

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Jill Corbusier Mayer

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: November 3, 2013

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is November 3. This is Therese Strohmer. 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 at Greensboro. I'm here with Jill Mayer. Is that how you say your last name?

JM: Yes.

TS: Jill, how would you like your name to be on the collection?

JM: Jill Corbusier Mayer.

TS: Okay, great. Well, Jill, why don't we start out by having you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

JM: I was born in Yonkers, New York.

TS: When?

JM: Oh, I'm sorry.

TS: It's okay.

JM: On January 27, 1945.

TS: January 27, 1945?

JM: Right.

TS: Okay. What was Yonkers, New York like back then?

JM: Actually, my mother delivered me there but we lived in Eastchester, New York; that was the closest hospital. So I didn't grow up in Yonkers, I grew up in Eastchester.

TS: Eastchester? And what was that like? Was that a rural town? Was it a city?

JM: I'd say it was a small city.

TS: Small city, okay. Now, what did your folks do for a living?

JM: Well, my father died when I was two of a heart attack, and my mother was a secretary in White Plains, New York for a large company, and she was working in the office with the doctor. It was the—like a social services type place—I didn't mean to say company—social services type place.

TS: Oh, okay. And—Now, did you have any brothers or sisters?

JM: No brothers or sisters, and she died when I was thirteen.

TS: Oh my gosh. That must—

JM: Yeah.

TS: That was a very difficult time to grow up.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: It was. And then I lived with her best friend and her husband.

TS: Is that right?

JM: So—Yeah, so I never lived—I had—My other—My only other family was in New Jersey. My mother is one—was one of ten children—

TS: Okay.

JM: —and she was born in Ireland, and my father was born in Belgium. So she had sisters. They all came over from Ireland in the early 1900's and she had sisters in New Jersey, and I had some cousins, and they wanted me to stay with them, but because I had just started high school—I went all the way through Catholic school. I wanted to—

TS: Continue?

JM: —continue on there. So by living with Eleanor, this friend of hers, I was able to do that.

TS: Very interesting. So when—Your father died when you were two.

JM: Yes.

TS: Do you have any memory of your father?

JM: None at all.

TS: No.

JM: And unfortunately, the only picture I had of him was stolen when I went on a vacation to Hawaii, and I had my purse in the car and the friend I was with had not locked that side of the car so somebody came to rob us and took the wallet, and I thought, "You can take anything you want—"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But the picture, right.

JM: "— just leave the picture."

TS: Oh, that's sad. I'm sorry to hear that.

JM: Well, thank you. I'm going to try and get on Ancestry.com, and with some friends that can help me because I'm not internet savvy so—

TS: That's a good way for you to get involved with it.

JM: —and see what I can find out, because they both came through Ellis Island [New York], so—

TS: Oh, interesting.

JM: —there should be a lot of history.

TS: And in the—at the turn of the century then, or when did they come over?

JM: I think—I think my mother was born in 1908, and my father was born before then because he was older than her.

TS: Okay.

JM: So they would have come when she was eighteen or so; she and her—two of her sisters came.

TS: I see. And they met in the states? Your parents?

JM: Yes. Yes.

TS: Okay. Well, what was it like—So your mom raised you by herself until she passed.

JM: Right.

TS: What—What kind of things did you do as a little girl, then, in Eastchester?

JM: Well, we lived in a—in an apartment complex called Interlaken Gardens. It was a series of apartments and it had its own lake. I mean, they weren't exclusive by any means, but it was just a fun place to grow up, being an only child, because there were so many children in the neighborhood.

TS: That you could play with.

JM: Right. So I have great memories of going tricking—trick-or-treating with them; sledding down the hill in the backyard and things like that.

TS: That's neat.

JM: I mean, it was great. As a matter of fact, I was back there two years ago because I went to my fiftieth high school reunion, and one of my friends who went to high school and grammar school with me took me back to the old complex and we walked around, and as everybody says, when you go home, it has shrunk—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —in your vision. That courtyard that I lived in was so big, and it—and it just looked like you could reach out and touch the neighbors. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, yeah.

JM: So that was kind of—It was really fun to see, but really kind of surprising.

TS: Oh, that's nice. So—

JM: But I was a Girl Scout; I was a Brownie, and a Girl Scout—

TS: Okay.

JM: —and went to Girl Scout camp every year; sung in the choir at the Catholic school. So I went K [Kindergarten] through eight to one school, and then of course on to high school and nursing school.

TS: Were you in Catholic school the whole time?

JM: The whole time. From the time I was four and a half, because I started kindergarten early, until I graduated from nursing school.

TS: So your nursing school, was that a—at a Catholic—

JM: A Catholic school in Poughkeepsie, New York.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, Poughkeepsie, okay.

JM: So when you say, "Poughkeepsie," people think you went to Vassar [College], but I didn't go to Vassar. [Both chuckle]. Since that's in the same town.

TS: Is it? Oh, okay.

JM: Yes.

