

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

INTERVIEWEE: Doris Messina Ehlenfeldt

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: November 2, 2013

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is November 2, 2013. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Doris—Doris, how do you say your last name again?

DE: Ehlenfeldt.

TS: Ehlenfeldt. I have to get that right. I'm in New Bern, North Carolina to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Doris, could you state your name the way you'd like it to be on your collection?

DE: Doris Messina Ehlenfeldt.

TS: Okay. So Doris, why don't we start out by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born?

DE: I was born in West Haven, Connecticut, right across the street from the beach.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

DE: I grew up with three brothers and a mom and a dad that [unclear] family full of military people; military service people, anyways. My dad was in World War II.

TS: He was? What service was he in?

DE: He was in the army, and he was on the ground in Ger—in Europe. He walked pretty much across Europe. Never got into—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was he an infantry guy?

DE: Yes, he actually took supplies out to the guys in foxholes.

TS: Oh, my gosh. So what— When were you born?

DE: Nineteen fifty-one.

TS: Ninety fifty-one? What was it like growing up in Connecticut in—at that time?

DE: Totally different than anything today. We were outside playing all the time. I had three brothers and a neighborhood full of boys, so—

TS: [chuckles]

DE: I did a lot of sports with them.

TS: What kind of sports did you play then?

DE: Well, with my brothers and the neighbors, football, basketball, baseball, swimming, hockey.

TS: You name it, really.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Football? You played football too?

DE: Yeah, they liked small people, because—

TS: You're quick and you can get around.

DE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I didn't always get to play immediately because I was a girl, but as soon as somebody got hurt, then it was my turn to play.

TS: Oh, is that right?

DE: And there was one kid that always got a bloody nose so—

TS: So when he was out you just waited for that to happen?

DE: Yeah. [both chuckle]

TS: —and you were in.

DE: Just took a little patience, yeah.

TS: Now, where do you fit in that hierarchy of your brothers?

DE: I have two older brothers, and a younger brother.

TS: Are you pretty close in age?

DE: The first three are all each thirteen months apart from each other, and then it's three years before my younger brother.

TS: Before your younger brother?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay. So you're—you're pretty close. So they—you're all about the same age then?

DE: Yes.

TS: Now, New Haven, Connecticut in 1951, and in the late—in the 50's, what kind of town was that? Was it a—

DE: Okay, well, we were in West Haven, so—

TS: West Haven.

DE: —we weren't right in the busy part; we were in a residential area. The—Most of the streets are on hills—

TS: Okay.

DE: —in West Haven. We were across the street from the beach so you didn't see a lot of animals, but the neighbors all knew each other, all spent time together. I grew up very involved in the American Legion.

TS: Oh, you did?

DE: My parents were very involved in the American Legion, so I was a junior girl by the time I was five.

TS: Are you still involved in that today?

DE: I didn't because when I married a second time, my husband was in the military for the only two years the American Legion didn't have [unclear] join[?].

TS: Oh, no.

DE: And so, then there was no reason to be involved.

TS: I see.

DE: So I dropped out.

TS: What—You didn't qualify on your own?

DE: Oh, I did, I did, but I didn't want to be involved with him not being involved, so.

TS: Without your hus—

DE: Yeah, we were [unclear] the country so—

TS: Okay.

DE: —I was already involved in meetings and stuff away from home enough without that.

TS: I see, okay. Well—So did you enjoy growing up there? Did you live there your—all your years growing up?

DE: I lived there right up until I was nineteen.

TS: Okay.

DE: And that's why I left town. So I was right there.

TS: Did you enjoy going to school, because it sounds like you were pretty active for your play.

DE: School, I was on the outside of things, basically, because of the tomboy, and I wasn't real outgoing. I was—I was a happy person, but I just didn't fit in with other girls real well.

TS: No?

DE: I think—No.

TS: Okay.

DE: So—So I didn't. So I was—And on top of that I was involved in drum and bugle corps.

TS: Drum and bugle corps? Neat.

DE: With the American Legion.

TS: Okay.

DE: And then I started volunteering at a VA [Veteran's Administration] hospital in my teen years.

TS: Oh, you did?

DE: So I was there one day a week, and then by the January of my junior year in high school I started hairdressing school, so I was going to school twice a day—

TS: Oh, my gosh.

DE: —through the half—the second half of my junior year and all of my senior year.

TS: Where'd you get all that energy? [chuckles]

DE: Yeah, really. It was a—It was a lot to do, so—

TS: Yeah.

DE: Then I graduated hairdressing school the May after March or—maybe March or so I took my—my state exams for hairdressing—

TS: Okay.

DE: —and passed that, and then in May I went into the military, along with a friend that I was at—had met in hairdressing school.

TS: Okay. Well, before we get that far ahead, did you have—Even though, maybe, school wasn't your most favorite thing, did you have a favorite subject, or favorite teacher?

DE: Yeah, I had plenty—plenty of that, plenty of that, and I had good rapport with all my teachers, even when I wasn't doing well.

TS: Yeah? [chuckles]

DE: So that was okay. Ms. McCauley[?] was one of my teachers—

TS: Ms. McCauley?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —my Home Ec[onomics] teachers—I really enjoyed her. I enjoyed—I loved taking Home Ec because I knew I could pass it really well.

TS: Okay.

DE: I mean, it was required in junior high and two years—

TS: Oh, it was?

DE: —in high school, but after that I took it another year because I knew I could get a good grade in it. And I enjoyed English, so there was—There was a lot I enjoyed but somehow, some trauma had happened in my childhood, and so I really think that helped me not be a good student.

TS: Okay.

DE: Because I was dealing with some of that.

TS: I see.

DE: And memories and stuff. So—And that was probably partly why I didn't, but I was very fearful in high school. It was a big building and—

TS: You were fearful?

DE: Fearful of—Not my safety, but fearful of just daily not remembering where I was supposed to be; when I was supposed to be there; the combination lock on the locker; where the locker was. That for some reason—That just really made me panic a lot.

TS: Kind of overwhelmed you.

DE: Yeah, yeah. So—

TS: How big was that high school then? Much larger than you were used to going to?

DE: Well, no, I went—That's the one I went to. Let's put it this way, my husband's class was thirty-five, mine was over—probably around three hundred.

TS: Oh, okay, that's huge then.

DE: So that's a big school.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Especially during that time.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yes, I can see. So you felt like you kind of get lost in—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —all the people, and all the hul—hullabaloo that's going on.

DE: Yeah. So when I was in a—When I got to where I was I was fine, but it was just—I just didn't care for the—all the traffic in the hallways and—and remembering—trying to remember where to maneuver to, so I just never was relaxed in it for some reason.

TS: What did your folks do for a living?

DE: My dad was a machine shop foreman; had only gone as far as the eighth grade, and then he dropped out of school to help support his family. There was his mom and dad and his—eight kids in the family. He was the youngest. Then he went in the military; he was in the army for four years, and—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That was during the war, right?

DE: —came back and he went back to, basically, the same company—

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: —that he had worked for before. They change—They changed products during the war years but he went back to that, and then eventually changed jobs, but it was always machine shop foreman type thing. He was a very smart man. It frustrated him with people with great educations that thought they knew all the answers, but he knew the practical side of things. And so, really, he was ahead of them—

TS: Okay.

DE: —in a lot of areas. My mom was a registered nurse.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: My mom had gone to—She went to nursing school when there were actual nursing schools.

TS: Right.

DE: She went for four years; it was very strict and all that.

TS: Where'd she go?

DE: Indiana.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: She was in Indiana. She was born and raised in Evansville, Indiana.

TS: How about that?

DE: And my dad was born in East Haven, Connecticut, which was all Italians; that was it, so.

TS: I see, okay. Well, did you have a sense, as a young girl, about, like, what opportunities were out there for you for the future?

DE: I don't really know. I don't know. I—When I—Once I got focused on the hairdressing I just—I mean, I still—I knew a lot of people in different areas of their lives and stuff but there wasn't a whole lot out there for women then, really. It wasn't talked about a whole lot.

TS: Yes.

DE: I think it was mostly office work and nursing and teaching and that kind of thing back then. So—So I thought hairdressing, but I really—the VA hospital is what made me not so sure about hairdressing. I enjoyed the hairdressing part of it, but if I had to sit and listen to ladies complain about gripey little things, and then I'd go in the VA hospital and talk to these World War II vets who were sitting there with no visitors, and limbs missing and everything, and I would be there with these women thinking, "I think you need to take a walk down the street and talk to a few men up in the VA hospital."

TS: Did you ever say that to any of them?

DE: No.

TS: [laughs] But on the inside you were, right?

DE: Yes, because I got tips out of school.



TS: Oh, yeah, right.

DE: Yeah, yeah. [both laugh]

TS: Work.

DE: Yes.

TS: I see.

DE: But that was—that was a real—I think that was a real eye-opener as a—as a teenager—

TS: Sure.

DE: ——to see the two extremes.

TS: Well, even to have the awareness—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —of that difference in how people were perceiving their lives.

DE: Can I tell you a short story?

TS: Yeah, of course.

DE: I—The American Legion, even today, do—they do a Christmas shop for the veterans in the hospital, and all the different posts have to donate gifts and things. So they set up this big room that looks like a Christmas store, and they can come in and they're allowed to pick gifts for their loved ones, and I still [unclear]. They can come in and pick gifts for their—and then we would wrap them up, and either give them back to them to give to their family or mail them to them.

