that I remember most is “whites only” signs in public places, and in movie houses and water fountains; being aware of—But there were looks, but actually mean treatment and—there wasn't that because you really didn't put yourself in a position to have that much social contact and press an issue of acceptance.

TS: So you knew what your boundaries were supposed to be—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —for those kind of social contacts?

PS: Yeah. And of course, doing business, shopping, etcetera, everybody is interested in—

TS: Getting the money?

PS: —getting the money, so they're going to—those kinds of interactions were civil, but at the social level there was just no intermingling.

TS: Was it the same—

PS: Except at the college, which of course was manned by white professors. And so, the kids, the Indian students who were at the college, began to be—socialize—[background noise] began to socialize and integrate.

TS: In a positive way?

PS: In a positive way.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Interesting. So with the—You were talking about how the schools are—the three tiered system of segregation for them.

PS: Right.

TS: So—But for the other public, like, water fountains and things—pools and things like that, what was it—was it still three tiered or was it, like, white and colored or [unclear]—

PS: You know what? I think it was basically the white and colored.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yeah, it was like just “whites only” and then there was another one. [both chuckle]

TS: As long as you went to the one that—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —wasn’t off limits.

PS: If you really had to go. But because of that you really just, kind of, didn’t want to have to participate in a—that kind of segregation.

TS: So your—your parents are getting higher education.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Your mom is in—a teacher, and your dad’s a businessman.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Does he have his own business or does he work under someone or—

PS: Well, actually he did a long career at State College—North Carolina State College [University].

TS: What’s your dad’s name?

PS: Joseph Walter Smith. James Walter; Joseph Walter; Michael—No, that’s my son. [both chuckle] Joseph Michael; that’s how it goes.

TS: Is that right?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Joseph Michael Smith?

PS: So my dad was in a business position—administrative position—

TS: I see, okay.

PS: —for the—let's say—Department of Agronomy at State College.

TS: Agronomy? What is that?

PS: Land use; farming.

TS: Okay; fancy name.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: Land—Yeah. And then he became affiliated with the utilities commission, managing, operating their first research department, so.

TS: Oh, okay. So kind of getting that off the ground and stuff like that?

PS: Yeah, yeah.

TS: And then your mom. Is she still teaching when you moved to Cary?

PS: Yes.

TS: Where's she—And what's your mom's name? Where's she teaching?

PS: Lula Jane Locklear Smith, and she was a language teacher, basically in Spanish.

TS: Oh, is that right?

PS: Yes. And so, she joined the faculty at Cary High School as the first non-Caucasian teacher.

TS: Oh. Well, she—she just left. I almost want to bring her in here, [both chuckle] to ask her how that experience was.

PS: And Cary High School is a storied high school, in that it is the first publically funded high school in Wake County, and maybe the state of North Carolina, back in 1907—

TS: Okay.

PS: —when the state decided to get into the business of public education.

TS: So did it integrate early or—No?

PS: No.

TS: She's shaking her head.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: But it had—[chuckles] But it had a smooth—I mean, fairly smooth for the times.

TS: Transition?

PS: Transition, yeah.

TS: Well, what was it like for you then to move from this semi-rural area with a beautiful mulberry tree to—Were you more in the city in Cary or—

PS: We actually spent the first summer in Raleigh—

TS: Okay.

PS: —as my folks were really trying to decide if they were going to make the move, and into which of the communities to settle, and it really was kind of going to be determined on where mom got a teaching job. And when it turned out to be Cary, then we came to Cary. And it was late in the summer and there wasn't a lot of time to find housing.

TS: To get ready for school?

PS: So there was a teacherage on the campus, which was an old dormitory because the first school had been a residential high school, and so they had converted one of the dorms into apartments for young teachers or teachers needing temporary housing. So we moved into the teacherage.

TS: Oh.

PS: Right alongside—Probably not fifty yards between the high school building and where we would be living. So that was certainly interesting to go from—to go into community living as, again, the first non-Caucasian.

TS: Right.

PS: And the only Indian family in the white community. It was really interesting.

TS: What do you remember about that? Anything—

PS: Well, I was very nervous, naturally.

TS: Were you?

PS: Yeah. Even though—Even though people were genuinely kind and open, I have always been aware of identification badge as skin color, as birthday suit. There is no escaping it. It's a part of human nature. When somebody looks different you're curious as to what you're looking at, so I have always been explaining about who I am, what I am.

TS: Is it usually surprising to people?

PS: Yes.

TS: Yeah.

PS: And it certainly was here in Cary.

TS: In Cary?

PS: Yes. And again, because of that wellspring of good feeling that I talked about it was really—it was not a bad transition. We—

TS: Maybe uncomfortable sometimes?

PS: Maybe what?

TS: Maybe uncomfortable sometimes but—

PS: Yes, but primarily I think because of just the—it was an internal—it was an internal insecurity, as opposed to external circumstances or attitudes or behaviors that were coming. But there was just a—a nagging doubt, really, about how—because to jump from segregated and being in an all Indian school and to come and to be accepted, it really just—it just—it seemed too easy and I—I was just a little suspicious I guess.

TS: Were you—Do you think your parents were nervous at all?

PS: Oh, I'm sure they were; I'm—I'm sure they were. But—

TS: But they didn't mention to you?

PS: We didn't talk a lot about it. We really didn't—did not talk a lot about it.

TS: So what school did you go to, then, when you got here?

PS: Cary; Cary Elementary [School].

TS: Cary Elementary?

PS: Yes.

TS: Now, you sound pretty fearless as a young girl. [both laugh] Did you like school?

PS: Loved school.

TS: Yeah? What did you like about it?

PS: The socializing. [laughs]

TS: Is that right?

PS: But I do like school and learning as well.

TS: Yeah?

PS: So I grew up with a bunch of teachers; aunts, uncles, grandfather. It seemed like the way to be in the world was learning and school and that routine, so.

TS: Did you have any favorite teachers?

PS: Actually, my fourth grade teacher down in Robeson County was a big influence on me, and please don't ask me her name—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I'm not going to.

PS: —because I don't remember, but it was all about geography. It was all about seeing the big, wide world, and at that particular time it wasn't Asia, but it was South America and it was the Amazon and—

TS: Completely different world though, right?

PS: Exactly.

TS: So it's very interesting to get a world view that's different from the one you're in—

PS: Exactly.

TS: —as a young girl. Yeah.

PS: And the trees—the river and the trees and the nature, I think that was a lot of it. That I could kind of identify with that aspect.

TS: Did you like—

PS: While it's different I still have the touchstone.

TS: So you like the nat—nat—things that had to do with nature—

PS: Yes.

TS: —and outdoors?

PS: Yes.

TS: Well, pretty neat.

PS: Yeah.

TS: So as—So you're a young girl then in Cary. What kind of things did you do for fun here? So you're—It's the fifties you're growing up in.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Do you have some thoughts[?] and things like that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: Well, we had our—Of course, we had the usual sock hops and sleepovers, and we thought—we thought initially, as elementary school kids, it was such a big deal to be able to walk everywhere, and after school to walk the two blocks—they're long but it was still two blocks—down to the local drugstore and catch up on all the gossip; rehash the day. And of course Friday night, the ball was a big deal and—the basketball. Everything revolved around either the school activities or church MYF.

TS: MYF?

PS: Methodist Youth Fellowship.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yeah.

TS: MYF, okay.

PS: MYF. One huge significant membership and club outside of school or church, but really blending both of those, that the young girls participated in in Cary, and I was right there in the midst of it, was the [International Order of the] Rainbow for Girls, which was a Masonics order sponsored activity; Rainbows for Girls.

TS: Is that like Girl Scouts but a different kind of activity?

PS: Well, I—I think it was more leadership because it was for older girls—

TS: Okay.