TS: Okay, so what—Growing up, then, did you have—did you take an interest in school? Did you like to be in school?

JM: I think so, yeah; I think I was a pretty good student.

TS: Yeah? How were the—

JM: My friend just sent me some old clippings from the church bulletin that had our graduation, and it mentioned the students who got above ninety per—ninetieth percentile on all their grades, and I found her name and I thought, "Wow, I thought I did okay." And then I found my name—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, you were in there—

JM: —so I was real [both chuckle] excited—

TS: Relieved too—

JM: —about that, yeah.

TS: —from your memory, that's—

JM: Right.

TS: And how—

JM: Made me feel good.

TS: Did you have a—a favorite—Were they nuns mostly at that time?

JM: They were nuns; they were Franciscan nuns; and then we had two priests at the convent. Sister Gabrielle was my favorite nun. I just remember how nice she was.

TS: Was that why you liked her so much?

JM: Yeah, she was just wonderful. She was young and pretty, so we all kind of looked up to her; we thought she was just special. And I also went back to that church for Mass at my reunion two years ago and it was just—brought back so many memories. To look—turn around and see the choir loft where I always got in trouble for talking when we were in the choir.

TS: [chuckles]

JM: When I would go to confession, which is something Catholics do, and that's a very anonymous thing; you never say your name, and the priest doesn't say your name, but he did for me. He would hear my confession and he would say, "Jill, please stop talking during choir practice." [chuckles]

TS: He did—He'd say that to you in the confessional?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: And—But by then, when you're a young girl and they know who you are, it's like you've confessed some hideous thing.

TS: I know.

JM: "He knows who I am." [both chuckle]

TS: It makes a big impression.

JM: It does.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Yeah, it really does.

TS: As a young girl growing up in—with the terrible loss of your parents that you experienced, did you—did you have a sense of what you wanted to do with your future?

JM: Not at all.

TS: No?

JM: Not at all. And then, after my mother died and I lived with her friend Eleanor, she thought that I should volunteer at St. Agnes Hospital in White Plains, New York. Was a Catholic hospital and they needed candy stripers, so—

TS: Right. Okay.

JM: —and there was—there was the main hospital, and then over to the opposite side there was a home for crippled children, so every Saturday I took the bus from my house and went there and worked with the kids and I loved it. And I went over to the main hospital then, and worked on the floors as a volunteer, and I just thought it was the most wonderful thing. I knew immediately.

And there was a Miss Caffrey[?], who was a nurse I really looked up to, and she had gone to Saint Francis Hospital in Poughkeepsie, New York, and I just thought she was the best nurse and the nicest person, so that's what I wanted to do, so—

TS: How old were you then when you were thinking—

JM: Oh, I was probably fourteen—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —or so.

TS: What was it that you liked about it that—that drew you to it?

JM: I just—I liked helping people. I really enjoyed the patients and talking to them and doing little things. Of course, I didn't do much because we were limited in what we were allowed to do—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: As a candy striper?

JM: —but I just liked that. Yeah, I just liked that patient contact; it was just wonderful. And I just thought, "This is what I want to do," and I've never looked back and I—

TS: Oh, okay.

JM: —I love it, absolutely, to this day. I'm not actively nursing, but I just think it's just so wonderful. Of course, at the time, versus now, we were so much more hands-on than the nurses of today are, but then again they're so much skills—so much more skilled than we were.

TS: Yes.

JM: So—

TS: My mother's a nurse, actually.

JM: Oh, that's great.

TS: She always says, "Once a nurse, always a nurse."

JM: Exactly.

TS: So—So I understand what you're—what you mean by that.

JM: Yeah.

TS: When you—SO you're a young girl, you're fourteen, you're thinking, "This is what I want to do." Now, is this after you lost your mother?

JM: Yes.

TS: Okay. Because Eleanor is the friend that's—

JM: Right.

TS: So you go through high school. Let's see. What year did you graduate from high school?

JM: Sixty-two.

TS: Sixty-two. Okay, so as a Catholic—John F. Kennedy was elected president; did you have any thoughts about that at the time?

JM: Oh, wonderful.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Best thing we'd ever heard.

TS: Yeah.

JM: And then when he was assassinated, that was obviously so big, but especially to us as Catholics. I remember we had no classes, and we were all in the dorm and they had us watch all the coverage on TV, and what was happening and everything, so it had a great impact on us.

TS: Do you remember where you were when you heard he was assassinated?

JM: I don't. I remember I was at school but I don't remember specifically where I was.

TS: Yeah. What about the whole issue of the Cold War? Did you have to do any of the duck and cover things that they did at that time?

JM: No. I don't remember doing any of that. I mean, I'm sure we probably did the—get under the desk and I—I just don't remember that.

TS: Anything with the Cuban Missile Crisis, or fear of that nuclear war?

JM: Not that I remember.

TS: Maybe in the school—Maybe in the Catholic school they didn't really show it as much.

JM: I think so. I think that's probably true because I don't have a big memory of that.