TS: Aw.

DE: And it was just a neat thing to do and I started doing that in my teens, and I was doing that for a couple years. They also did, once a month, I think, on Friday nights, there was bingo, and then once a month there was—there was a dance, where—piano player, accordion player, whatever—

TS: Right.

DE: —and the guys would dance. And so, I got to know guys because I helped with that, and even to the point that if one of the ladies wasn't going to be there, I could get it together.

And so, I got to know all these guys. Well, the Christmas shop came along one year and we had one of those big laundry bins all filled with wrapped toys that needed to go up to one of the florists, and there was this small guy that I'd been working with him two days already; seemed like a nice guy and everything. And he says, "Oh, you know it's the end of the day, let's go ahead and run this upstairs and it won't be here in the morning."

I said, "Okay."

So we get on the elevator and he said, "Yeah, I used to be up on this floor."

I said, "Oh, really," and everything. I didn't realize it was locked—it was the psychiatric—

TS: Oh.

DE: Well, that was startling enough, also I'm on my elevator alone with—this elevator alone with this man thinking, "I'm going to the psychiatric ward."

And then get up there and we—they unlocked the door and we started down the hall; I knew all the men because they came—I danced with them and played bingo [both laugh]. And I think that, too, also told me something different.

TS: Yes.

DE: Because things I had heard about people with mental illness—

TS: Right.

DE: —or mental problems, are totally different than these people I had met down there.

TS: That you had conversations with and—

DE: Yeah.

TS: — interacted with a long time.

DE: Yeah. So that—that was a real eye-opener too. The VA hospital taught me a lot. [chuckles]

TS: What made you decide to join the navy?

DE: I wanted to get away from home.

TS: Okay.

DE: And my friend, Shirley, also was—She mentioned it one day at school—at hairdressing school—that she was thinking of going in the military, and I just—my ears just went up, I said, "Really?" Because I knew I wanted to leave home, but I didn't know—

TS: How.

DE: —how to go about it. And so, I said, "Could I look into that with you?"

And she said, "Sure."

So the air force didn't want anything—So I didn't tell my family; didn't tell my parents.

TS: Okay, how old are you about now?

DE: Eighteen.

TS: Okay.

DE: I think we had—I had graduated from high school. I graduated when I was seventeen; I didn't turn eighteen until the January after I graduated. Not because I was smart, but because you could start kindergarten earlier.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right. You started kindergarten when you were just younger.

DE: Yeah. So we—we took a bus, went downtown New Haven, and we did go to the air force office. They didn't want anything to do with me because of my height.

TS: Oh?

DE: Because I'm not five feet.

TS: Oh, you're not? Okay.

DE: At that time the air force is really looking toward what you look like—

TS: Right.

DE: —if you were a female. I don't think the pilots today would appreciate that.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: But—So then we went to the navy, and—and they said, "Fine." They were still worried about my height and everything. I was probably right on the weight thing—right near the edge—but the height thing was the thing that bothered him, so he was—he was really concerned about that but he pushed it through anyways.

TS: Yeah?

DE: So.

TS: I wonder what your papers say for how tall you were.

DE: My papers say—What happened, in actuality—The day we went to get checked, there was an older guy doing the measuring and weighing.

TS: Yes.

DE: And you know how you use the bar and it slides down?

TS: Okay.

DE: They had a—They had a wad of tape at five feet.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: And I just normally wore my hair teased up on top at that time, and that bar came down and hit my hair and he said, "Five feet."  
And we said, "Fine."

TS: See, there you go. Well, I've heard about for the weight, where the women would eat, like, bananas—

DE: Yeah.

TS: To put on a couple extra pounds really quickly.

DE: Oh, I would have had to take them off.

TS: You would have had to take—yeah. [chuckles]

DE: Because while I was in hairdressing school I was eating out of machines a lot.

TS: Oh.

DE: Because I would—In between—

TS: The quick vending—

DE: Yeah, yeah, because I—because I was missing supper at home—

TS: Okay.

DE: —later, so.

TS: Interesting.

DE: I had always been thin, but then I put some weight on during that time, so I—

TS: Now, if you were eighteen, didn't need your parents' sig—approval—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —or signature?

DE: Yes.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Okay, so tell me about that.

DE: That was the hard part, because my dad—I'm being the only girl, that was real hard for dad; real hard for dad. But he willingly did it, but with reluctance. Mom, it didn't seem to bother. I know—Knowing her now, I realize she just wanted to do what she thought I really wanted to do. Whereas I saw it as she didn't really care, but I don't think that was true.

TS: She didn't want to see you—

DE: She didn't show anything at all and it was like, "Okay, that's not bothering you any," but it did; it did. It was—

TS: You kind of wanted her to miss you a little bit or something?

DE: Yeah, yeah, and I'm sure she did. We had rocky situat—There were some rocky situations in there, so.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But she did. Yeah.

TS: Now, did—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: But my dad, it was hard. My dad, it was hard, and he showed it.

TS: Did he come around to it ever?

DE: Oh, he did. Yeah. Well, he was proud; more than anything, he was proud.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. And my mom was too. My mom just didn't know how to relay that to me [in] words. Dad, you could see, even in his expressions.

TS: Now, he was the Italian?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay. [both chuckle]

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: What about your brothers? What did they think?

DE: My young—My brother that's thirteen months older than me—Mike was already in the [U.S] Marine Corps. He went in right after he graduated the year before.

TS: Okay.

DE: His only response to me in a letter was, "If you go in the Marines, I'll break every bone in your body."

TS: What about—

DE: So—

TS: What about the army? Did you consider the army?

DE: No, we didn't even do that.

TS: No?

DE: We didn't—no. Shirley didn't mention it. We did—I guess she'd already done her picking through; it was going to be air force or navy.

TS: Oh, okay. So you just went along with what she had—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —the research she had done and everything.

DE: Yeah. [both chuckle] It's the easiest way to—I'm a good follower. I can be a leader, I've been known to be a leader, but I'm a real good follower.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

DE: So that's how we wound up. My oldest brother tried to bribe me into staying home.

TS: Oh, is that right?

DE: He was one of the reasons I was willing to leave—

TS: I see.

DE: —because I was tired of his—He's a perfection—He—He knew how everybody else should run their lives.

TS: So he, kind of, was a little controlling and—

DE: Yeah, yeah. So he tried; it didn't work.

TS: Well, he's the oldest, right?

DE: Yeah, yeah, it was typical of that stage. And my youngest brother, I don't know how Paul reacted to it. He missed me; he talked to me on the phone a lot. I always enjoyed calling home and talking to him.

TS: You said he was three years younger?

DE: Younger, so he was—he was fifteen.

TS: Okay. So yeah. So he had a lot going on in his life, too, and probably—and his other brothers were gone from the house, right?

DE: No, the oldest brother was still there.

TS: He was? Okay.

DE: Yeah, yeah, just my brother had went in the military and left.

TS: I see, okay. Well, so you—so did—When you signed up, did you sign up like a buddy system? Did they have that in the navy?

DE: We did have a buddy system.

TS: Okay.

DE: As it turned out, it didn't follow through in the end, but yes, we did go in on the buddy system. And we went on the cash—cash—cache program.

TS: What's that?

DE: I have a little pin that—it said you'd signed up but you didn't have to go for another certain amount of time, like thirty days, or sixty days—

TS: Oh, okay.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: —something like that.

TS: Like a delayed sort of entry.

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: We did that because we were still finishing up getting—doing our boards—

TS: Oh, all right.

DE: —at hairdressing school.

TS: Okay. Did you—Did you use your hairdressing at all?

DE: I've never worked at it. I've gotten paid for it, but I've never worked at it. It was good in the military because at the end of the month when you're short—short of money you can see other people that need haircuts and things, so—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —that always worked out.



TS: I remember that from when I was in. One of my friends was a hairdresser in civilian world—

DE: Yes.

TS: —and she was always giving haircuts. I think she gave me a few too.

DE: Yeah, it worked out that way, so.

TS: Yeah. Well, that's really neat. Okay. So did you—Do you think, too, that you were influenced by that military background that was around you—

DE: Oh, yeah. Yes—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —the American Legion—

DE: Being with the American Legion for sure, yeah. And my—I had uncles that had all been in the military and—and everything. Because it was like three injured in World War II; three or four that were injured in World War II. My uncle was in during the Korean War, so there was—there was a lot there, and then my—and then my brother, who was my—my sun and moon, was already in the military.

TS: Right, the one that was in the Marine Corps?

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Now, did you—did it seem out of the ordinary to be a woman to go in the military? I mean, did you know any women that had been in?

DE: No, no.

TS: But it didn't seem all that different?

DE: No, it just seemed like the perfect out to be able to leave home. I figured it was one way I could leave home and I'd have food to eat, I'd have clothes to wear, and a place to stay.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: I figured those are the three basics, so.

TS: Did you sign up for a certain amount of time?

DE: Three years.

TS: Three years? Okay.

DE: Three years, yeah.

TS: And now, was—Where did you end up with your basic training?

DE: Bainbridge, Maryland.

TS: Okay. How—

DE: We were one of the last ones going through Bainbridge. It was—I don't think there was too many more after us.

TS: Was that the first time you were away from home?

DE: Yes, that was very hard. The bus—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was it?

DE: Yes. The bus pulling out to go to New York was hard.

TS: Yeah?