PS: —and it was really the instilling of community service and—

TS: What kind of things did you do? How old are you then when you're in this group?

PS: This started at, like, seventh, eighth grade—

TS: Okay.

PS: —and went through high school.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yeah.

TS: You were pretty involved in that, then?

PS: Yeah.

TS: What'd you like about it?

PS: Well, I did like the—I liked the structure of the group and the lessons and the ritual. The ritual of participation, the sisterhood that one felt, the community service that we did. The one project that I remember is a collection of—a Santa toy box that I delivered—because



I was then, like, the president of the group—back to an orphanage in Pembroke at Christmas time, and so it was really—it was that kind of thing that really helped keep us on the straight and narrow and really make—developed in all of us, really, a sense of community and giving back.

TS: And a sense of citizenship, too, maybe.

PS: And citizenship, definitely.

TS: Interesting, yeah. So from what you do later there's got to be some connection, I would think.

PS: Well, exactly right. The ritual, the order, the participation, and the sense of citizenship was certainly fed[?] right into [American] Red Cross.

TS: Now, you said you were a tomboy as a young girl. Now, did you play any sports in—in high school or elementary school or—

PS: You know, I didn't. I came out as a young married mother, suburban housewife. I became a jock in high school. [chuckles]

TS: Is that right?

PS: In high school I was a cheerleader, and again in other more academic related clubs, like Future Teachers [of America?] and the [The National] Beta Club and—more than sports minded. Because again, let's remember in the fifties, it was really basketball for girls or I guess there was softball. I don't even remember that but it was mainly basketball. I always loved to swim. I was always in the water at some time, but never organized sports. That was not a big deal for girls.

TS: Well, that would have taken away from your social time, too, right?

PS: [laughing] Yes.

TS: So with the background of your parents, did you have high expect—did they have high expectations for you as a young girl to go to college?

PS: Oh, definitely, that was always on the radar screen. In fact, for Cary, it was really like a preparatory high school.

TS: Oh, okay.

PS: We had, like, 90% college bound.

TS: Wow, that's pretty high.

PS: I—I may be exaggerating it—

TS: That's fine.

PS: —but it was very high. It was certainly more than 60%. It was—Yeah.

TS: How big of a high school?

PS: There were a hundred in my graduating class.

TS: Okay. So that's—that's a small group to focus on, too—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —then, to be able to—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —to move them on.

PS: Well, let's—let's remember, too, that Cary was a suburb, situated in a really ripe educational surrounding. You've got Raleigh with North Carolina State [University]; Wake Forest [University] is not that far away at the time in the town of Wake Forest; you've got Duke [University] over in Durham; and you've got UNC Chapel Hill. And you also have state government in Raleigh. So a lot of people living in Cary at the time are either affiliated with state college or state government, so you've got a very educated community here.

TS: An aware—awareness of that education too.

PS: Right. And I think the fact that it was the first public high school and had such a reputation was a draw for these professional families.

TS: Well, so in high school were there classes that you really enjoyed, that you thought about as—What—What kind of expectations were there for you for the future? As a young girl still, in a—late 1950s, early 1960s, your expectations of what kind of jobs you could have and things like that, or what college—

PS: Were very limited; were very limited. And I—The expectation was education; that I would be a teacher; that I would be a teacher.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: To be a teacher?

PS: Yeah. And in terms of where I would attend, my father and my mother were very frugal, and the state system had a very good reputation, so I thought it would be at one of the state schools. Even though a part of me—that social side of me—was attracted to the likes of Meredith College, [chuckles] because I thought they were a little more social there.

TS: Where's Meredith at?

PS: That's in Raleigh by state college; a girls school. It was a girls school but I thought they had more easier access to socializing than the gals of—at Greensboro did. And there was that attitude at the time that the women's college was for the more serious [laughs] female students.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: What—That wasn't just—That didn't describe you at the time?

PS: I didn't think so.

TS: No?

PS: Serious enough but not to the exclusion of fun and socializing. I would have really, probably, headed to Chapel Hill if possible, but at that time you had to be a nursing student to start there as a freshman, otherwise you transferred in as a junior, and who knew what I would be doing by the time I was a junior.

TS: Did you want to be a teacher?

PS: Yes, I thought it was a noble thing to be, but it wasn't—I didn't see it as the end all. And so, when I got to WC [Women's College of the University of North Carolina] and discovered that there were other options, and psychology was really just beginning to become significant in early childhood development. That's where I went; I was drawn to that.

TS: Is that what you graduated in?

PS: Yes. Child Development and Family Relations out of the School of Home Economics, it was then.

TS: I see. So how—how was it that you ended up at Woman's College in Greensboro?

PS: Well, because it was where my parents really wanted me to go.

TS: Because of the cost?

PS: Yes.

TS: And probably made the location not too—

PS: Yes.

TS: —far away.

PS: Exactly.

TS: What was that like for you?

PS: Well, again, it was another—it was not unlike me coming to Cary because it really has—it's taken a long time for me to get really past the initial suspicion of total acceptance. Okay? As—As the native girl that I looked like. So I was a little nervous but I was excited, and it didn't take me long, again, to really appreciate the world that I was being exposed to, because we really did have fifty state representation there on campus, and I've always been more comfortable in a diverse population because there's less attention on me when there's a broad spectrum of backgrounds. So I loved it. I ended up really, really liking it, and there was plenty of social opportunity. [laughing]

TS: Like what? Let's talk about some of those. What kind of social opportunities? Tell me what you remember.

PS: Well, it was basically the bus trips to Carolina [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill?].

TS: What were you doing on those bus trips?

PS: Well, actually it was the girls just being delivered to the campus for fraternity parties; that kind of thing.

TS: That's what I was thinking. [both chuckling] Well, I mean, in the pictures that you showed me from the Red Cross before we started, you—you seemed to have a really open personality.

PS: Right.

TS: Welcoming. It looks like you had lots of friends all the time.

PS: Yeah.

TS: So I imagine that once you got to WC that wasn't hard for you to make friends.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: Not at all, not at all really, and I learned to play Bridge and that was an instant opportunity for a wide variety of friends.

TS: A lot of Bridge playing in the—

PS: Yes.

TS: —commons area and things like that?

PS: And in—And in rooms.

TS: Yeah?

PS: Yeah, bedrooms, and that's where we did our cigarette smoking. Terrible, terrible thing but that was one of the rights of passage, as it were, to young adulthood and parents not around to tell you no. But thank goodness I was able to—I did smoke for a while but it was never a big addiction.

TS: It was a social thing, right?

PS: It was a social thing.

TS: Yeah.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Now, did you have a curfew?

PS: We did. Oh my goodness. We had—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Where did you live too?

PS: Dorms.

TS: Which dorms? Do you remember?

PS: Jamison is where I started out and then I was in Winfield [Weil/Winfield], and we had a sign in/sign out system, we had to get permission from our parents to go off on the weekends.

TS: This is where we need to videotape, because of the face that Pat has—

PS: [laughing]

TS: —is showing that she was not happy with those things.

PS: Yeah, it seemed a little—too tight, I thought, for young college women to have to get—still get permission from their parents to go home with your roommate, or to sign in and out of the dorm. I mean, considering where we'd come, maybe we need sign ins and sign outs now. [both chuckle] The world is a more dangerous place now than it was then. But anyway, that's how life was being lived then.

TS: But you—Now, you went in 1960 and in—in—before—you started in the fall of that year, I would assume.

PS: Yes.

TS: But in—in the beginning of that year we had the sit-downs [sit-ins] in Greensboro.

PS: Yes.

TS: Do you remember anything about that? Were your parents concerned at all about that; the civil rights movement?