TS: Did you have any kind of world view; were you connected to that outside world at all as a young girl?

JM: I don't feel like I was.

TS: Yeah? Yeah. So you thought—

JM: We had a television at home, but I don't remember—Like, children today will probably remember so much more—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —of what's going on.

TS: So then, after you graduated from high school, as you—Did you enjoy high school?

JM: Yes; yes.

TS: Yeah. Did you do any activities there?

JM: Not really. I mean, I was—I don't remember. I think I was on the yearbook staff, but that would be about it. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah.

JM: I didn't play—I mean, being an all-girls Catholic school, there weren't a lot of sports. Actually there was only basketball; was the only sport—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was that the only one?

JM: —that we could play. And of course, I'm very tall so people thought I'd play basketball, but I had never done that before, so—

TS: Didn't have an interest in it?

JM: I didn't—No; I didn't try.

TS: Then you went to Poughkeepsie—

JM: Right.

TS: —to go to nursing school—

JM: Right.

TS: —and how was that experience?

JM: That was wonderful; absolutely wonderful. To this day—There were thirty-three of us that graduated, and we've lost four, but we're all still close—not in the weekly emails or anything—we get together every five years, but— and we talk occasionally on the phone, but it's just like we're back in that dorm—that freshman dorm—which a—was a three

story, old house that we lived in, and it was just wonderful. And there was a tunnel that went from that dorm to the hospital—

TS: Oh, really?

JM: —because of—because it snows, obviously, in Poughkeepsie and everything. So that we could get to the hospital, we went down through the tunnel.

TS: Like an underground tunnel?

JM: Underground tunnel. We have great memories of going down through the tunnel, and that's how we got to the cafeteria.

TS: Did you play any pranks on each other in those tunnels?

JM: We—We didn't.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: No?

JM: I don't remember us doing anything; just laughing, and kibitzing, and being silly and stuff like that, and—

TS: Yeah.

JM: One girl said she thought the janitor was really cute-looking so we all used to tease her about him and stuff like that, [both chuckle] because he was a young man. It was lots of fun, it really was. And it's gone; that house is gone right now. They took it down and there's a bus stop there. It used to be the convent for the nuns.

TS: Okay.

JM: And so, they took it down and there's a bus stop there, and then they took [it] down because the hospital is doing really well. The hospital's a major trauma center for Dutchess County and everything so that's going fine, but there's no more nursing school. They haven't had a nursing school since the seventies.

So then they took the other dorm that we stayed in for our junior and senior year down too, to build office space. So it's—It's sad to go back, but it's fun to walk through the hospital, because even though it's expanded there are still—

TS: Parts of it—

JM: —the corridors and parts that we remember.

TS: Yeah. Well, what got you interested in going into the navy?

JM: Well, my mother's husband at the time had been in the navy—he was retired from the navy—and he talked about the navy non-stop, and I thought, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know if I want to do this," but being an only child, and after we graduated all of us went different directions. Some went to schools, some got married, and we drifted apart. And I was living down in Florida, didn't know anybody except my parents down there, and so I thought, "Well, why not?" And I did it, and I absolutely loved it. Best thing I ever did.

TS: Well, kind of walk me through your decision to do it. So—

JM: I—

TS: —you're in Florida—

JM: Yes.

TS: —and what—You see—Do you see anything that triggers your idea about it? You were living with—Who did you say you were—

JM: I was living with Eleanor—

TS: And her husband?

JM: —and her husband.

TS: And so, he was in—had been in the navy?

JM: Had been in the navy, right.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: And he talked about it all the time.

JM: And we lived—We went to the base at Jacksonville; there's an air station at Jacksonville [Naval Air Station Jacksonville].

TS: Right; that's right.

JM: So we would go over there sometimes to eat, or to shop and things like that, so I was around it. There were planes in the naval hospital and everything, so—I don't know, I

just—they really kind of talked me into it and I thought I'd give it a try. So I applied, and I really don't remember much about the—the application or the starting process, but after I was in, I was sworn in and then I went to Newport, Rhode Island [United States Navy Officer Training Command, Newport, Rhode Island] for Officers Candidate School, and then we all awaited our assignments from there and we all went to different places.

TS: Well, now, Vietnam was going on. Do you remember any—because—and they had a call for women nurses to—to join the military.

JM: Yes.

TS: Do you remember anything like that at [unclear]—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I don't. I don't remember that till later, because when I went it was 1969, and we had a base in De Nang [Vietnam], and then we had the two hospital ships.

TS: Right. But I mean, when you went in it was '66, and that was around the time they were starting to—

JM: Right.

TS: —heat up the war a little bit.

JM: Right.

TS: Did you have any thoughts about the war at that time?

JM: I didn't. I worked on a neurosurgery ward so my thoughts at the time were the tragedies of these Marines coming back, having all these head injuries and different things that we took care of; being paralyzed and stuff like that. It was just sad to see, but then I thought, "Well, I'd really like to go on a hospital ship."

TS: Oh, so when you—after you—so what—that—you were thinking about that when you were already in the navy?