DE: Yeah. As much as I wanted to leave home, that was hard.

TS: Yeah. Well, how—So then, how was that? Tell me about that experience, from what you remember.

DE: I was going to say I don't remember too much of it. It was just strange to—to go away from family, to go away from everything you know; kind of hard but excite—And Mike had given me—Michael had written home and given me some points of—“Just don't let them get to you about this. They're aiming to do this to you and just keep yourself above that. Don't fall into the fear that they're trying to instill in you; just don't.” And I can see that, and so that helped me some.

TS: Okay. So he warned you about that emotional—

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: —aspect of basic training that you were going to have?

DE: Yeah. And he was a very small guy so I'm sure he had a lot thrown at him when he went in.

TS: In the Marine Corps?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

DE: So he knew—He knew what he was telling me.

TS: Do you remember anything about your training—your initial training?

DE: Yes, yes. We had a story I've never heard anybody else have, of our boot camp.

TS: Well, let's hear it.

DE: First, we got there and they had—there was such a big group coming in at the time, they had—divided the group into two separate companies, and somehow the paperwork didn't go through so the buddy system didn't work. So that was another, right through—right then. Here was Shirley was going in one direction, I was going in the other direction, and we were going to be each other's support system and that was gone.

TS: Ripped out.

DE: So—But see, part of this is where—I had good values installed in me, and I had the sense of adventure, so that—that helped—that kicked in, and I still had that underlying leadership, because I had actually done some leadership positions in the Auxiliary—in the American Legion.

TS: Okay.

DE: So I was [used to that?]. I mean, I had done things with my dad, where he put me in charge of paying the umpires, and paying the people after ball games, so I had those things instilled in me [unclear] was there.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You had responsibility as a young girl?

DE: Yeah. So—But then—So we got divided, but then we had this company, and all we know—all we can surmise was, our CO [Commanding Officer] was giving us too much help, too much encouragement; not making it hard enough for us, maybe?

TS: Yes.

DE: But anyways, overnight we lost her. So the person that now you're—like, you're aiming—all your focus is on this person because this person is going to help you through boot camp, and they rip her away from you overnight and bring in somebody else. Not a lot of girls—And oh, that's when they—they split it, because some of them stayed back. They—Some got two weeks back—got put back two weeks. So it was a real upset in boot camp. I mean, everybody was already on this emotional high anyways, and then—then for that to happen. But in that, where a lot of them just were going to gripe their way through, I was just constantly saying, "You know, griping isn't going to help us."

TS: Remembering those women that you were cutting hair for?

DE: You can be—Yeah, you can be—Well, this is before that time, but I said, "Wells is trying to help us. She had nothing to do with it happening." And she had a wonderful personality. I said, "She—She's doing everything. We need—Beating her up isn't going to do a thing for us; it's just going to make it harder." So I gave a lot of pep talks.

TS: Did you?

DE: Yeah, because I didn't see any—any progress in just complaining about it. I mean, nobody's ever changed the military yet by their complaints. Hasn't—

TS: You don't think so?

DE: It hasn't happened yet, you know? And I was the guidon which I really didn't need to have; was the guidon. But me and Kathy, I still say we're the same height but somehow she won by a quarter of an inch or something—or a fraction—and I got it, so I had my little—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, it was the shortest one that got to—

DE: —flag with me all the way through. Yeah, the shortest one got the guidon.

TS: I see.

DE: But that was boot camp. So it was somewhat traumatic along that line because of all the upsets, but like, having to stand in formation for long periods of time, I was in drum and bugle corps; we used to do stand still competition. You don't lock your knees and you just stand there. It's okay. And so, punishment wasn't punishment for me. I mean, I didn't like standing there but it wasn't anything I hadn't done before.

TS: So there wasn't anything really physically difficult, because you'd also been a tomboy, right?

DE: Yeah. There wasn't that—There wasn't that much phsyi—It's so different than it is now. There wasn't as much physical in it, in the navy. The—Probably the biggest physical part, that I can recall, was swimming, because you had to be able to stay afloat for a certain length of time, which, I grew up across the street from the beach so that wasn't as hard. I mean, I had to put—It took some strength, but at the same time it wasn't overly—I—I didn't panic in the water.

TS: Right.

DE: I'd been in the water all my life, so I wasn't a great swimmer, but I couldn't [drown?].

TS: Right.

DE: So, no, none of that. I—The schooling probably was harder for me than anything.

TS: Was it?

DE: Yeah. There was a lot—a lot of book work. A lot of—And I think one of my biggest fears I came out of boot camp with was not recognizing who I needed to salute or not salute, and what to call.

TS: In the navy it always was confusing to me. [chuckles]

DE: I don't know that I ever got it down right. And I have—didn't have—I'll tell you after, I didn't even have to do it at my duty station.

TS: Oh, you didn't?

DE: Where I was stationed eventually—finally, a lot of the doctors were there paying back for their schooling, so they're really doctors first and officers second, whereas some are officers first and doctors second.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So they weren't really worried so much about it?

DE: So they were complaining because people were saluting them.

TS: Was that in Annapolis?

DE: People that—Annapolis. Well, see we weren't on the—we were on the hospital compound part.

TS: Oh, not—not on the academy?

DE: No, not on the other part; the compound.

TS: Okay.

DE: And so—Because they were working side by side like they were team players and then all of a sudden [unclear] supposed—So they complained about it enough that the CEO—CO, who was not a medical person at all—so he was in charge of a hospital, which was crazy—but he just put out the order that—nobody wore hats at the time.

TS: So they didn't have to salute?

DE: So nobody had to salute. So then, my fears went down the tubes. [both chuckle] I didn't have to worry about it.

TS: Now, when you signed up for the three years with your friend—What was your friend's name again?

DE: Shirley.

TS: Shirley. Did you have a job that was—you knew you were going to do, or was that going to be assigned in basic?

DE: No, that was going to be assigned in basic.

TS: Okay.

DE: We had—They did testing in basic.

TS: Okay.

DE: At that time.

TS: So what kind of job did you end up getting?

DE: Hospital medic.

TS: Hospital medic?

DE: At that time you were going to go under either the secretarial, communications, or medic. I mean, it's basically—There might have been something else in there a little bit, but those were the three basic ones that women wound up doing.

TS: Well, that—This is 1969, when you went in, right?

DE: Yeah. That was just about the end of that, then they started opening it up more.

TS: Opening it up.

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, what about the Vietnam War? What were your—Did you have any thoughts about that at the time? Because in '69—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Yeah, my brother was—

TS: —there'd been a lot of protests.

DE: Actually my brother and my boyfriend were in Vietnam.

TS: Oh, they both were?

DE: I don't know if—Jim was in during my senior in high school. Yeah, my senior year of high school, all the other girls were talking about this romance, that romance and everything else, and I'm just sitting there thinking, "You don't even have a clue," because I never knew if he was going to be alive the next day. He was a Marine, too, and he was on the ground. So, I—I just hardly could even touch base with where they were at.

TS: Did it upset you, the protest against the war?

DE: Yeah, somewhat. Yeah, I think—I think it did. I don't think I had a complete understanding of the whole thing, and they didn't give us—the media didn't give us a understanding of it at that time. So really, you could just be neutral because you didn't know. I knew it had to be wrong, though. I'm—You just—Yeah, you don't go against your government and your military that way so I was not in approval of it, but I lived in my own little world, I was going to school twice a day—

TS: Right.

DE: —I didn't have time to hardly breathe, let alone do anything else.

TS: What about the counterculture that was that was going on, too, with the free love and drugs and things like that?

DE: I was not a part of any of that. People tell the stories; the music, the everything else. It's like I was in never-never land. I haven't—don't have a clue.

TS: Did you have any kind of music that you did like and listen to?

DE: Bobby Vinton. Do you remember Bobby Vinton?

TS: Bobby Vinton?

DE: My brothers did Beach Boys a lot.

TS: Okay.

DE: So I knew the Beach Boys well, and Bobby Vinton. My father did not like the radio station changed.

TS: Oh, he liked it on his station?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: In his car he took all the buttons off except for the one [chuckles]—

TS: Oh, is that right?

DE: So he could put it on his station he took all the buttons off, and so you didn't have to worry about that. And at home, when my parents were home, it was that or records or something [unclear].

TS: Yeah.

DE: So I didn't really get into a lot—My brothers did. Somehow, I lived in a bubble by myself, apparently.

TS: Now, your—So your brother and your boyfriend, did they both come out of Vietnam okay?



DE: Yes, they did; they did. My boyfriend came out and married a fifteen year old out in California.

TS: Fifteen year old?

DE: Girl in California.

TS: Okay.

DE: And—Fourteen or fifteen. It might have been only fourteen; not sure. And my brother came out—I saw—My brother came out somewhat traumatized. He was a—a structural aircraft mechanic, and saw a lot; did not talk about it; did not like to sit around with other veterans and rehash. He didn't do that, but he did go through post-traumatic stress. And years later, really paid a price emotionally for it some, but he did not take pla—part in any of these getting together and—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Not reunions and things.

DE: —talking about old times. No. None. He didn't even know—He didn't even understand my dad going to—My dad was still going to reunions.

TS: Right, from World War II?

DE: Yeah, World War II, and Mike just never saw the purpose in that. It just—It—I guess it just traumatized him enough that he just didn't want anything to do with it. Now, he didn't go crazy or anything afterwards. I mean, his marriage had problems at times. He got married after he was in. But, no, he came through otherwise; he came through good. He still eventually moved back to the same home town we grew up in.