PS: I don't—I don't remember there being a lot of real genuine concern about that, even though the sit-ins—some of the sit-ins were taking place close to campus, down at the corner.

TS: Right.

PS: But because we all felt that it was the right thing to be happening, we all—we were all in support.

TS: Oh, you were?

PS: Yeah, for the most part. The liberals were—certainly wanted these segregation rules to fall. So there was a lot of positive support actually—Yeah, concern that violence would

not reach out and touch too many people, but in terms of the basis of what was happening we were all very supportive.

TS: Well, I remember going to an event where some of the young women from Women's College had gone, just walked down to see what was going on, and they had their sweat—Was is sweaters that you wore, or jackets that had—

PS: Jackets.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Jackets, and so it identified them from Women's College and they got in a lot of trouble and maybe were going to be expelled.

PS: Is that right? I don't remember that.

TS: That was probably be—like, in that time period before you arrived, so I didn't know if there was—they had more, like, rules for you about how you could participate, or if they were—

PS: That's an—That's an interesting question because I—I really—I don't recall that. I don't recall that being a big issue. But again, remember, at 1960, a freshman, you're really into your own self and your own experience and making transition. Quite frankly, politics and I did not really become one until 1964.

TS: Yeah?

PS: The buildup in Vietnam and the assassination—the election of JFK [John Fitzgerald Kennedy].

TS: Yes.

PS: That was when politics became real for me.

TS: What do you think about that election; when he was elected?

PS: And then the—

TS: That'd have been '60.

PS: Yeah, and then the assassination in '63.

TS: Sixty-three, yeah; [unclear].

PS: And I was actually up in your part of the world; I was in Detroit, Michigan.

TS: On the day of the assassination?

PS: Yes.

TS: What were you doing up there?

PS: I was an exchange student. I was doing an exchange program into the Merrill Palmer Institute of Child Development, family relations [Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child and Family Development]. I have some paperwork on that. I didn't know if this discussion would include that, but I do have some paperwork on that experience.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: What did that involve? What was that—What was that about?

PS: Well, it was just a semester in this institute to really broaden a student's exposure to theory and research practices in child development and family relations. Another world expansion in that kids from all across the country came. My first introduction to Mormons. They're from Utah. There were several students there. And as I say, it was only a semester, but here we were in Detroit, and we did go out into the school systems to observe, and that was quite eye-opening and different than—

TS: I wonder if you went to Southwestern [High School]. That's where my grandfather was teaching at that time.

PS: Is that right?

TS: In Detroit, yeah.

PS: What level was he teaching? High school?

TS: Yes.

PS: No, this was at—We were in—

TS: Lower elementary?

PS: Yeah, and I—again, I don't really recall—

TS: Exactly where.



PS: —exactly where I was.

TS: So when that—So when that occurred, when JFK was assassinated when you were in Detroit, what were your feelings at that time? Do you remember?

PS: I remember being—Yeah, well, very upset with just the loss of—of the president and what that was doing to his own immediate family; the country and the immediate family. And I was a little concerned for safety at that point in time, and we did not leave the campus that weekend at all, but we stayed in front of the TV and—and watched everything.

TS: The funeral procession and all that?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Do you remember during—even be—while he's president and the Cold War; like, the Cuban Missile Crisis?

PS: Yeah. I remember—I remember being down in the preschool at UNC when that happened.

TS: In Chapel Hill?

PS: No, in Greensboro.

TS: In Greensboro?

PS: In Greensboro. I can remember, again, the concern and the tension—the nerves—that the adults had that day.

TS: So there was, like, a tension they were passing on?

PS: Yeah. Everybody was quiet and listening to the radio and really nervous.

TS: So you weren't really 100% tuned into that? You were just—It's like it was reflecting off of the people that are around you?

PS: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

PS: Exactly.

TS: Interesting. So—

PS: Well, at that point in time I think there was still that sense that we were still invulnerable or not vulnerable, because of the oceans, even though it's Cuba—

TS: Right.

PS: —and our—our military superiority, we just knew that we had the best equipment. And so, there not going—it's not coming to where I am.

TS: Right, it's not that far removed from winning in World War II and—

PS: Exactly.

TS: Well, how about we—So you're back at Women's College and you're going along with your classes and having your wonderful activities [both chuckle] that you're doing, and so you're—you're thinking about—What's your—What is your major that you're doing at that time? The—

PS: Child development—

TS: Child—

PS: —and family relations, and that was basically the preparing you to be a preschool teacher.

TS: Oh, okay. And so, that's why—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: So I would still come out with a teaching certificate.

TS: Okay. That's why you were down in that classroom the day of the—the Cuban Missile Crisis.

PS: The school, yes; the nursery school on campus—

TS: Okay.

PS: —was really our laboratory for observing kids—preschool kids, and then working on the floor with the teachers in teaching preschool.

TS: Had—Had the college been integrated yet with African-American students by that time? I don't remember what year it started. It was in the sixties but I don't—

PS: Now, I don't recall that we had lived in black students in the dorm. Maybe there were some graduate students or off campus. That's a—I haven't really thought about that. There must have been some black girls but not in my immediate vicinity. But again, maybe it was me and the Italians and—[both chuckle]

TS: You said people from all over the country, right—

PS: Yeah, yeah.

TS: —you had made friends with?

PS: And I know we had some men at the—the latter years in the graduate programs. I'm—There must have been some black students then. I'm sure there were.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: There just weren't any in your circle.

PS: Exactly.

TS: So what are you thinking about—You're thinking about, like, you're going to be a teacher, right?

PS: Oh, I figured that that is—that would be my destiny.

TS: Okay.

PS: But then senior year comes.

TS: Okay.

PS: I come back from Detroit, and a lot of girls are getting engaged, and those who are not getting married are going into classrooms for the most part. And having been to Detroit and—I just had this yen to travel; to do something other than return to a small town school system where my exposure to eligible men would be very limited. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, how do you relate that to your trip to Detroit?

PS: Well, because there were a number of male students actually, in psychology and sociology who were at the Merrill Palmer Institute. And so, all of—While there I see these new fields of endeavor and I said, “Ah ha! I do not necessarily have to be a nursery

school teacher.” And actually, I came back after graduation—No, I guess that was after Korea, so I’m getting ahead of myself.

So what happened was, during the spring semester of senior year there was a strong recruitment program on campus then. Lots of organizations and school systems came to interview and make students aware of what jobs were out there, Red Cross being one. So I went to hear what the Red Cross had to say; what were the opportunities at Red Cross. And the gal who was at the table was promoting, with a lot of enthusiasm, this [unclear] mobile[?] program, and, boy, that just sounded like great opportunity to get to Pearl S. Buck [Pearl Sydenstricker Buck was an American writer who spent the first parts of the twentieth century living in and writing about peasant life in China.] country, and to leave the country and see some of the world that I probably—I thought at the time—would never have an opportunity to see, except in a situation like this, and it wouldn’t—it wasn’t going to cost me or my parents any money. This was something to really think about.

[chuckling] Well, I tell me parents what I’m interested in and the reaction is, “You don’t have any idea how close that is to China, do you?”

I said, “Well, I—I think I do.” Well, that’s a dangerous part of the world.

TS: Had they talked about going to Korea at that time? Is that where—

PS: That’s what I’m saying—

TS: Okay.

PS: —as I have said this is where the program is—

TS: I see, okay.

PS: —in Korea and they’re saying China and the danger. “Goodness gracious, I’m going to be with the military. How safe—You can’t be much safer than that.” So reluctantly—reluctantly—

TS: And how old are you?

PS: —it was approved. I’m—What?—twenty-two. Twenty-two.

TS: Did you have to get your parents approval to go?

PS: No, but you wanted their approval.

TS: Right.