JM: Oh, yes.

TS: Okay.

JM: Yeah; yeah.

TS: You signed up; you went to officers' school. How was that?

JM: That was great.

TS: Yeah?

JM: That was great.

TS: Was anything particularly hard or difficult?

JM: It really wasn't. I mean, we were learning about the navy; we were already nurses so they weren't having to teach us anything as far as nursing. You would get that when you got to the—the hospital, so it was just learning about the navy; literally learning about types of ships, saluting, marching, uniforms, protocol, things like that.

TS: Right.

JM: All the basic things. And the funniest thing is there was also—the [Naval] Chaplains School was there; there were several schools besides the nurse's so we really bonded with the chaplain of the group, two of the priests—as a matter of fact—and one of those priests wound up marrying my husband and I—

TS: Oh, nice. Okay.

JM: —years later. Yeah, and I stayed in touch with them. But it was just another good bonding experience, making friends and—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, now, you had—

JM: —and everything.

TS: —spent much of your life up to this point in, like, all girl environments.

JM: Right.

TS: Right? So through your schooling and nursing and now your—and even in the nursing in the navy it was mostly all women.

JM: Right.

TS: But you're having—as part of the navy, you're having a lot more interaction with seamen and things like that.

JM: Yes.

TS: Did that—Did you—Did that expand your world view at all, or did—was that—

JM: I think so. I think so, because you're right, because I always went—It was—Obviously grammar school was coed, but high school was all girls and so was nursing school.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Yeah, so it really was a different social interaction.

TS: How did you find the navy? Was it a fit for you, or—

JM: Oh, yes; I really liked the navy.

TS: What was—

JM: I really liked the people. I liked—As I—When I came in as an ensign, which is the lowest officer rank, and I could see the supervisors that were lieutenant commanders and commanders and captains, and I enjoyed it, but I think I just enjoyed the camaraderie.

TS: Right.

JM: I had three roommates when I first came in, then other times I'd have one or two roommates and we'd go out and we had a—in [Naval Base] San Diego there was a naval air station—[Naval Air Station] Miramar—that was near us, so of course, we had the officers' club and there'd be all the pilots and dinners and things like that. So it was fun.

TS: You had a really good social network.

JM: Yeah, really. Absolutely.

TS: What did you think about the hierarchy, the structure, the rank, the discipline, things like that?

JM: I didn't—I don't think I thought that much of it. I mean, I thought I respected those people but I never had any problems thinking, "Well, this is absurd. Why are they asking us to do this or that," or "I don't like the way this is run." I think at the time, because you're so junior, you're just looking up to everybody like they're gods, and then, eventually, as you start climbing that ladder your ideas change, but I never had any concerns about—

TS: Right.

JM: —going against the system, so to speak.

TS: Okay. So you—So you—After you graduated from your OCS, and then where did you head out from there?

JM: San Diego [Naval Medical Center San Diego]—

TS: Okay.

JM: —which is the largest naval hospital, and it was—besides being the most beautiful place—not the hospital, but the city of San Diego—and all the things there were to do in San Diego, all the—the beach and all the water activities and—it was just wonderful. It was—It was the best duty station for a young nurse, plus the hospital was huge, so that you got such good training because you were on wards where they kept the patients that were, like, forty patients at a time, so—versus going to a smaller clinic, or a very small hospital in some place, this was huge and you could work ICU [Intensive Care Unit] or emergency room, neurosurgery. So you got a lot of nursing experience there.

TS: Yeah, I was going to ask you about—so when you were in Florida, did—you had worked as a nurse before you went in and—

JM: Yes. Just for a short time.

TS: Oh, so most of your nursing experience is coming from this—

JM: Right.

TS: —this time frame.

JM: Right.

TS: So this—You—I wanted to say—I don't think we had this on tape. It was '66 when you started.

JM: Right.

TS: And so—

JM: And I graduated in '65, and I stayed after nursing school at my hospital, and there were little cottages that nurses could stay in, so I had a roommate there and we did that for about six months, and then I went down to where my family was and I worked in a hospital in Jacksonville.

TS: Okay.

JM: And then I went in the navy, but I really learned, trial by fire, to be in this large hospital.

TS: Did you give any thought to the idea of travelling while you were in the navy. I mean, was that one of the draws?

JM: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

TS: Yeah? Like some sort of adventure?

JM: Yeah, that there were overseas duty stations and things like that.

TS: Okay.

JM: That would be good.

TS: So you're in San Diego. You were there for about three years, then?

JM: Right.

TS: And you're— And this is where you're learning to be a nurse?

JM: Right.

TS: What did you like doing best?

JM: Nursing-wise or just being in San Diego? Nursing-wise?

TS: Bo—yeah.

JM: I mean, I really liked neurosurgery. I—I—That really—

TS: Oh, okay.

JM: I really liked that a lot, and I think because I liked the two doctors that I worked with and I just liked the type of patient care. And then I went down to the emergency room, and I loved the emergency room.