TS: Oh, yeah.

DE: He actually lives on—He actually lived on the same street we did growing up.

TS: On the same street?

DE: Yes, [unclear], and his wife is still there. He died last January.

TS: He did? Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

DE: And at his memorial service—At his wake, it was strange. My youngest grandson—my grandson went with me. He's sixteen, and he went with me, and—partly because he loved my brother so much, partly because he could be my support, because being disabled, it's hard, but people don't know what you need. So—But he was sitting off to the side of the funeral home, and Jim came up and I wouldn't even have recognized him.

My brother said to me, "Oh, there's Jim Collins[?]."

And so I took him over and introduced him to my grandson. I says, "Nate[?] there's someone I want you to meet."

And he loved his grandpa, so I said, "This was my first boyfriend." And the look he gave me. [both chuckle]

I don't know if he's forgiven me yet for that one. But anyways, I talked to this guy and I—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: This is the one that married the fourteen year old?

DE: Yeah, and he—I guess that lasted a number of years. My mother would kind of let me know once in a while what was going on, but I don't know. He eventually went back to Connecticut. But he's on his second marriage also.

TS: Okay.

DE: And it has gone well, and he's raised his kids. He—One got married last year and everything, so I guess I'd have to say he came through it okay too.

TS: So maybe he—for him—he had—He was dealing with the war in his own way.

DE: Apparently he did. See, I never had—I never was in touch with him. That was the first time since we were—since I was eighteen years old—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —that I even saw him, so—or talked to him at all. So yeah.

TS: Well, tell me about your first duty station, then—No, wait, you have to go to training first, right? So when—where—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Yes, I went to Great Lakes. Everything interesting at Bainbridge and at Great Lakes, most of the buildings were built temporarily during World War II. I guess that sticks out in my mind the most because any of these buildings were said to be—if they caught on fire, they'd be gone in two minutes.

TS: Nice.

DE: And don't use the stairways.

TS: Don't use the stairways? In a fire?

DE: Because—Well, there was no elevators, and the stairways would go—collapse so fast.

TS: So what were you supposed to do?

DE: I don't know. Maybe they did say that but get all—well, two minutes; you got two minutes. And these buildings—They were old.

TS: Well, did they have one of those ropes out the window?

DE: Probably. I don't know if they ever showed it to us, though.

TS: Okay.

DE: But—And Bainbridge there weren't a whole lot—Well, our classroom buildings were built during World War II. Maybe they didn't give us the warnings until we got to Great Lakes. But—And I was in the newer brick building in basic. But I got to Great Lakes and all the buildings were all old ones. There were all these old ones, and they were—We weren't far from the men's training section. So not far from our area—That was just almost like a weird [scary, surreal thing?] the whole thing through.

The guys that, like, copped out, didn't do what they were going to do and everything, and they put them in a little unit over here, and I guess they were going to decide what they were going to do with them; if they were going to discharge them, or whatever. So they played havoc on the base. So there was warnings that would go out at different times, and there was a tunnel between our barracks and I think it was the officer's quarters. There was a tunnel. Now, the doors were locked, you couldn't—There wasn't a handle on our side at all, or whatever. But there were people that I just—perverts that made their way through it different times.

TS: Did you say perverts?

DE: Guys that came through. Like, a girl waking up —

TS: Oh.

DE: —with somebody over her with a—something in his hand, or whatever.

TS: Oh, my gosh.

DE: That—Fortunately it didn't happen while we were there. Of course, it also made you really eerie the nights that you were standing duty and had to—

TS: Right.

DE: —walk the hallways and everything.

TS: Look out for them.

DE: But I got to there and they needed some non-commissioned officers because they didn't have enough to oversee the—twenty-four-seven. So they had two—some of us, and when we got there, I had taken two weeks leave. Some of the girls had gone directly there, and they met us all together in the living area, went around the room and asked us who we were. When I said my name they said, "Oh, yeah, we've heard about you."  
And I thought, "What does that mean?"  
So apparently, somehow what I did in basic got to Great Lakes before I did.

TS: The pep talks and—

DE: I guess. Which I didn't think—there was no officers around or anybody around when I was talking. But anyways, they saw that, so they wanted to take me in as—as one of the people that would stand duty. Well, I didn't skip—When I got on the bus in New York, there was a girl called Eileen Brodnick[?]  
—Brod—Brodnick, I think. And Eileen wa—  
had the mouth of a trucker. It was just not good; and she was loud. And I don't do well with those kind of people; "Just—You can—I'll just stay over here and you have your space, and that's fine."  
And so she'd been mouthing off a lot, all the way through boot camp, all the way through everything. I had not—We had not emotionally tied together in any way. Get to hospital corps school, wouldn't you know, she's there, in my company. At that time they'd have seventy-five ISO[?] company every two weeks, and then once in a while they'd make it seventy—sixty-five guys and fifteen girls.

TS: Okay.

DE: And so, that's what they would do for corps school, and she still wound up in my company.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: So she also wanted that NCO [non-commissioned officer] status, which I'd let her have it.

TS: Right.

DE: So they take me in the office, somebody talks to me, and I said, "You know, Brodnick really wants this."

They said, "We know, but we want you."

I said, "But she really, really wants this, and it won't bother me if she—"

They said, "We want you."

So me and somebody else wound up doing that. That put stress on school.

Because of the conditions—I mean, you'd have fires. An arsonist would be running around—one of these guys, probably—setting little fires, and when you're in buildings that are supposed to burn down in two to four minutes, I mean—and now all of a sudden you're in charge of all these girls, because there was more than one company worth of girls in the building.

TS: So is that, like, in the—in the barracks?

DE: Yeah, yeah.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's where you're in charge of them?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: And I don't know how many women were in there. It was more than just fifteen because there was more than one company of them.

TS: So you combined a bunch of different—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —companies of women.

DE: Yeah, whatever companies—any women that were going through boot—through corps school were in there at that time.

TS: I see, okay.

DE: So—

TS: So you had all this extra responsibility.

DE: So that, yeah, there was guys that were known to scale the sides of the building up to the—There was a basement they used, and the two floors, and they could scale the sides of the building, even though if you looked down you would never know how they did it. But that happened while I was there, so then you've got security around there because there was a ravine behind the building, and you'd have security out there.

One night I get a call from the sheriff patrol saying, "We're dropping a girl off; we found her before she jumped off a bridge." Wouldn't tell me who it was. They just dropped her at the door and called me afterwards. So now, I'm doing duty, walking the hallways, going in the bathrooms wondering, "Am I going to find a body somewhere? Is there one missing? Is there—"

So that was the—So that kind of stuff was all nerve-wracking.

TS: So wait just a sec. The woman that jumped off a bridge, they just took her back to you?

DE: She didn't jump—She didn't—They got her before she jumped.

TS: Well—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: They just took her back.

TS: But she was thinking about it.

DE: Yeah.

TS: And they didn't give her any treatment for—

DE: They just brought her back.

TS: Did she end up okay?

DE: I never knew who she was.

TS: Oh—

DE: I know the CO—

TS: I see. You never knew.

DE: I know my—my commanding officer knew.

TS: Right.

DE: And they said, "Yeah, we know about it."  
I thought—But they never told me. I guess they decided they weren't putting any more on me than I already had, but I'm not sure what would have been worse.

TS: Knowing or not knowing.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah, interesting.

DE: But knowing that—And that's the first time I was going to come in contact with—Well, if you see two women in bed together you have to report it.  
Huh? [laughs] I mean, I knew those things happened but I didn't know I was—

TS: Oh, was that, like, a different kind of world for you to have to—

DE: Just to know that I'd have to be involved in it.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: Not that I didn't know about it—

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: —but I'd have to be involved in it.

TS: Oh, that you'd have to do the reporting, and—

DE: Yeah.

TS: I see, okay.

DE: Yeah, just that. Otherwise, my company did well and [unclear]. They did fine. I had one girl that—You know Pigpen in—in the—

TS: Charlie Brown?

DE: Yeah. We all wash our clothes the same and everything but hers just never looked like everybody else's. Her light blues just looked a little bit dingier. Her shoes never shined. And some say it was mean, but, I knew I had to help her, and so I polished one shoe one night. You know, I never did check to see if the other shoe looked like the next morning, but I gave her the one [both chuckle] to show—

TS: She had one polished shoe as an example?

DE: I never—Yeah, and I never—I never went back and checked it. I don't know what happened to it. I have—If I did, I have no recollection of it. I remember doing it for her, but—and she was a good kid, but she just—just didn't have it together. [chuckles]

TS: Just couldn't quite get [unclear] enough, or—

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: I see.

DE: So that was it, and we—it was good, and we had a really neat CO. Art[?], being the officer of our class—he was a real neat guy. I think he had all sons. He had—He just had some—He had a sense of humor but he didn't let it show a whole lot, but—and it was a good group of guys I was with. And that's where I first learned about—One time they didn't take math teachers, or they didn't take married men. Well, I was in hospital corps school with men who were married math teachers, and when they got the notice they were going to have to go in, they just went ahead and joined the navy.

TS: I see, okay.

DE: And I'm not sure a medic was going to keep them any safer than anything else was, because during Vietnam medics didn't have it easy.

TS: Right.

DE: Not the guys. And it was real hard to have those parties for those guys before they were getting ready to ship over and stuff.