PS: You wanted them to say, “Okay.” I probably felt like I did have to get it, but you didn’t need to have a piece of paper signed—

TS: Right.

PS: —giving you permission for the Red Cross to take you. So a second interview. They wanted to see me again, I needed to see them again, and the headquarters was out of Atlanta. You would not believe how I dressed to travel and to go to this job interview.

TS: Yeah? How—Tell me about it.

PS: Sunday best, with a hat and gloves. First airplane flight.

TS: That you’ve ever taken?

PS: Yes. And, as I say, a pre—presenting yourself, really—as I look back on it—like I was headed to church. It was really—It was a funny thing in retrospect.

TS: Was that something that—A way that you would normally not dress?

PS: A hat and gloves? We were not wearing hats and gloves normally as college students on the weekends. We did not get dressed up like that anymore to do church, but somehow proper Red Cross in Atlanta. [chuckles]

TS: So they had—Had they conveyed to you that this was, kind of, the attire that you needed to wear to the interview?

PS: Well, you needed to be dressed. They certainly didn’t specify hats and gloves but you needed to be properly dressed.

TS: Right. You wanted to make a good impression.

PS: Yes.

TS: So they were interviewing you and you were, kind of, checking them out and—

PS: Right.

TS: Okay. How did the interview go?

PS: Obviously it went very well. [both chuckle] I liked what I heard and they thought that I had the stuff to—to stick with it and do the program.

TS: And how long was the—your commitment?

PS: A year; thirteen months.

TS: Thirteen months, that's it?

PS: Thirteen months.

TS: Just a year.

PS: Yes.

TS: That's not too bad.

PS: Not at all. Plus, the additional travel that you could do was a big enticement to me; the R&R [rest and relaxation] trips that you could take.

TS: Okay. Now, had you always wanted to travel or had you gotten this bug closer to when you were graduating?

PS: I had always wanted to travel; I had always wanted to travel.

TS: Since you read about Brazil?

PS: Yes, exactly. Yeah. And then really, as I say, going to Detroit even though there were drawbacks, but I had an aunt and uncle who lived outside Washington D.C. in Bethesda, Maryland and we would visit them periodically. And we had made a trip to New York. So I had been traveling some.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: A few places?

PS: And as I say, I always felt more comfortable in a diverse setting where I could just, kind of, be part of the group and not the focal.

TS: I see. So you had about a two week training. This is 1964, then, right?

PS: Nineteen sixty-four; the summer of 1964, yeah. We had two weeks in Washington D.C. before we took off.

TS: How was that? What did you learn there?

PS: Well, it was Red Cross history, it was clubmobile, women in—affiliated with the military, service to the military, and programming what we were actually doing in the culture.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So what was the mission of the clubmobile?

PS: It was really morale boosting for troops, so it was to supplement whatever programs the army was able to provide. It was a touchstone back to females stateside, hoping that that would keep a lot of guys on the straight and narrow for their sweethearts back home.

TS: Again, we need video because she—

PS: [laughing]

TS: Her eyes just went to the ceiling on that.

PS: Well, it was such a noble thought that fifty American girls for forty [?] American troops would be enough touchstone for the fellows to stay out of the village, which we know is just not humankind. But anyway, it—it was a good—it was a good program.

TS: And was this also a reflection of your time with the Rainbow for Girls, for their service and—

PS: Exactly. Exactly. And the uniforms and the ritual and all of that. It fed right into my sense of commitment and community and give back, and working together.

TS: Now, did you have your own, kind of, discipline structure, or did you feel that was something that you needed some, maybe, guidance with? Are you naturally self-disciplined in those ways?

PS: I think I am.

TS: Yeah?

PS: I think I am. I do like order. I mean, I like variety but I—I do like order.

TS: How about for independence?

PS: And I like independence. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. Well, as soon as you said you went up in that mulberry tree I already knew that, but—

PS: I do. I do like independence. I—I think that I have an ability to draw disparate things together in a way that I can see the whole and help other people do that as well, and I liked putting a new spin on old things. Not that I can't come up with brand new ideas but I can see different aspects of situations and make them interesting.

TS: It is. And so, tell me about your—getting—your trip to Korea, then—South Korea.

PS: You mean just the physical aspect of getting to—

TS: However you want to describe it.

PS: [chuckles] Well actually, we were on a troop airplane.

TS: Oh, you were? Okay.

PS: Yes, and so we were, like, twenty-some hours in air. We did have a touch—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was it a military place then?

PS: On a military plane.

TS: Oh, okay.

PS: So we were getting our introduction to what life was going to be like as a small group of women in all these guys—

TS: How many of you went together?

PS: —in route. What is the number? Here we are.

TS: In that picture?

PS: One, two, three, four, five—Seven of us.

TS: Okay.

PS: Seven was our class that headed to Korea.



TS: You all went together?

PS: We all flew together, and then we dispersed.

TS: While you were there?

PS: Yes.

TS: So there were two in a particular—

PS: There were six units operating—

TS: Okay.

PS: —and I don't remember if it was two, two, how we split up, but we were replacing girls who were leaving, just like military rotation.

TS: I see, okay. So describe—So you had a really long plane ride; twenty hours—

PS: Yes.

TS: —or so. Same plane? Did you stop anywhere?

PS: We did stop for fuel and I forget where it was. We didn't—We were not—We didn't deplane.

TS: Okay.

PS: It was just a fuel stop. Maybe Hawaii.

TS: Were you thinking at all about, “Why did I decide to do this?” or were you excited about it?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: No way.

TS: Super excited?

PS: I thought it was great. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah?

PS: I thought it was great, and very excited to be on—on my way, on my big adventure.

TS: Well, you described to me earlier before we turned the tape on about landing and what that experience was like.

PS: Oh, boy.

TS: Do you want to describe that on tape?

PS: Well, of course, you were really ready to be out of the plane, and for fresh air and sunshine, and just a little more space between everybody. But when the doors of the plane opened and the air came into the plane it was, first of all, hot. [chuckles] We had forgotten that it would be really hot. It was July, August, and there was a perfume in the air unknown to most of us, but—

TS: Was it a pleasant perfume?

PS: A pleasant perfume? No, it was not. It was pungent, and we figured it had to be some kind of chemical or fertilizer, and sure enough—I don't know how the word started but the word did come back. Somebody knew from having been there before or talking to people that it was the smell of nightsoil on the rice paddies, because rice paddies were everywhere and nightsoil was a big fertilizer. Do you know what nightsoil is?

TS: I only know because you told me earlier—

PS: [chuckling]

TS: —but you can tell me—you can describe it again.

PS: Well, it is human waste and plumbing—indoor plumbing was scant, and the recycling—they were recycling before we really became big recyclers. And so, that's—perfume if you will, was prevalent everywhere in the country during growing season.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Everywhere you went?

PS: Yeah.

TS: When you—When you touched down and had that experience of that smell in the air and everything, and then you're—So you're taken to Seoul? Did you go to Seoul?

PS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yes. Actually, I think what happened was that we—we were picked up by the military units that we were going to be working with, so the girls dispersed at the airport.

TS: Oh, so when you had your orders—because your orders here say where you're going?

PS: No, they really say Seoul—

TS: Okay.

PS: —as touchdown, but I think that we began that the girls really left—split up—for the units where they were going—

TS: Right away?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: —out at the airport.

TS: You didn't have a lot of time together once you landed.

PS: No, and I was staying right outside of Seoul, but still, the airport was far enough from where we were going—and Seoul proper—that we did get a sense of the countryside on our first ride to our locations, and it was a surprise to most of us how rural the countryside was.

TS: As in, like, a third-world country or un—less developed?

PS: Yes, a less developed country, in that the roads were hard, packed dirt, and transportation by natives was walking with baskets on top of head or around the body, or bicycles.