TS: So you liked that kind of—Actually, those are both really stressful environments.

JM: Yeah, they are; they are.

TS: So things probably moved quickly, too.

JM: They really are.

TS: That intensity and that—

JM: The intensity and the things you—you got to do and see, and you—how you were counted on to do so—to just think on your feet and be in charge. You're twenty-two and just out of school and you're in charge of all these younger corpsmen, trying to teach them the right way, and the right way to handle patients.

TS: Right.

JM: And supervise their skills, because obviously their training is so much more limited. They have a—I think it's maybe a sixteen week corps school, it's called, so they certainly aren't as capable as RNs [registered nurses], but, boy, they—they really shone. Back in those days they were just amazing. Especially when I was in Vietnam on the hospital ship—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —those corpsmen—

TS: They were great?

JM: —just—just wonderful. Absolutely.

TS: You're in California during the counter-culture. How was that?

JM: I think we just ignored it.

TS: Did you?

JM: I mean [both chuckle]—Well, I mean, it was there.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How could you ignore it?

JM: It was all around us, with the hippies and stuff like that, but, I don't know, we were in such a different world, so—

TS: Is that what it seemed like?

JM: Yeah, it did.

TS: It seemed like a foreign thing—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: It really did; it did.

TS: —the protests, and the hippy culture.

JM: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. So you didn't get wrapped up in—none of your friends were involved—

JM: No.

TS: —with that kind of thing.

JM: Not at all.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Not at all.

TS: Okay, so what kind of things did you do for fun if you're not out partying with the hippies?

JM: Yeah, partying with the pilots. [both laugh] And in our apartment complex there were many naval people since it was near the air station. Besides the nurses, there were pilots and what they call line officers who were on the ships, so we had an active social life in the apartment complex and—going to the beach—

TS: All right.

JM: —and things like that, and great restaurants and things to do. I didn't really take any trips that I remember at the time, just—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —enjoy day by day living in a beautiful place like San Diego.

TS: Yeah, that's so true.

JM: Lots to do, lots to see, good shopping; everything. It was good.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Are you enjoying being in the navy then, at this time?

JM: Oh, yeah. Very much so.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Very much so.

TS: What made you volunteer to want to go on a hospital ship?

JM: I just thought it would be—there were two other nurses, one that I worked with directly, the other one was just a friend from the hospital, and we had talked about it, and we thought it would just be really interesting, and we felt it was safer than applying to go to our base in Da Nang, which was on the land. We thought, "Well, we're working in a hospital. This is a hospital. It's afloat and it's in a different location but it's still a hospital," and it was. It had all the facilities, had the OR [operating room] and the—and the E—not the emergency room, but the triage area had medical floors, surgical floors, pediatrics, because we had some Vietnamese children that they took care of. They did cleft lip and palettes and things like that as a humanitarian type thing, but I just thought it would be interesting since we'd seen all these patients, and to see what it was like to be over there.

TS: Well, tell me about that, then. Let's talk about your time on the USS *Sanctuary*. Right?

JM: Right.

TS: So that was in 1969. Do you remember the month you went over?

JM: I went over—We went over, literally, New Year's Eve, '68 to '69, and the three of us got off that airplane and got to the nurses' quarters, and of course, it was like a twenty-something hours trip to get over there, and we were exhausted, and we went to bed and I remember telling them there—the other nurses—and we knew some of them because we'd been stationed with them—"Wake us up if you're having a New Year's Eve party."

When they woke us, it was incoming. They were being—the bombs were falling, and so we had to put on flak jackets and crawl under the bed, and we were—

JM: Where were you at?

TS: —dead asleep. We were in the nurses' quarters at Da Nang, at the hospital in—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, because you had to—

JM: Da Nang.

TS: —fly into Da Nang.

JM: Yes. We had to fly into Da Nang, and they were going to take us by helicopter out to the ship the next day.

TS: What did you think about all that?

JM: Well, I was like, "Well, this is an interesting discussion." I'm laying under a bed and you can hear things going on. You could hear the fighting and you've got a helmet on and a flak jacket; "Maybe this wasn't such a great decision," but we were fine. We were just anxious to get out to the ship.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: To the ship?

JM: And then they took us by helicopter the next day.

TS: Was that the first time you'd ever been on a helicopter?

JM: Yes; yes.

TS: How was that ride?

JM: Oh, I loved it. I thought it was great.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I was very adventurous at that—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —point in time.

TS: Yeah. Well, tell me about being on the ship. I'm really curious. I haven't ever talked to anyone who's been on—on a hospital ship before.

JM: Right. I think it was a 400-bed hospital ship—300 to 400-beds, and like I said, we had all levels of care. The helicopter lands, they take them down this little ramp and into triage, and then they decide who has to go where; who's the most seriously hurt and—Because we also got some medical people, like guys with malaria and things like that.

TS: Okay.

JM: So it wasn't all just wounded.

TS: Okay.