TS: Most of the guys that you were with?

DE: I guess we didn't do that in corps school.

TS: Yeah?

DE: I guess we did that when we were stationed, but yeah.

TS: [sneezes] Excuse me.

DE: But to know these guys and to know they had family and everything, and they were going to be going. That was hard, because they were young.

TS: Right.



DE: They were still real young. Yeah. So hospital corps school was good. That's where—My chit for my moustache. One of the other guys—

TS: Your—Your what?

DE: A—A chit is a request.

TS: Okay.

DE: Okay? That—One of the guys—The captain's—Art[?]  
—Why can't I remember his rank?

TS: That's okay.

DE: But they had to ask permission for—grow a moustache, so he was fed up that they, like, "You're going to do this now, and then you're going to shave it off, and then that means changing pictures, and—"

So he finally said, "Fine, nobody is growing a moustache without having the request approved through me."

DE: And so that's when I sent in my request, and he actually approved it.

TS: [laughs]

DE: So, [unclear] said, "You're not going to do that."

I said, "Well, I might as well."

But there was one day we were marching back to the barracks—

TS: Right.

DE: —after classes, and I—and I knew all about marching. I knew how to give marching orders because I'd done it in drum and bugle corps. But I said something about, "Hang a left," and he was driving by and heard it. [both laugh]

Next thing he says is, "I don't remember that order before."

So he did have a sense of humor and he went along with having girls in his command, so—

TS: Well, good.

DE: —that was good. So hospital corps school was good along that line; we were good friends and—and it went well. We had—It was—It was neat. I think every phase of my—my time in the military, there was a song that I kind of connect to that, and I remember on the way to the airport after hospital corps school, it was "Flying Away In a Jet Plane."

TS: Oh.

DE: Okay.

TS: "Leaving On a Jet Plane"?

DE: "Leaving On a Jet Plane." And then—Oh, and the other thing that was really—that stood out in the hospital corps school is emotional stuff, unfortunately. It was the fact that, because of different things going on—the arsonist going around, or somebody trying to break into the building, or whatever—and it would have people on edge a little bit. Well, there was one gal that had her guitar, and she had a very beautiful voice to sing. And so the nights I stood duty sometimes I'd ask her if she'd just come in the office and sing. And she—It just calmed everybody down at the end of the day. And I real—That was a real blessing for all of us.

TS: That's really nice.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: That was really neat.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But otherwise corps school was a lot of jamming [?]. I mean, my mother—It—It frustrated my mother because what I was allowed to do after thirteen weeks of corps school, she went through nurses training for.

TS: Oh, right.

DE: And so it was hard, but all the medicines, and all the—because you—you had constant stacks of cards with all the medications and what they were for, and what their side effects would be, and all this stuff, so it was a—it was a lot that we went through in corps school. And when we did—And then we worked in the hospital. The Great Lakes had a big hospital there, and that was—

TS: For part of your training?

DE: Yeah—

TS: Okay.

DE: —yeah, and we got put on different floors. The hardest one for me was the children's. I was on children's, and they had a little girl with—Is it—Her head gets real big. Encephalitis, is it [sic- Hydrocephalus]—that it? You're head swells up—

TS: Okay.

DE: —and they have to put tubes in to drain the fluid blocked down into the body, and they sent me in to help.

I said, "My mother's [a nurse? unclear]."

TS: [chuckles]

DE: But I had to stand there and hold her head still, with the cloth over the top, and, like, five people working on her to do all this, to drain it and insert this tube, and I could just feel the only thing that kept me on my feet was knowing that if I let go of her head there'd be a major problem. And as they all finished up, and we're leaving the room, the last nurse in there looked at me and she said, "Would you like to sit down for a little while?"

I said, "Thank you," because I must have been as white as a ghost.

TS: Yeah.

DE: It was hard to do. But otherwise we enjoyed it. We enjoyed the hospital—We enjoyed the—the physical stuff, learning to stick needles into oranges and then eventually having someone stick it into your arm. We did a lot of that, so we had a lot of fun in the process of learning, too, but there was a lot jammed on us in thirteen weeks.

TS: I guess so.

DE: I don't know that—I don't know that being the patient on the other end I would have liked to have known how much—because I went into civilian—working with dependents and officers and it's like, "I don't really have that much training under my feet, really." [both chuckle] I probably knew as much because mom was a nurse and I'd seen what she does—

TS: Right.

DE: —versus what I learned in school.

TS: What you learned in—

DE: Yeah.

TS: Right.

DE: So.

TS: That's interesting. When you left Great Lakes, where did you—And now, was your friend with you at all? The—

DE: No, never saw her.

TS: Never saw her again? [chuckles]

DE: No. No, no.

TS: Okay.

DE: Because in hospital corps school was people I'd been in with boot camp.

TS: Okay.

DE: That was people I'd gone to boot camp with.

TS: Okay.

DE: So I did have people there I knew.

TS: So you—Now you are—You're headed to Annapolis, is that right? [unclear]

DE: Yes, went to Annapolis, yeah.

TS: But you're—But you said you're not at the academy, you're—

DE: We're on—The base in—in Annapolis is, you have one section here, which is the academy and the hospital was there, which the hospital is not there now. It's something else.

TS: Okay.

DE: But that was on this side. Five miles up the road was the base where all the movie theaters were, the bowling alleys, all the enlisted people, the ships; everything were up there.

TS: Okay.

DE: So when you're walking, you're more likely to go into town which is a mile this way versus five miles up the highway that way. And not many had cars there. A couple of them had cars there, but not many.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So you were by the academy but at the hospital.

DE: Yeah, yeah.

TS: I see, okay.

DE: We walked—To go to town we walked across the academy lawn—

TS: Okay.

DE: —to get there, so saw a lot of the academy area because we walked past it all the time; their parade ground and stuff, we walked past there.

TS: What was the typical day like there?

DE: There?

TS: Yes.

DE: That was more—To begin with, I was on the—the dependent ward—dependents ward.

TS: Okay.

DE: So yeah, started off there. So was working with wives—wives and daughters, and not kids so much, but women probably more than anything. And it was 3:00 [p.m.] to 11:00 [p.m.] shifts, so unless you stood duty on the weekend—I don't know if I ever worked nights in the hospital part. But it was—A lot of the women were pleasant, it was just regular daily care. The nurses did a lot of it, we didn't do a whole lot—We don't do anything like what the LPNs [Licensed Practical Nurse] and stuff do now. So it was changing bedpans and changing sheets and getting drinks and—and all that kind of stuff.

TS: Yes.

DE: And you'd give injections. I gave a lot of injections.

TS: Oh, you did?

DE: A lot of injections; a lot of injections; [both chuckle] pre-surgery injections and this kind of stuff, or antibiotics, or whatever. Once in a while you'd get an officer's wife who was a bit more demanding, and that would be interesting. And the longer I was at Annapolis, the more I met Mrs. Colonel So-and-so or Ms. Admiral So-and-so, or—so that made life a little bit more difficult. They eventually put me over into the—the labor and delivery, which is really an experience at eighteen, going on nineteen. I was astounded at the amount of noise the women would make in labor.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: I mean, they were screaming at the top of their lungs. I mean, they were just like a—Of course, a lot of these were really young girls. They were married, being in the military like that, with their husbands in. Went through that, learned to—to set up the instruments and everything in the labor—in the delivery room. Set it up and tear it down, and clean things, autoclave things, that kind of stuff.

The doctors—See, I—Oh, where was I first? No, the doctors—Like I said, a lot of the doctors were paying back, so they were doctors first. So they were more than happy to teach you what they were doing. Well, the first time a doctor was teaching me about an episiotomy, I'm standing there, with all the blood and everything going, "Just stitch the lady up and let's get this over with." It's like, "I don't care what's being stitched to what, just do it." [both chuckle]

TS: Didn't want to be trained?

DE: No, I didn't want to know how to do an episiotomy, didn't want to see what one looked like. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

DE: But they were always so friendly about it and everything. It's like, "Okay." But held a lot of hands, did a lot of that stuff and everything. My first child wound up being born in that—

TS: Oh, is that right?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: — hospital. In that—Yeah, in that same—Well, not in that room but I did go through labor down there.

TS: And that was your son, right?

DE: Yes, my son was born a navy baby. So I was there—None of that was real long, because, from there, I don't know how, I wound up in the OB-GYN [Obstetrics and Gynecology] clinic. I would rather have stayed in labor and delivery. OB-GYN clinic was—The doctors have to see patients every fifteen minutes on OB days, so you were just, like, pushing them through like crazy.

You did all standbys; the doctor was never in the room with a—with a woman by himself. Phone was constantly ringing. The—And that's where I learned about the Mrs. Admirals and the Mrs. So-and-so's, and they wanted their care, and they wanted it now, and they didn't care what else was going on in the world.

So there was a lot of pep talks with women who were bleeding, and you were trying to convince them that they needed to lay down for a while, put their feet up in the air, but they need to go to work, and so then you're—It's like, “Well, do you want—” There was reasoning with some.

I was there when a lady aborted. That was really kind of mind-boggling—really eye-opening—to be there for that. But that was a busy place, and like I said, it wasn't a medical person that was overseeing the hospital, so when some of these women complained to him because they weren't being taken care of quick enough, he gave us another telephone.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: That was—

TS: As though that was going to solve the problem.

DE: That was going to solve our problem.

TS: I see.

DE: Now we just have two phones ringing.