TS: Lots of bicycles?

PS: Yeah. So immediately we realized that, “Hmm. We have—We are going to have a very different experience,” but that was okay because, as I said, this reminded me of all the Pearl Buck that I had read. I just didn't expect it to be so similar still.

TS: I see. So tell me a little bit about what you remembered from Pearl Buck, when—when you had read about that.

PS: What I remember the most was the birthing of babies right out in the workplace, as it were, by the farm—in the farmland, and I—it was all about the women, and the subservient but dedicated and loving women who were in the Asian culture.

TS: Did you find that that was more the reality still, when you were there for that experience?

PS: Well, actually we had more experience with Korean men as bakers, drivers, office workers. We had those assigned to us. We had in our service two or three Korean men at each clubmobile station to help us execute our jobs.

TS: I see.

PS: Our contact with the women—Well, we did lead a—a pretty comfortable life, in that we were living with the officers in military camps. So that meant that we had house girls who kept our rooms. We only had one room each but they still were cleaned by house girls. Of course, we ate in the officers' clubs all our meals, and there were beauty parlor facilities on the base, and for, like, a quarter [chuckles] you could have your hair done every week, and another fifteen cents or whatever you—manicure, and that was where we had the most contact with females.

TS: With the women?

PS: With the women.

TS: Because they were the ones performing these—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —the cosmetic and the hair styles and things like that.

PS: Right. Yeah.

TS: Interesting. So you—So you were at—I think it was—ASCOM [Army Support Command Korea]? Was that the—

PS: ASCOM, yes.

TS: That's the first place that you were at?

PS: Yeah.

TS: And what was, like, a typical day?

PS: A typical day really was travel and program performance; four, five, six programs a day. It was really a coffee stop at different military units. The size could be from one or two, which would be up on a communications site on top of a mountain.

TS: Oh, but just one or two people would be there?

PS: Yeah.

TS: And you'd stop there? Oh wow.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

PS: Or a mess hall full of a hundred, a hundred and fifty people guys, and we had developed audience participation-type programs, like *Jeopardy* or *Name that Tune*. Sometimes, occasionally, we would do a little history program, but you're engaging, you're acting live a show host to get the guys to participate in the program, after you had been at the doughnut and coffee table. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah? Is that what came first?

PS: Yes.

TS: So how did you feel about the term, "Don—" and how do you feel about the term, "Donut Dolly," as a description?

PS: For me it was a term of endearment; I—I was not offended by it. I just thought it was a cute way for the fellows, really, to show their—their appreciation actually. They did appreciate the coffee hour and it—the repartee with the girls; they really did.

TS: And you're in a timeframe—like, we were talking earlier also how it's, like, between, like, wars, really.

PS: Exactly. The end—The Korean ceasefire had taken place in 1953 and Vietnam was just building up in the sixties.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Yeah, the year after you got—I think—

PS: Yes.

TS: The end of the time that you were in Korea.

PS: Yeah. In fact, some of the women that we worked with in Korea re-upped and went over to Vietnam to—to work. I did not do that but some did.

TS: We can get to that later. That's okay.

PS: [chuckles]

TS: We'll find out why you didn't do that. So you're—So you—The reception that you're getting from the—the men—the soldiers—is it pretty positive?

PS: Very positive.

TS: Yeah?

PS: Very positive, yeah. It was a—It was an innocent sister/brother or girlfriend/boyfriend flirt kind of situation for the most part, and we really didn't—we went back to our home-bases at the end of a workday at five o'clock, so that the socializing we did personally was going to really basically be with the servicemen that we lived with—

TS: On the base that you're at.

PS: On the base.

TS: Well, when—How was your—What was your transportation that you took to these places?

PS: Oh, it was everything. It was very interesting. The big deuce and a half tent covered trucks; military trucks. That was—That was probably our mainstay of transportation, because again, we were bringing the donuts with us. They made coffee but we were actually trooping the—our props and our donuts with us through the day.

TS: Where'd you get donuts? Is that where the baker came in handy?

PS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PS: They were made in a kitchen. Each club mobile unit—Pardon me—had its kitchen. It was a cake-like donut.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yeah, and they could me made in—enough for the days use; boxed. We had to have some idea of the size group we were going to, so they were already pre-boxed and allocated for that stop. Then we traveled by train to some places.

TS: Oh.

PS: We traveled by helicopter. That was really the most fun of course.

TS: Why did you like that so much?

PS: Well, because I'd never done it before. [both chuckle] It was fast. It was better than a couple of hours on those ruddy roads in a deuce and a half, with the dust covering you by the end of your day. We—Summertime—The next summer—spring and summer, while it was floods and then it was dust, or maybe it was dust in the wintertime too. So it was an interesting experience [unclear].

TS: So you got—Up above the dust was good in the helicopters?

PS: Yes.

TS: How—How were the pilots? How did they treat you when they were flying?

PS: They liked to show off their skills with the [chuckling] sudden drops and their big circles.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How did you handle that?

PS: You're twenty-two years of age, this is an adventure. The possible dangers really did—they were not front and center.

TS: [chuckles]

PS: It was about enjoying what you were doing.

TS: Having a good time.

PS: Having a good time, because that was what you were supposed to be bringing to your programs too.

TS: Right. What did you like best about it; this kind of work?

PS: Well, I certainly did like the sisterhood that was involved in the unit, and actually being with the women and doing—putting the programs together and being—living together. But I did—I enjoyed interacting with the variety of troops that we had. That was always interesting because it was a range in the enlisted men from college to high school dropouts, and again across the country with different accents, and depending on where the serviceman was from, depending on how he reacted to me and assumed what my heritage was. So I could be to—I could be Italian; I could be Hawaiian; a few people did say Native American; Greek. What—Whatever olive skin culture GI was looking at me, I was a touchstone for them, which was interesting to me.

TS: Did you let them run with whatever? If they said, “Oh, you’re—you’re Greek.” Did you—Did you—

PS: I was flattered by it and I certainly let them know that, and I said, “However, it might surprise you,” and then I would tell them.

TS: Then you would tell them? So you would tell them?

PS: But I would embrace their suggestion because it was; it was flattering if they saw me as—

TS: Yeah.

PS: —somebody they could really relate to.

TS: Had that been an experience that you had through your lifetime of people having—trying to figure out what your heritage is, or was it really—did it really come out a lot because of—

PS: It came out—It came out much more in the military in Korea, because the—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Because of all the people from all over?

PS: Exactly.

TS: Yes.

PS: Exactly.

TS: Very interesting, yeah.



PS: Yeah.

TS: I like how you—you—you're playing along with it and—but then you still tell them.

PS: Oh, yeah; oh, yeah.

TS: That—

PS: Say, “Oh, I wish I could [unclear]. I wish I could speak Greek or do the dance for you but I am—”

And then—But they always—Then they are waving to you and looking forward to your next visit.

TS: Yeah.

PS: Yeah.

TS: So you—

PS: Goodwill ambassador really; we were goodwill ambassadors.

TS: Did you have a strict moral code that you were supposed to abide by?

PS: Well, did you have to throw the word “strict” in? [both laugh] Let's just leave it at of course there were codes of behavior—military codes of behavior based on morality—

TS: [chuckling]

PS: —that we all were supposed to be living by; not just the women but the men as well. Remember, that's why we were there.

TS: That's right.

PS: But as I have said, we were all young, active humans and there were attractions. You couldn't not be—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: A little bit of hormones raging.

PS: The hormones were raging.

TS: Okay. Well, I—More—

PS: [laughing]

TS: More what I was getting at was, like, the hierarchy of the Red Cross. Did, like—Did you have a supervisor looking over your shoulder or were you pretty free to do whatever you wanted?

PS: We were pretty free actually.