JM: And then we had—we had a neurosurgeon; we had an ENT [ear, nose, and throat] surgeon; we had a little x-ray—doctors—we had orthopedics; everything you could imagine. So then they'd triage them, operate on them, and then we'd be taking care of them on the floors. And of course, on a hos—on a ship, there's a section for officers called the wardroom, which is where they eat. And so—I mean, that was another experience. We had—Literally, your meals are served. You come to meals at a certain time and the—and the—the guys—the sailors—that were working there would give you your food and everything. I mean, that was nice, and there was a place to sit and watch some television, and—I think we had television there; I'm trying to remember. No, I guess we didn't have television. But—

TS: Video—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: —we could socialize.

TS: Well, no, I guess you didn't have videos, yet, either.

JM: No, but I was thinking—I remember watching something. We actually had—

TS: Movies, maybe?

JM: We had—Yeah, we actually—we did have movies, and we actually had a—an in-house television station on the ship, and they let the nurses be—become the people that would do some of the talking; do the weather and things like that—

TS: Oh, okay.

JM: And so—Excuse me—somebody would come on and give the news of the day; what was happening outside in the war—

TS: I see.

JM: —and then back in the states, and—including football scores and baseball scores and things like that, and then we'd come on and talk and do some sports and some weather, so that was pretty exciting.

But we lived in a nurses' quarters. I think there were probably twenty-five or thirty of us, and I was in a room with two other girls. All the rooms were two but I happened to get in a three bed room, and it was bunk beds type thing, so I was on the top and then I had a roommate underneath, and then one across the way, and we had a desk. So you'd go to work, you go down the ladder, which is the stairs. I'd go down to ICU, and then you'd go eat lunch, then you'd come back up, and then you'd have free time. We had a tiny nurses' station and we—not nurses' station, nurses' lounge, and we'd sit out there and talk and—

TS: Play some cards?

JM: —and visit. Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

TS: How was the food?

JM: The food was good.

TS: Yeah?

JM: The food was really good.

TS: I've heard that food on a ship was pretty good.

JM: Yeah. And then they'd even have something at night. I wanted to say it was after 10:00, where you could go down and get sandwiches and things, so—

TS: Like a snack bar, sort of.

JM: Yeah. That was—It was really fun; we enjoyed it. And it was funny because if we ever had visitors and they came, obviously, from Vietnam from being on the land, and they were now sitting down with white tablecloths and white linen, and all these Marines and other people were like, "Oh my gosh. I can't believe you all eat like this every day." They're eating C-Rats [C-Ration, was an individual canned, pre-cooked, and prepared wet meal]—the rations that they had—and stuff like that out of cans, and we're sitting there having soup and salad and chicken and all kinds of things.

TS: Yeah.

JM: So it was very bonding. We bonded with the doctors, all the nurses did, and the corpsmen. I mean, it was really great.

TS: Now, when you—when you worked there, what section did you get put in to—

JM: In Intensive Care.

TS: For the entire time?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I was there for a year; the whole time.

TS: One thing I've always been curious about with these ships is, are they—are they moving?

JM: Yes; yes.

TS: Okay.

JM: There was another hospital ship called the [USS] *Repose*, and we were—like, we called ourselves “ships passing in the night” because there was a station in Da Nang where the naval hospital was, then further up north there was a place called Quảng Trị, which is a [U.S.] Marine [Corps] base, so we each—one ship would be in the Da Nang area, one would be in Quảng Trị, and we literally would be passing during the night, and then every so often we'd go into Da Nang, and you could get off the ship and there was a small PX [Post Exchange] there and you could walk around the town, and you felt safe in the town of Da Nang because—or the city of Da Nang, because there wasn't anything going on right there. It was out in the fields, out a little bit further away, so—

TS: How often did you get off the ship?

JM: I don't remember how often we were in Da Nang. I was going to say maybe once every three or four weeks we got off, and then we have a repair time when we have to go into port in the Philippines; [U.S. Naval Base] Subic Bay, the Philippines. They call that a line period, when you've been out in the—in the sea for a while, and we had the longest line period of any ship, meaning we were out there for a hundred and twenty days. Normally every ninety days they go in to the Philippines for repairs and they stay about a week or so, and they refurbish everything, and they get food supplies and everything. But we were out there for a hundred and twenty, so the nurses—we painted a big sign, “Longest line period of any ship,” and stuff like that.

Our—Our anesthesiologist, his wife was coming to meet the ship. His name was Frank and her name was Phyllis, and we'd heard about—all the doctors were married, and

we'd see pictures of their family, so—I guess it must have been close to Christmas, and so we put—made a big banner that said, "Yes, Phyllis, there is a Frank."

We had a great time, and we used to—We used to bring cakes out to the helicopters on the anniversary of a landing, like the hundredth helicopter that landed, the two hundredth helicopter that landed, so we called ourselves the Sanctuary Tomatoes. I don't know where we got that, but we made this patch that had a smiling tomato with long eyelashes and we'd make these signs in the nurses' quarters, "The Sanctuary Tomatoes welcome the hundred and fiftieth helicopter landing." So these guys would land and all of a sudden, two nurses would carry a banner with about six nurses behind them carrying a cake and it kind of lightened—

TS: Right. Even though they might have—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: —lightened the mood.