TS: Yeah. Interesting.

DE: This is—Yeah, it was very interesting.

TS: So was it, like, that rank had its privileges for the wives of the higher-ranking—

DE: Yeah.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —officers?

DE: Well—

TS: Some of the—

DE: I don't think it was so much with the doctors. I think it was for the man in the top office that was trying to make an impression. So I don't think anybody was really pleased with him. I mean, we had so many needs in the hospital that needed to be redone and remade, and he remodeled the front lobby, and didn't—and then said he didn't want gurneys

pushed through there even though it was a much shorter way to get from one part of the building to another.

TS: So a lot about appearances and things like that?

DE: He was all about appearances; all about appearances. I mean, we had an x-ray machine that was held up by a cord. They sent it—They knew it was in danger so the company sent the cord, like a big bungee cord, for us to—and we—It wasn't wobbly or anything, but we thought, "Is that really going to do anything if this machine decides it's not going to work anymore?"

But we had a nice lobby. It was a—It was really sad. But—But it was a good place to be, and if I did night duty there it was like walking the hallways—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —and checking things out.

TS: Well, what was your, like—the favorite sort of thing that you did at work?

DE: I worked—I went from the OB-GYN clinic—They needed a female up in x-ray. They had to have a standby person up in x-ray, and so the guys up there scanned the building, and went to their boss and said, "Okay, you need to go down and tell Louise[?] when you want her." [both chuckle] "You've got to just tell him that you—"

So I got recruited up into x-ray, and that's—that was my love—

TS: Okay.

DE: —was x-ray.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: I did—

TS: How long were you there?

DE: —on-the-job training in x-ray. I don't know, probably—I don't know—at least a year.

TS: Okay.

DE: I enjoyed it. I'm sorry—I'm really sorry that I didn't go through with x-ray school.

TS: Yeah?

DE: On-the-job training was good, and I—I was good at it.



TS: Yeah.

DE: I was really good at it, so—

TS: And you liked the people that you—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Besides putting up with the guys.

TS: Besides putting up with them?

DE: Yeah.

TS: What kind of stuff—

DE: They were good guys.

TS: —did you have to put up with?

DE: Well, there was only one bathroom.

TS: Okay.

DE: So they said, "Oh, well, put a sign on the door saying, 'occupied' if you're in there."  
I said, "No, because then you will walk in."

TS: [chuckles]

DE: Because there was no lock on the door.

TS: Oh.

DE: So I said, "No, I'd rather sneak in." And then there was a stall right inside and the rest of it was over there. I said, "I'd rather go look up and down the hallway and not see any of them and scoot in there, rather than set myself up." [chuckles]

TS: So is that what you did?

DE: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, it never conflicted. We never conflicted with each other, but it was funny getting to that point of what we were going to do.

TS: Well, you always have stories today about how women were harassed in the military, and things like that. Did any—Did any of that ever happen while you were in the service?

DE: No, I didn't; no. I'm sorry for that happening now because I was—I guess that's why it was probably back in my element. We had—It was a part of the building, upper floor, on one end of the building, and the only thing up there was the x-ray was down this hallway. When you got off the elevator, right to your left was the operating rooms. But they changed their clothes. They had to go all the way down the x-ray hall into a back room to change and everything. And so, we were together a lot; we saw each other a lot.

And then, our guys—We didn't like having to get up in the middle of the night to run over to take x-rays, so the guys got a gurney that would fit in one of the offices that we could lock the door and sleep on. Well, the guys decided they didn't like the gurney so then they recruited a hospital bed. But that had to stay out in the hallway. I can spook myself in a room by myself. I can scare myself in the x—in the x-ray processing room by myself, and the room wasn't—was very small. But by the time I was done, I was ready for another room. They said, "Scared yourself again, huh?"

They were very nice to me. They—They realized that I got spooked easy. But now, I have to sleep in this little hallway.

TS: Right.

DE: Not—Not everybody would really want to go back there, unless they had to do surgery in the middle of the night. Then they had to go around the bed to get to their room to change their clothes. So I thought, "Oh, great."

But I did do that. I somehow nerved [sic] it through that. There was one day—But apparently, they knew something because one of the OR guys told me one day, he says, "You know,"—and I didn't even wake up—"we had surgery last night and I was thinking of jumping on the bed," he said, "and then I thought about it and figured you probably had a gun with you so I didn't do it." [both chuckle]

I thought, "Good, if that's what you feel like. Just go with that thought. I never thought of it, but hold that thought."

TS: Keep it, keep it.

DE: Of course, that tells you something different, too; you could have a gun on base at that time.

TS: Oh, you could?

DE: Probably. You must have. Well, our MP's [military police] had guns and stuff.

TS: Okay.

DE: I don't understand this stuff today. How can you be on a military base and not have any guns?

TS: I think some of them do, though. This is—

DE: Some of them do, yeah.

TS: Yeah. Like MP's do.

DE: But I think it's a shame that—that it's controlled the way it is, and yet I—I don't—I hon—I feel very highly toward the people that are in the military. I'm not happy with the direction the military has taken in a lot of areas.

TS: Like what direction has it taken?

DE: Well, they're not—that shouldn't have happened in Fort Hood [Texas]. There should have been somebody been able to do something. It should have been not treated as a workplace violence thing. It wasn't. It was a military move, and—and I feel for our people, and now I'm really feeling that they're trying to take that out of the whole equation, and they're trying to train them to not—Our chaplains are all in—at risk.

[On November 5, 2009, U.S. Army major and psychiatrist Nidal Malik Hasan fatally shot thirteen people and injured more than thirty at the Soldier Readiness Processing Center at Fort Hood, Texas.]

TS: How are they at risk?

DE: They aren't allowed to use the name of Jesus Christ a lot of times. They think—Some have been court—are sent toward—The man that has—last week, or the week before, that said they shouldn't have "In God We Trust" or something like that at the end of the Air Force oath? He has stated that his—his goal is to have four hundred people court-martialed for mentioning God.

And the air force, within forty-eight minutes after he called and made that complaint, that plaque was off the wall. I'm fearful of what will happen to our military when they do not have that support. And one of the men that recently went through a lot of hassle for his faith in the military, he said he had people emailing him saying how supportive they were of him and he says, "These are people I served with, and we didn't even know we were followers of Jesus Christ because we were afraid to say anything."

So—And I—That day comes. That's what brought my dad through World War II. That's what brought a lot of those men and women through World War II. You take faith out of the military and—and—So I'm sorry to see that, but I'm also sorry to see some of the "Mickey Mouse" rules they have that just don't make sense sometimes. I mean, it's always been stringent things that sometimes don't make sense to civilians but that was okay, it was the military. But now, like them suggesting they have to change the style of the Marine's caps, so they're more gender friendly. I won't even go there.

TS: Okay. I don't know anything about that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: I won't even go there. Yes, our—our higher-up put out that highly big suggestion this past week. I can only hope it does not go through.

TS: Okay. [chuckles] I'll have to look that up.

DE: I know there's a big complaint from coming—Yeah, he wanted something more gender friendly. The first news—

TS: Who wanted something more—

DE: President Obama.

TS: Oh, the President?

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: I thought [unclear]—They're already trying to take their—their dignity away from them. You take your dignity out of the military, what—what are you—what are they fighting for?

TS: I don't know how much control the President has over the—

DE: I know it—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —the hats, though—

DE: —there's an awful lot of—

TS: I mean, that seems like—

DE: —complaints coming through. One's like a multi-million—billion dollar thing to do.

TS: Yeah.

DE: So it's absolutely insane. But even that he would even announce it.

TS: Oh—

DE: That tells you that's a—That's sad.

TS: Makes you really wonder if he—he actually is—did announce it, I—

DE: Yes, he did.

TS: Oh, he did?

DE: He did, yes. It was very much official.

TS: Huh, okay.

DE: It's been on the news.

TS: Interesting.

DE: So. I don't listen to the main media all the time because there's so much that isn't coming through the main media right now. A lot of what's in the main media the last couple of days could have been in it a year ago, six months ago, eight months ago. Now it's a big issue in the mili—in the media. But they—They were trying to be—be nice to the liberals and didn't do anything, and now it's all hitting the fan.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

DE: So.

TS: Well, on—along those lines then, the one thing that has changed—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —is the—couple things, but like the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, that was actually put in place in the nineties and then repealed.

DE: Yeah.

TS: What did you think about all that?

DE: I think it should have stayed in place.

TS: The "Don't Ask, Don't Tell?"

DE: I do, yeah. I think it went better. I—And actually, being in the military, and believing in women being in the military, I'm very much opposed to putting women on ships with men. I'm very pro-marriage. And you're under stress, you're under duress, things are going to happen. Things are going to happen and that's that. So I—And I—I listened to all the pros and cons before the decision was made. I listened to the pros and cons, and really, there was a lot of cons that were just—more cons than pros, and yet they wanted to do what was equally right.

And I honor the women in Iran. I'm proud of what they're doing. But I do know our men are—are raised to protect women, and you get into a real tough situation, they make—may make a bad choice because they are defensive toward the women that they're serving with, and that—that is [unclear].

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Besides being on ships, do you think there's other jobs that women shouldn't be able to do?

DE: Well, just some of the stories I've read from some of the women and stuff out on—in combat. Combat's so stressful. I don't know what the answer is. I don't know—It seem—It would seem weird [unclear]. But how many—You could never be sure just how militarily you are ready when you have women involved.