TS: You didn't have, like, a main person that came and checked on you?

PS: We did. I'm sure we did, but we were really self-governing.

TS: I see.

PS: Yeah. One of the girls—Now, was she appointed or did we elect her?

TS: [chuckles]

PS: I really—I think that maybe they were—

TS: Appointed?

PS: —appointed.

TS: They probably would want to pick—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —the one that they thought would—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —be able to—

PS: Yeah, I think that's how it went. But we were really removed from headquarters and we worked independently.

TS: Which of the places—So you were in three different places you said. So you're at—in Seoul, at ASCOM, and then what were the other two places that you were at?

PS: Well, I was at an air force base at Osan [Osan Air Base], by Taegu [now spelled Daegu], and I was up by the DMZ [Demilitarized Zone] at a place called Camp [John C.] Pelham, which was where the 1st Cav [Cavalry Division] was. The 1st Cav then went to Vietnam and—

TS: While you were there?

PS: —the 2nd Infantry [Division] came in. Yeah. First Cav has that storied history of fighting men and [unclear], all the way back to Garryowen [Garryowen is an Irish marching tune used most notably for General George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry Division] and [Gen. George Armstrong] Custer, which was interesting to me, being on the other side of Custer's battle.

TS: Oh, that's true.

PS: [chuckling]

TS: Yeah, yeah.

PS: But yeah, very, very interesting.

TS: Was there a difference between those three places? I mean, as far as your—

PS: Well, yeah, because the missions were different.

TS: Oh, okay, how were they different?

PS: The military missions were different. Well, of course, by the DMZ you've got the most tension because there were still incidents occasionally.

TS: What kind of things would happen?

PS: Well, people—there could be an attempt to cross, or just emotion[?] and rumor about activity in the DMZ could cause some shooting to break out.

TS: That's when they had it a little bit more—I know in later years, like in the late seventies or eighties, they cut down all those trees because of some of the incidents.

PS: Right.

TS: So it was a little bit more foliage—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —and things like that. A little—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —easier—Not so easy to see across—

PS: Right

TS: —at that time. Well, you—I was going to ask you about that. So the 1st Cav—Did you notice a difference where you stayed, like, in the type—besides just the tension, but in the type of soldiers, maybe, that you're—

PS: Yes. Yes.

TS: Can you describe that a little?

PS: Well, in—in the infantry, as—as the backbone of the army—I—they're less specialized than, let's say, up in the 8th Army ASCOM by Seoul, which is the more organizational—

TS: Support services?

PS: —support services, and then in Taegu and Osan, that was air force. So you can see that you would have different jobs, different kinds of people attracted to or placed depending on skill and background and—and sheer numbers too; more in the infantry than in the air force and—

TS: There was a lot more infantry [unclear]—

PS: But of course, there was a lot in ASCOM and the support at the business level.

TS: So the one in Osan, that was a smaller—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —smaller unit—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —that was there? How long were you at each of these places?

PS: Oh, it was about evenly divided; a little over three months.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: About three months or so at each?

PS: Yes.

TS: Which one did you like the best?

PS: Which one did I like the best? The first two, I think; either. I mean, the first assignment because it's new, it's fresh.

TS: Right.

PS: And Osan because of the air force and the pilots and the helicopters; that was great. And so, by the time you get to the third one [chuckles] you're beginning to have that short-timer's attitude, and you've been through all the programming, and—so it would definitely have to be in order of time spent.

TS: And you've got all your games memorized and—

PS: Right, yeah, because you do float the programs around.

TS: Did you ever have any conflicts with anybody, like while you were doing your programs? Was it—Did you have, like, a tough sell sometimes with your audience, or were they mostly pretty receptive?

PS: You know what would be the most frustrating sometimes, [chuckles] is when the officers—this was supposed to be for enlisted men—when the officers would want to show off for us, and sit in the front row and answer all the questions, without giving the enlisted men really the opportunity to be the audience participant. Other than that—And so, we would talk to them on the side or afterwards and say, “Really? [both chuckle] We know you know all this. This is for the enlisted men.”

TS: Right, it's a participatory—

PS: Yeah. “Next time maybe you could let the other guys participate.”

TS: Would they do it then?

PS: Yes.

TS: Yeah?

PS: They would. They—It's that old hormonal thing, as we said. We're all young people out having a good time. It wasn't the—Because there was no fighting conflict it was a whole different attitude about being—peacetime military is very different than wartime.

TS: How do you think it's different?

PS: Well, that sense of tension and sense of possibility of harm makes a difference.

TS: Less so where—Even though there's some danger, especially up by the DMZ?

PS: Yeah, but again, it wasn't every day and you weren't—

TS: There's no shooting?

PS: No.

TS: It's not active shooting?

PS: No. When it was it was contained; it was short-lived.

TS: Like incidents, really.

PS: Right, more incidents.

TS: Well, you had—Where's the little officer's—What was that that we called [unclear]?

PS: Oh, my little speech?

TS: Officer's presentation, yeah.

PS: [chuckling]

TS: I wanted you to—get a sense of, like, what you had to present. You—You explained this as you had to present something to the officers so they would be on board with the program when they first were arriving in—in South Korea. Is that correct?

PS: Well, now that I am looking at this—

TS: Yeah?

PS: —I think I did misspeak. This—And I'm surprised now.

TS: That's okay. What is that one?

PS: This really is more about—This is for new staff coming in to our unit.

TS: Oh, for the—for the actual—for the Red Cross—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —women?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Well, that—go ahead and read it.

PS: Well, let's see what I was saying—

TS: Let's see.

PS: —that we haven't covered.

TS: Okay.

PS: “For those of us who haven't had a chance to meet everyone here, I'd like to introduce all of those staff members present,” and I list names—first names.

“In addition, there are three girls absent: Joan Puffer[?], Carol Hines[?], are down at Kunsan [Air Force Base in South Korea]. Their normal travel one[?] would have put them back in ASCOM tonight, but they are staying another day for our troops serving in the field, or more accurately, at sea range. Kathy O'Connor, our head unit, just left Wednesday for a well-earned R&R [rest and relaxation] in Hong Kong. To understand our mission here today it's necessary to flip back into history and take a looksee at our beginning.”

Now, I don't—Why would I be doing this after the training in Washington?  
I—I'm still at a loss—

TS: Maybe it's filler?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: —for why I'm doing this. [both laugh]

TS: Maybe you had twenty minutes or—

PS: I guess.

TS: —and that was part of it.

PS: “In 1953 following the cease-fire agreement, 8th Army Headquarters requested through the Department of the Defense that the ARC—American Red Cross—assist in the planning for the post-combat period in Korea. It was decided our—that the ARC contribution was to be in the realm of supplemental recreation, or our mobile recreation program. The GI section, being concerned with morale and recreation, thought that the ARC club mobile would serve adeptly in boosting morale by seeing women from home. They would be exposed to a—stimulating ideas, and in general, their perspective might be in foc—kept in focus. Thus supplemental recreation was brought to Korea.

Two weeks after the cease-fire program, after the war, the program went into effect. In its infancy the program was, in every sense of the word, mobile. Because the men were not organized into compound—compounds or stationary posts, neither were the club mobile workers. At this time there were eighty-five workers in thirty-one units traversing some twenty thousand miles. Today—” And this is—What?—’53, ’63.

TS: So about a decade later?

PS: Yeah. “Although still mobile, there has been a settling down. The number of units has decreased in accordance with demand to the present level of six. These are located at ASCOM, Taegu, [Camp] Red Cloud, [Camp] Saint Barbara, Camp [unclear], Camp Casey.” Camp [John C.] Pelham was part of Camp Casey.

TS: Okay.