TS: —like, wounded patients on—

JM: Right; right.

TS: —on the—Now, is that how—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: We'd wait until after that all—

TS: Okay.

JM: —happened.

TS: And then you'd go back and

JM: Right.

TS: Now, would the—So most of the wounded came in from helicopters?

JM: Right.

TS: Did they come in any other way at all?

JM: No.

TS: No? That was it?

JM: There wasn't any other way for them to get there.

TS: When you—When you had your—What kind of hours did you work?

JM: Regular floor shifts; like, there were three eight-hour shifts—7:00 [a.m.] to 3:00 [p.m.], 3:00 to 11:00, 11:00 to 7:00; so we just rotated.

TS: Okay.

JM: It's called a.m.'s, p.m.'s, nights.

TS: Okay, so you had a eight-hour shift—

JM: Right.

TS: —not like a twelve hour shift—

JM: Not a twelve-hour shift like they do now.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But that's pretty intense, though, still—

JM: Yeah.

TS: —for that eight hours.

JM: Yeah.

TS: And now, '69, that was a pretty difficult year for the war, too—

JM: Yes.

TS: —so you—you must have had a lot of—

JM: Well, the biggest—the biggest thing was in '68; the Tet Offensive—

[The Tet Offensive was a series of surprise attacks by the Vietcong on military and civilian commands throughout South Vietnam, taking place in January and February of 1968.]

TS: Right.

JM: —of February of '68. But still, the war was still obviously going very strongly in 1969.

TS: Do you have any recollection of any of the—the men that you treated?

JM: I do, and I've seen the name of one that I remembered—His name was Rusty—and I saw his name on the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial] Wall. I remember that he—we had heard he did not die—he did not die in our ICU because they were medevaced [medical evacuation] then to go back to the states, so he made it that far, but we had heard that he had died, and he was the sweetest young man, and he had so many terrible wounds and injuries and everything.

As a matter of fact, what's really funny is—that's not funny, that's very serious—but there was a Marine who'd had a head injury and he was totally disoriented, so it's almost like when you put someone to sleep under anesthesia and they say crazy things, or curse, or something. So for some reason, one day the head nurse came to see the ward and she was walking up and down, and she said something to him. He had no idea who she was, and he wasn't in his right mind, and he just, "Blank, blank, blank," a whole bunch of expletives and stuff like that and, of course, she was just shocked.

But we told her about what his medical condition was, and years later, when I was back in [Naval Hospital] Oakland, was probably about two years later, he came in to have the plate in his head removed, and I saw the name and I thought, "It couldn't be."

And then I talked to him, and I said, "Do you ever remember being on a hospital ship?"

And he said, "Well, they told me that I was."

I told him my name, and I told him that story, and, of course, a Marine would never curse out—

TS: A nurse?

JM: An of—Yeah, a nurse or an officer. And I said, "I tell you that—how I know it's you," and I said, "You have a wound that goes, like, from your left hip down to here, and you have this," and his—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, you—

JM: —and his mouth just dropped—

TS: —totally described, oh—

JM: I said, "I can tell you that I'm not making this up because I remember your injuries."
And he was just—He said, "So what did I say to her?"
And I said, "Well, kind of along these lines."
He was like, "Oh, ma'am, no, ma'am, did I really?"
And I said, "You had a head injury; you had no idea what you were saying."

TS: Right.

JM: But to see him—

TS: Right.

JM: —come back years later—

TS: Right.

JM: —to have this plate removed, it was just amazing.

TS: Yeah. Well, how—How did you handle that—that kind of stress of dealing with a—all the wounds and death, injuries, things like that?

JM: I don't know, I—It's just—You hate to say that it becomes just a part of your life, but it does. I mean, you're reacting as a nurse, and you're so sad, and you're just like, "Wow, I can't believe this is all happening." But you're just in such a constant flux of working, and going places, and doing things that you didn't have time to sit and dwell on it.

TS: Right, but in later years did you—did you have any kind of post-traumatic stress disorder?

JM: I didn't.

TS: No.

JM: I didn't. I have a friend that had—I think, had a little bit of that and she doesn't like to relive all those memories. I—For some reason—

TS: Right.

JM: —I did not.

TS: You were able to put it in a place that—

JM: Yeah; yeah, exactly.

TS: Like a lockbox, perhaps?

JM: Right; right.

TS: Yeah. I was ta—I remember talking to a—I think it was a Donut Dolly and she was telling me how, when she met the guys, she didn't really know their names, she knew their nicknames.

[Donut Dollies is a nickname for members of the American Red Cross Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas program, usually single female college graduates used as morale boosters for U.S. combat troops.]

JM: Yeah.

TS: And it used to always kind of bother her that she never—she couldn't even look them up on the wall because she only knew they were—

JM: Right.