TS: What do you mean?

DE: Because how many women—A ship's ready to pull out, how many women are pregnant—

TS: Well, some—

DE: —when the time comes?

TS: Some people have said—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —in some studies that the percentage of women who are pregnant is comparable to men who are not ready to deploy for other reasons, whether it's for—

DE: I don't know that I go—I still don't—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —like that idea, though.

TS: Yeah.

DE: There's [unclear].

TS: Having pregnant women in the military, you mean, or—

DE: Yeah, well, not in those positions. If you want to back where—I don't think it has to go all the way back to what it was when I was in, but I think whenever it comes into a kind of situation where that is—where there is safety involved for a whole unit, why would you put—why would you purposefully put compromising people within that unit, that you can't be sure of?

TS: Yes.

DE: I don't know; I don't know the answer to that.

Marie[?] was a fantastic officer. I—My mom had a friend that—she worked with—with aircraft and everything for years and she did well. But at the same time, I'd like to think my military—my military's ready—is militarily ready—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —when the situation would open up.

TS: Well, did you feel when you were in—So, it was, like, '69 to '71, right?

DE: Yes.

TS: Do you feel like you were treated fairly for promotions and—

DE: Oh, yeah.

TS: —things like that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Yeah. Yeah, that was all equal, yeah.

TS: Yeah?

DE: And even—That was back, too, when—For some reason it came back to mind—That was, too, when the racial period—some were still there, and some were being worked on, and some were—so that was still something—

TS: The racial tensions and—

DE: Yeah, I think so. Well, yeah, because I grew up in Connecticut when we got—had curfews at night because of things going on. But the one interesting thing came to me—and I served with black and white people and it was fine. In hospital corps, when we went to—We weren't in Annapolis, were we? We must have been in Annapolis by then. Got into a situation where the newest person that comes on is not going to get the best jobs for the day. And so, one—Greg[?] had been there for a while, before we were. He was a real fair guy, real neat guy. He was a black. And this new kid came. And, of course, he was at the bottom of the list, so who's going to swab the floors? Or do that? Whoever the newest person is is going to wind up doing the crummier job. Well, he kept pulling up the race card, and the other guys were grumbling.

And I said, "You know what? Let me go talk to Greg." So I went in, and I had never—

TS: So which—which one was Greg, he was the—

DE: Greg was—He was more senior than any of us—

TS: Okay.

DE: —and he was black.

TS: And was the other guy black too?

DE: Yeah, Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. He was pulling that race card—

TS: Okay.

DE: —every time anybody opened their mouth to him. And I had never dealt with anything like this before, outright. But I went in and talked to Greg and I said, "There's—has a problem, and there's a lot of grumbling going on, and I think you need to know."

So I told him. He just looked at me, and he said, "I'll take care of it. I'll—I'll take care of it." And whoever the younger guy was never said another word; never said we were picking on him because of his color or anything like that. That was the only time I came up against anything racial.

But I still cried right here in New Bern just within the last month. They honored some of the black men from World War II—after all these years. They just got the honors



they deserved all those years ago. Some of the first black troops in the Civil War even came out of New Bern.

TS: Is that right?

DE: New Bern area, yeah. I was just reading on one of them—[William Henry] Singleton [?] who came out of this area, that helped recruit a lot of the blacks to—to fight in the Civil War. So this area is known for it, but—but it's amazing the stories that come from back then.

TS: Right.

DE: A lot of them we didn't hear. I mean, the Indians never got their credit and they did a huge thing in World War II.

TS: The—

DE: Code breakers [The Navajo Code Talkers were a group of Native Americans who served in the United States Marine Corps during World War II. Their mission was to send and receive secret coded messages in the Navajo language that the enemy could not understand or decode.]

TS: Oh, the co—the Indian—

DE: The code breakers, yeah.

TS: Amer—American Indian, yeah. Well, did you—did you find that you fit in to the Navy?

DE: Yeah, I did well in there. Yeah. I think because there was enough structure and yet enough freedom, so—

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, why did you decide to get out?

DE: Because I was one of those foolish ones that they say will do it, and I said, "No, I won't be in that percentage." In school—In school they were telling us a certain percentage will get married and all this and I thought, "It ain't going to be this person." And I got married.

TS: Oh, you got married.

DE: And then I got pregnant.

TS: Okay. Was—

DE: So—

TS: Was that period that—when you had to get out because you were pregnant? Seventy—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: That was a fine line. Being a medic at the hospital I would have been okay, but I knew they were going to put me back in the OB-GYN clinic and I couldn't stay in x-ray.

TS: Oh, you wouldn't have been able—Oh, because you're pregnant?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Oh.

DE: So that was my whole determining factor.

TS: Where you were going to get—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Otherwise I would have stayed in.

TS: Oh, you would have?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Otherwise I would have stayed in through it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, because Ken was in. My husband's at that time was—He'd done two tours of Vietnam, and he was going to be getting out after that—that time. So that was coming up, so I would have just stayed in until he got out, but—or to my end of my thing. But, no, once—because I think I still would have been out before him.

TS: You would have?

DE: Yes. But when I realized what they might do with me I thought [unclear]—

TS: You didn't want to do that again.

DE: I didn't want to go back to OBGYN.

TS: So that would have been your least favorite place?

DE: Yes.

TS: For—To work in.

DE: Yes.

TS: Well, did you—

DE: I'm not good at whiny women. I'm just—

TS: [chuckles]

DE: —not good with whiny women.

TS: Let's see, well, did you receive any particular award or anything for any of the service that you did?

DE: No.

TS: Good conduct, things like that?

DE: Well, I got good—yeah—

TS: But regular [unclear]—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Yeah. [unclear] regular, yeah.

TS: Was there any special mentor that you had, that helped you through your training, or at your job?

DE: No, but I just always thought a lot of it—and her initials came back—it was H.G. Wells was the gal that took over our company in boot camp. I just really thought very highly of her, because she walked into a very volatile, tough situation.

TS: Oh, the one where the one—

DE: Yeah.

TS: — had to leave and then she had to take over?

DE: Yeah, and she came in. I just really admired her for what she did.

TS: Do you consider yourself a trailblazer in any way?

DE: No, not really. Not really, no.

TS: No?

DE: Yeah, I guess I—I guess a minor one, so, not—no, [chuckles] because I felt like I didn't really do that much.

TS: Well, there—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DE: Only two years.

TS: —weren't that many women in the military at that time that you were there; less than one percent.

DE: That's true. But yeah, I was convenient because they always needed women standbys. They were always having problems with that, but—Oh, and I did—Over in x-ray I got to know a lot of the guys from Annap[olis]—from the [United States Naval] academy because—when they broke arms and legs and—

TS: Oh, right.

DE: —all that kind of stuff. So—Of course, you couldn't fraternize with the—the men, which they were—

TS: The officers?

DE: They were very fru—Future officers.

TS: Okay, that's right.

DE: They were very frustrated because we weren't allowed to work up on their ward at all, and when they came down to x-ray and they found out there was females in the—the hospital but they weren't allowed contact with them, that—that frustrated them—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —because all they saw was the nurses that were—So that was fun to do. And you know which guys came in because it was a—a generational thing, and what guys earned their way into the academy. You knew as soon as you started to talk to them which ones were which.

TS: Okay.

DE: They—They're much more personable. And I know us girls—When you have a group of girls, you have a lot of different personalities. There was one girl that did go-go dancing in the officer's club, and so we all got invited to go to the officer's club. So we got to—We could go over there and drink once in a while. That was kind of nice.

We had one girl that got to know one of the—one guy and—because when the subs came in—those guys had been underwater for so long, just—

TS: Right.

DE: But one of the girls got to know one of them and the next thing we have was a tour—they had tourists during the day for the people on the subs in—in town. But we got our own tour, so—

TS: Your private tour?

DE: Yeah, we got our own private tour.

TS: Back—Like a backstage tour?

DE: Yeah, after—after hours, so.

TS: Yeah.

DE: They would comment to us that a lot of us were doing better on the ladders than the guys at the academy were doing on the ladders. [both chuckle] And they actually even served us a meal there, so that was kind of neat.

TS: Oh, nice.

DE: Yeah, so we got those little things, and Annapolis is a beautiful little town if you haven't been there.

TS: I haven't.

DE: It's interesting, yeah.

TS: I, I [unclear] going there.

DE: And I was fortunate, about eight years ago or so—twelve years ago—a friend living in Fredericksburg, we were up visiting with them for Christmas, and Mark, at the spur of the moment said, "Hey, we're going to go to Annapolis today."

And he had no idea—I don't think he had any idea of my connection with Annapolis because I'd lived there for a couple years.

TS: Oh, right, okay.

DE: And so, to go back there and walk through Annapolis on Christmas Day was really kind of cool.

TS: I bet it was.

DE: It was really cool. We did go on the academy side, and we did go down into where [USS] *John Paul Jones* is and that, so that was really kind of cool. We didn't go to where I used to be stationed—that part—but somebody had told me that they had changed; it was a police headquarters now, and I don't know what they were doing with the barracks over there. And our barracks, they were very easy because they used to be for nurse's quarters, so I never had bad housing, except for World War II housing.

TS: Right, for the training.

DE: Because there we had our own—We had hardwood floors, and our own bedrooms and locks on the doors, and a big galley downstairs, and had a big living room, dining room area that we could have parties.

TS: So you were living the high life, huh?