PS: “They are manned by forty-eight women. In addition, there are three area supervisors in Seoul. Our program here in Korea is unique. Red Cross workers in Europe [were] in supplemental recreation but were not mobile. Here we have a one of a kind challenge. We are our own resources, manufacturers, salesmen, and critics. Program ideas, props, presentations, evaluations are all executed by members of the units. To be more specific, let’s examine a typical program from inception to [unclear]; program progress, run schedule, evaluation, sole[?] ordering house.”

TS: [chuckles]

PS: “In as much as our stops are in conjunction with coffee calls according to military scheduling, we serve the donuts and coffee. We feel however that this feature is strictly secondary, giving programming top priority. We are reinforced in this belief by the fact that in the summer we do not take donuts on our travel runs and our attendance remains constant and participation high.”

TS: [chuckles]

PS: “To be more lucid about a club mobile unit and its total life, let’s outline some of the extracurricular activities of the ASCOM unit. Hopefully the posters have indicated other phases of our work.” Oh, boy. “Birthday cards, social functions, baseball, hospital parties, and donuts, bimonthly newsletter, and with all business there are supplies to be accounted for and other statistics to keep.”

TS: Oh, so you have to keep the business end up, too, it says? Is that what you’re saying there? Okay.

[Speaking Simultaneously]



PS: Yes. “Actually, it is by our stat reports that would justify our existence—”

TS: Expenses. I got it.

PS: “— to wit, last month’s records show that 4,674 people attended our programs, we traveled 6,052 miles, we made 169 stops, and served 10,221 donuts; thus Donut Dollies.”

TS: [chuckles]

PS: “The task being what it is, one might worry—about the qualifications—wonder—that has to be “wonder about the qualifications of the girls in a unit. Two of the outlined qualifications are college grad, twenty-one to twenty-six years of age. Needless to say, a good strong backbone is a necessity, and if we really felt in a back-slapping mood, we would enumerate all those lofty sounding phrases like, ‘Eagerness to work and learn on the job, affability, conscientiousness, patriotism,’ but we won’t.”

TS: [chuckles]

PS: “We’ll just say that the ARC club mobile workers are professional recreation workers on a tour of duty from a year to eighteen months in South Korea. Are there any questions? We thought it might be fun for you to participate in a brief rendition of one of our programs. Mary and Jane will do the honors.” [both chuckle]

TS: There you go.

PS: Well, there were some interesting stats in there.

TS: Yes, there were, there were, and—

PS: We were busy.

TS: That’s more than—

PS: We were having an adventure, but we were really—all day long we were busy out on the job.

TS: What time did you start out in the morning?

PS: Eight o’clock.

TS: Eight to 5:00, but it was—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —just a different kind of—not an office job for sure, right?

PS: Right. Right.

TS: Tell me about—

PS: But when you think about it, being up and being ready to greet and be social demands a—a certain stamina.

TS: Well, you certainly couldn't—I don't think—show that you were having a bad day.

PS: Exactly.

TS: Even if you were.

PS: Exactly.

TS: Because you'd have to be positive—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —for the soldiers and the airmen, right?

PS: Yeah, it's all about being positive.

TS: Did you—So was that, like, how—you say that the—the unit that you were in, the sisterhood that you had, did you just keep each other pretty—try to keep positive, because—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —things happen, you have boyfriends, you lose boyfriends—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —some people don't feel good, you get sick.

PS: Yeah.

TS: But you still have to go out, right?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Was that—

PS: Oh, yes, it was like an extension of college in that regard; the living in the Quonset hut was like a dorm. We each had our own room but—and honestly, you really needed some pri—you needed privacy, because of being social all day long.

TS: So you needed some alone time?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Right.

PS: Yeah.

TS: Well, tell me—you met someone here, somewhere in Korea, that—

PS: Who became my husband, you mean?

TS: Yes.

PS: [laughs]

TS: Patrick, yes.

PS: Patrick.

TS: Pat met Patrick.

PS: Pat met Patrick, yes.

TS: Tell me about that a little.

PS: Well, this is—I had to get that in about the officers being social[?], because he was one of them.

TS: Oh. [chuckles]

PS: And so, our first meeting was a little, “Why—Why—Why must you be this way?” But anyway, he is—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Where was he at?

PS: —an Irish leprechaun—

TS: Okay.

PS: —and he's just full of spunk and spirit himself. It's too bad he's not here.

TS: Yes, I know. Where—Where did you meet him at? What—Where was he?

PS: At one of the—He was an officer in the Camp Casey area.

TS: Oh, okay. So this was in the third assignment that you—

PS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PS: Yes. And we really did not start dating—

TS: Okay.

PS: —in Korea, because as I say, we got off on this kind of footing that was a little testy. Not—Not ill-humored but just—

TS: Right.

PS: —“Come on, these are for the guys. We know you're smart; you're an officer. You don't have to prove—”

TS: Right. You tried to put him in his place although, right?

PS: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

PS: Exactly. So I would see him and we would just, kind of, flirt with each other. But we both came back to the United States; he to muster out of the military. So he's assigned back to a home base, which would be Fort Dix [New Jersey] because he's from Philadelphia. I decide to stay with Red Cross in a different program. I now go into—their hospital social work, and I'm assigned to Walson Army Hospital at Fort Dix.

TS: Okay.

PS: So right—

TS: Unbeknownst to you he's there, then, right?

PS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PS: Unbeknownst to me he is there. We still have the same affiliations stateside as we did out of country, in terms of being able to live on the military base and use the officers' facilities. We're still considered the equivalent of, like, a second lieutenant or first lieutenant.

TS: Okay.

PS: So my first night on base I, with my new roommate, go to the Officers' Club, and sitting at the bar is Patrick Sweeney and a friend of his from South Korea. And of course, the first words I hear—They're at the far end of the bar, we're coming in the door, the first words I hear, "There's a Donut Dolly here!" [laughing]

And I thought, "Oh, do you believe this? As big as the military is, I am going to be in the face of officers from South Korea units that I worked at." So sure enough—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: It was almost like—almost like Casablanca—

PS: It must have been—Yes.

TS: —moment there, huh?

PS: Yes.

TS: Just no piano player.

PS: Yes.

TS: Interesting.

PS: And that was—Since then we have been in each other's face. [both chuckling]

TS: Ever since then. Well, now, why did you decide not to do the extension, or stay in South Korea, or go to Vietnam like some of the other women did?

PS: Well, because I guess I had fulfilled my—my curiosity about the Orient and I really was not—I'm not as brave as maybe I thought I was because I really was not drawn to be in combat. I didn't—

TS: Okay.

PS: I did not have that keen sense of being really ready or able to do that up close and personal.

TS: How—I don't think we talked about this on tape at all, but you said how you visited some of the orphanages and had a reading program for them? What was that like?

PS: Yes, that was part of the commitment of the Red Cross, I guess, and military, to the culture and country that we were in, and because there were so many children of mixed parentage.

TS: A lot of soldiers had had children.

PS: A lot of soldiers had fathered children, and they suffered discrimination and were abandoned and were in orphanages. And so, we would go and read English for them to repeat.

TS: Do you know how those children ended up at all? The—

PS: Well, I think it was mixed results, that some stayed and probably found comfort with each other in terms of marriage and living together, and others came to the United States, and some number were reunited with fathers, and some couples actually did marry and come to the United States. Not that those children would have been in the orphanage.

TS: Right.

PS: But it was—it was a big diverse solution for the kids.

TS: I see. Now, so—

PS: They were beautiful children for the most part.

TS: Yeah, the pictures you showed me, right?

PS: Beautiful children.

TS: Now, did you have—So you—you left—you left—So you served thirteen months?

PS: Thirteen months.

TS: Thirteen months. So you did your full tour.

PS: Yeah.

TS: And you—But you decided to re-up. Is that what you call it in the Red Cross?

PS: Well, to stay with Red Cross; I decided that I—I would stay with Red Cross. Again, after that experience I certainly wasn't ready to suddenly go back to a—a quiet life.

TS: Teaching elementary school?

PS: Oh, preschool.

TS: Or preschool, that's right.

PS: Or preschool, yeah. So—And I wanted to actually stay north of the Mason-Dixon [line].

TS: Why?

PS: Well, because, again, the diversity and the energy. I was—I seemed more comfortable.

TS: A bit more cosmopolitan and fitting in—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —sort of thing?

PS: Yeah, I did.

TS: Did you have—How long did you stay with the Red Cross then?

PS: Well, I did that for a year. Now, this is a really interesting turn of events, because that was really very ba—It's not what you would call social work. They called it social work but it was really—

TS: In the hospital?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

PS: It was really just more communication, sending[?] and assisting, and again, continuing to be a good PR [public relations] person.

So at the end of—As that year was winding down—Actually, now, early childhood education and child development was beginning to really come into the mainstream of public education at the high school level. My aunt that I told you about in Kensington, Maryland—Bethesda—had been a home economics teacher there for a number of years. They were going to be starting a child development curriculum in the

Montgomery County School System. She had an in. They didn't know a lot of young people with this particular degree. I got the job to actually organize and implement the first child development high school course in Montgomery County.

TS: Really?

PS: Yeah. It was fraught with delay, and as is not untypical of a lot of new programs, even into the construction of the room with a two-way window—mirror—for observing—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, okay.

PS: —kids to observe—

TS: Right.

PS: —what's going on, and then to come and work on the floor. So I did that. I left Red Cross then to do that and—

TS: How long did you stay with them?

PS: Well, I only did that for about a year because I thought I was getting married. I had gotten engaged and thought I was getting married and would be moving out of the area. Well, the engagement was called off. Didn't—The wedding did not happen.

TS: Who were you engaged to?

PS: To my husband.

TS: The husband that you're married to today?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: [chuckles] The husband that I'm married to.

TS: Who—Oh, who called it off the first time?

PS: Well, he did.

TS: Okay.



PS: Cold feet; he did. [chuckling]

TS: Okay. Now I really wish he was here.

PS: Absolutely. So there I am without a job. I go back to Red Cross to stay in the area. I really didn't want to come back.

TS: You liked the area?

PS: I did Junior Red Cross in the public school system of Washington D.C.

TS: Oh, is that right?

PS: Now, there was an interesting experience; talk about going back into segregation. Not that it was still—I guess it was still legal—

TS: So this is, like, the—'66.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PS: Sixty-six, yeah.

TS: Interesting, okay.

PS: And so, here I am basically working in a black school system; the Washington D.C. school system. There—

TS: And it's segregated?

PS: Yes, and that was when I really got my education into the fact that a human being is a human being. Races—Race has so little to do with what we want in life and how we live life, and to be part of the black middle-class as a worker in their school system, they were just like any—the kids in families that I had left out in Montgomery County, Maryland the year before. Now, a year later, we do get married, [both chuckles] and my work career is basically over.

TS: So you guys have been married over forty—over forty years?

PS: Yeah.

TS: Forty-five?

PS: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Great. Congratulations. That's really great.

PS: Thank you.

TS: What would you—If you had to sum up—Your experience with the Red Cross as a young girl and going to a developing country and working with soldiers, what—how do you think that shaped who you are today? If it did at all.

PS: Well, of course it did, because it was just—I became a citizen of the world through that, and I found a level of comfort in realizing that I am a typical human being and have a natural affinity for society and social living, and I have continued to enjoy being a facilitator of interaction—social interaction, human dynamics.

TS: What have you done—

PS: And I got a lot of confidence—

TS: Yeah.

PS: —in that, as being part of the military life and the Red Cross life and the various locations that I—and types of jobs that I did for Red Cross—with Red Cross.

TS: Do you think there's any kind of misconception about the work that you did, like the Donut Dolly—

PS: Well, there was certainly. I—And I do think that what was happening in wartime, and the Second World War, was totally different than what we were doing as peacetime. And again, it was really wartime experience in Vietnam. So yes, there's been this misconception about what was the purpose and how things were being executed.

I had one more Red Cross experience I should share with you. I actually did a disaster assignment.

TS: Oh, where at?

PS: Down in New Orleans.

TS: After [Hurricane] Katrina?

PS: No.

TS: Before that?

PS: Long, long time ago. Betsy. I think it was—

TS: Oh, Betsy.

[Hurricane Betsy was a destructive tropical cyclone that brought widespread damage to areas of Florida and the central United States Gulf Coast in September 1965.]

PS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PS: And I was—I lived down there. I did that out of—It was the year I was at Walson Army Hospital, and so they were pulling Red Cross staff from whoever wanted to go and do that. So I was there for, like, three months.

TS: How was that experience?

PS: That was really interesting of course because I was doing mostly interviewing and trying to validate and secure information for reimbursement or financial [unclear]—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: The vouchers for, like—

PS: Yeah.

TS: —hotels or food and things like that?

PS: No, for rebuilding of houses.

TS: Oh, okay. Even the—

PS: Yeah. Determining the extent of damage and whether it was water rising or wind or—

TS: So the Red Cross participated in that?

PS: Yeah.

TS: I would think that would be more FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency].

PS: Yeah. Well, at that point in time Red Cross was very in—determined in what they were going to do.

TS: Inter—That's very interesting.

PS: Yeah.

TS: I didn't—I wasn't aware of that. Well, your—your whole, like, theme of service has kind of—flows through this interview in some ways. Have you ever thought that the United States should have some sort of national service for its young people?

PS: Yes, I think it would be terrific, because I honestly did feel that my year—just even that first year, that single year in Korea, was as significant as my four years in college. I really did, in—in terms of—Yeah—facts or figures or that kind of learning, yeah, but in terms of being a citizen and being a good human being—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Getting a better world view, too—

PS: Yes.

TS: —of different cultures—

PS: Yes.

TS: —and even within our own United States?

PS: Yes, I think it would serve us very well to have national service.

TS: Well, is there anything that you'd like to add that we haven't brought up? Can you think—

PS: We've talked a lot more and broadly than I thought we were going to. I probably have just really talked too much.

TS: No, no, not at all; not at all.

PS: [chuckling] This—This will get really synthesized and—

TS: No, it's a—it's a nice broad discussion of your own personal experience, but then how it's shaped you, and also the broader contribution that the Red Cross has done through the years. So no, that's great.

PS: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: It's a great conversation. I appreciate it.

PS: Well, good; good. Well, I would have to—the Red Cross was a great place for me too.

TS: Would you do it again?

PS: Yes.

TS: Would you recommend it to anybody else?

PS: Yes.

TS: Even today?

PS: Yes.

TS: Yeah? So you have two sons and a daughter. Have—Have—

PS: No. [laughs]

TS: Not—Not for them?

PS: They have—This has not been their path.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I don't know how old they are.

PS: This has not been their path at all. Well, my daughter is a teacher and—but living outside the country—Well, my son—my oldest son—through business, went to Europe right after he graduated. He was in Holland—

TS: Oh, okay.

PS: —for a year, but that was through business, but still, he did have a little sand in his shoes and wanted to see the world. My middle, second child is more a homebody. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, doesn't have that adventurous—

PS: No.

TS: —want to go and travel kind of spirit?

PS: No. No.

TS: Well, it's been great to talk with you, Pat. I really appreciate it.

PS: Well, thank you. It was fun to really revisit this—these adventures and experiences.

TS: It was good to do it with you. I'll go ahead and turn it off then, okay?

PS: Okay.

[End of Interview]