DE: Yeah! I mean, our barracks there were very easy to take now. The bathrooms were big, but, so what.

TS: Do you think your life is different because you joined the military?

DE: Yeah, probably; it gives me a different perspective. It has to. When you meet men who are getting ready to leave for war, and then you see them come back, or some—some of them—I didn't see those come back necessarily, but others came back and knowing how it changed, and especially Vietnam, and then to—I just never really bought into what they were saying about it. And it seems like—

TS: What—What—What do you mean?

DE: The things—All the controversy and everything going on about Vietnam.

TS: At the time—

DE: The way they treated—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —or now?

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: And I'm glad I held back on any kind of judgment or understanding of it then because—because so much of the truth has come out now. So much more truth, and these—they weren't respected; they weren't honored when they came home. I was reading again on the internet another one of—how they bring a body back now, and everybody—they have an honor guard to bring a body home and everything. In Vietnam, one of the guys was saying he remembered getting off in the middle of the night when they came home, because of all the protesters and things, and the coffins were just stacked on the airplanes and shipped out. That kind of thing.

So I guess I didn't feel right was being done at the time to our military. I couldn't have told you why, but now I do. It was just there—the inkling of something's not right here; it smells too much. And to know my brother was a good man. And to know my boyfriend was a good man. And they had gone, and they—and one of my best friends growing up, he and my brother and I were just about the same age and we were real close growing up.

And Michael—My brother went in, then I went in. Well, Donny[?] couldn't get a job and he went to school for a little bit, but he said he couldn't do anything because everybody figured you were going to get dropped so they wouldn't hire you. So Donny decided to go in. Donny blew up bridges. I mean, he went to the extreme; he went beyond my brother and I.

TS: Yeah.

DE: He just—[chuckles] And he went to Vietnam when he didn't have to because his older brother was already there. And—And Donny was a good man. He stayed in the military until he retired, and raised a good family and everything, and so I've seen a lot of the good part of people that came out of Vietnam.

TS: Yeah.

DE: And—And the positive stories. So I didn't really buy in to it then, and yeah, some of those atrocities happened, but if you looked—if somebody ever talked—and the men didn't talk back then, the media wasn't wild—you probably had some atrocities in World War II. You probably had some atrocities in World War I. Who knows?

You hear stories about Bosnia or wherever. There's always going to be some of that. That's my concern about faith in God in the military, because he keeps a moral standard. If you take away that moral standard, you're not going to be any different than anybody else that you—all these atrocities you hear, and stuff. But there's always going to be somebody that falls short.

TS: Well, you have three children, and I think you told me that your son joined the navy.

DE: Yes, he did.

TS: Would you—

DE: He joined right out of high school—

TS: Right out of high school.

DE: —and he went to basic in California, and was then sent to Maine. It was—It was funny; this week they just did a new destroyer. At the time he was in would have been 1990, he went in. Ninety—By '92—'91 or so, there—the *John Paul Jones* was the destroy—a new destroyer that they were making in Bath, Maine. It's one of the—Bath Iron Works is one of the last ones where they still roll them in—they knock the blocks out from underneath and roll them in—and we got to go see that.

TS: Neat.

DE: He was the youngest person to be assigned to the ship at that time so he stood on deck, and I did not know until that time that John Paul Jones was his hero. But he got to hold John Paul Jones' sword while the ship was christened and sent into the [unclear]—

TS: Oh, because he was the youngest.

DE: He was the youngest person.

TS: Oh.

DE: So—

TS: Neat.



DE: —that was a great opportunity and honor for him. And my mom and my dad and I were able to go.

TS: Very nice.

DE: So that was really a cool deal. And he wanted to stay in, but he couldn't put up with all—what a lot of people refer to as the “mickey mouse” stuff. He was a diligent worker. He's a person that's going to get the job done and do it right, and he couldn't—He didn't put up well with other people that—A lot of the guys would say, "Oh, well, he'll finish it so we can go on home today."

He just—He didn't like the fact that they gave him a hard time because you didn't have a part and yet the ship was new so there weren't extra parts yet, but you're supposed to have it to fix this part. So he got out, but before he even got out, the company he works for—he's been working for since—almost twenty years now, I guess. The company he works for, one of their people was there working alongside him and heard him say he was getting out and he said, "Oh, would you like a job when you get out?" Handed him an application.

TS: Neat.

DE: So he never—My son has never gone job hunting, per se.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: He went from a teenager into the military, got his job handed to him, and he's been in Norfolk [Virginia] for all these years since.

TS: Well, if a young person came today and asked if—said they were thinking about joining the military, what kind of advice would you give them?

DE: That's a real tough one. I respect anybody that'll go in, especially in these un—the waters that we're going into now; we don't know what lies ahead. I have a son-in-law that is actually National Guard, and so I have a grandson that is in his senior year and then will go active duty. He's already done [a month?] of camp last year. So that's hard. Not knowing—The not knowing is hard. I think it's still good discipline. I think it's the same advice that I had; don't fall into the mind games; don't get yourself all hyped up.

I think the big thing is don't go crazy. There's going to be people that try to influence you in a very positive way, and make sure you find them and follow them, because otherwise they'll take you down to—That's where I learned to drink, was in the military. And it wasn't a good thing; I wound up being an abusive alcoholic out of the military. I think you need to be alert, you need to know what it is you believe, and be ready to stand up for it.

And to have pride in your country. And that's the big thing. Somebody wants to go in the military, make sure that they have pride in their country. They don't want to go

in just to get away, and because they want to go kill the bad guys, but that they have a pride for the uniform and a pride for their military.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

DE: Standing up for what's right. Standing up for what's right for our country, and standing up for what's right for the people of our country. And to be willing to give whatever I need to give to do that. There's many times in these past years that I was frustrated when young people would say, "Well, I'd never go in if you paid me," and, "there's no way anybody'd get me in there."

And I'm thinking, "I would go. If I was able, I would go."

So it frustrates me and I have to be real careful not to say anything at all when I hear that kind of talk. Or put the military down. It's like, "Have you been there? Have you done it? Do you know what you're talking about?"

TS: Right.

DE: Because—And unfortunately, a lot of our kids don't have pride for our country. They don't know what our flag is about. They don't know how our flag came to be. They don't—

We had my grandson when he was, like, maybe three. His dad was on active duty in the Med[iterranean]—Med at that time; on a Med cruise. And Memorial Day came along. I always go down to the cemetery for the services, and there's a wall around the cemetery so it's a little ways away from where they'd be doing the talking and most of the people are. So my daughter and I decided we would take Nate[?] down there, because we wanted to go down for it, especially with Bennett[?] being gone at that time on active duty.

We were down there on this wa—it was a low wall, so we're sitting on the wall. There was an older lady on the other side of me. Nathan wasn't making any noise or anything, he wasn't—but he was moving around; he was on the grass and on our laps, and on the grass and all this stuff. And this older lady finally made a negative comment to me about children, in some way. It was one of those times you take a deep breath and say, "Lord, please let me say the right thing."

And I said to her, "You know, if we don't bring the children, they're never going to learn any of this, and someday there won't be anybody here."

And she didn't say any more. They were not words of wisdom that I had ready for the moment; I just was thankful that the right words came out, and they came out so well.

TS: Right. So passing it on to another generation.

DE: We have to. We have to pass it on to the—and it's not getting passed on very well at all. I mean, our President even has gone to other countries and said—apologized for us, apologized for our pride. Yes, we don't want to be arrogantly prideful, but we have a lot to be proud of as Americans, and our kids aren't taught that. Even back twenty years ago, I was working in an elementary school. My office was next to a classroom. It came

Memorial Day weekend, kind of up to that time, and they were singing some patriotic songs; the ones that I learned all year round growing up.

And after class that day, I said to the teacher, "Oh, it sounds so good to hear those songs."

"Oh, well, we'll sing them again next year."

I—See? So, it isn't anything new right now; we've started losing it down the generations. And we need to regain it. I also, since you let me on my soapbox—

TS: [chuckles]

DE: A lot of people say that young people today would not be able to—if we had a war—if we had some—I mean, there is a war, but if we had something here they wouldn't know what to do, they wouldn't have the guts to do it, and all this stuff. I don't believe that. I believe that, inherently, most Americans know they're something different.

Yes, there are some that [unclear] themselves ignorant. But I have to believe there's enough military families, and enough veterans from years gone by, that have—their kids do understand something. And if the time came right, they would do the right thing. And they'd be willing to defend what they have, because all of a sudden—Even now, with some of the things going on in the country, people are starting to stand up and make—They're realizing they can't just take things for granted. They have to be able to voice their opinions, and they have to do what—choose to do what's right.

And I think—I think that would come about. Maybe a little bit—I mean, they weren't really ready before World War I, probably. They probably weren't ready for any—for any big—Was anybody really prepared before the Depression? To start not using things, and saving things, and—No. But they did it and they did it well. So I—I think it's still there. I—I—It may be not seen as well, but I think it's there.

TS: Well, I don't have any more formal questions. You've kind of answered some—

DE: That's okay.

TS: —of them without me asking.

DE: Good.

TS: But is there anything else you want to add that we haven't talked about?

DE: I'll think of something after you leave. [both laugh] I'll email you.

TS: Okay. Well, Doris, thanks so much for letting me in and—

DE: Thank you.

TS: —sharing your stories and experiences with me.

DE: You're welcome; very welcome.

[End of Interview]