TS: —"Doc or "Cowboy" or—

JM: Yeah.

TS: —something like that.

JM: Yeah.

TS: But having been a nurse, like you said, you recognized this guy—

JM: Right.

TS: —because you had their—their chart and things like that.

JM: Right.

TS: So, have—So you've been to the wall?

JM: Yes.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Matter of fact, this weekend coming up is the twentieth anniversary of the women's Vietnam memorial [Vietnam Women's Memorial].

TS: Okay.

JM: And one of my friends is going up. I—My knees are kind of bad so I don't want to do all that walking—

TS: Yeah, that's a lot.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: —but they'll—they'll have a nice celebration up there. I was there twenty years ago when they dedicated that.

TS: Oh, were you?

JM: It was started by an army nurse—

TS: Ours are on the tenth anniversary.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: —and so—Oh, were you?

TS: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

TS: So—

JM: I really would like to go, but I just thought, "No, it's going to be really crowded," and I thought, "I'll get back up there again." I thought, "Maybe the twenty-fifth." And I thought, "Gee, I'll be in worse shape than I'm in." Maybe not, though, you never know.

TS: That's right.

JM: In five years.

TS: So you spent a whole year working with wounded—

JM: Yes.

TS: —and you had some breaks where you went to Subic Bay and then [unclear]—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: Well, and we also got two R and R's; rest and recre—relaxation.

TS: Oh, okay.

JM: So I went to Hong Kong for one, with a friend, and then I went to Bangkok [Thailand] with the other two friends that I had come over from San Diego with. So that was lots of fun, and as crazy as it sounds, the Marines would fly helicopters to pick us up and take us on the land and bring us to the officers' club there; they'd invite us to parties, if it could be called a party. I mean, just to have female companionship and talk to different people.

TS: Yeah.

JM: So we did a lot of that. Not a lot, but we did that maybe once a month or something like that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: On the heli—

JM: Maybe twice a month.

TS: —copter ride? Yeah.

JM: Right.

TS: I hear that that seemed to be like the taxi of—

JM: Right.

TS: —Vietnam, was the helicopter.

JM: Right.

TS: Yeah; that's interesting.

JM: I mean, I still remember coming back from the beach, as it was called—that's what the land was called—and we're so oblivious as to what is really happening, and we're in a very small helicopter, and you could see the red and green tracers, which is how they—before they start firing the bullets they send these tracers out, and we're like, "Oh, look at those pretty lights in red and green."
And the pilot's, like, thinking, "I have to get these women back."

TS: [chuckles]

JM: And one—A couple of times we couldn't come back, so they would just evacuate where they lived and let the nurses stay there.

TS: Oh, okay. Because it was too dangerous to fly?

JM: Yeah. It was too dangerous to fly because there was too much activity going on.

TS: Did you—Did you ever feel like you were in danger?

JM: I really didn't. I think—I don't know why you just feel like somebody's going to protect you. You're with all these Marines; nothing's going to happen to you.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Which is kind of silly, but you're just—I don't know. It's just so different.

TS: What's interesting for you—for me, to think about you being on that—the ship and you're talking about the quarters you're in, they're tight, and how you're eating and intermingling with the rest of the crew, and at that time they didn't want women on other ships.

JM: Right.

TS: Hospital ships was okay for nurses.

JM: Right.

TS: How—What do you think about that?

JM: I think it's great that they've opened that up to women.

TS: Yeah.

JM: But every time I'd hear, "Oh, and the first woman on a ship was on the USS 'something'," I thought, "No, she wasn't. We were there before her." But you're right, I mean, they wouldn't put women on anything that was considered combats. They never

were on ships because they were all deploying—all different carriers, destroyers, and things like that—and now they have women on submarines, which is really close quarters and everything. I think it's great for women who want that line of work and want to be able to do that, that they can—they have the opportunity to do that.

TS: Is there anything that you think they shouldn't be doing?

JM: I can't think of anything. I think if they're physically qualified, and mentally ready for the assignment, they should be allowed to do it. I really do. I mean, obviously there would be some physical things that women just wouldn't be as good at; hauling things and stuff like that. But I think if they're ready to try it—

TS: Right.

JM: —why not?

TS: The other controversy that you hear about in recent years has been about gays in the military.

JM: Yes.

TS: And when you were serving, it was, like, illegal. You couldn't—

JM: Right, right.

TS: You got kicked out if you were found out. And then they had a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"—

JM: Right.

TS: —and then that was repealed.

JM: Right.

TS: What are your thoughts on all that?

JM: I really had mixed emotions about that, and I—I didn't know—You're right, when I was there that didn't happen, and I think it's great. I think everybody should be able to serve. I know my husband, when he was alive, he had some—some doubts about what would happen with, like, housing and stuff like that; that it would be a different interactive family unit, so to speak, like—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: He was in the Marines, right?

JM: —family— He was in the Marines.

TS: He was a pilot?

JM: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JM: Yes. His thought was—He thought it would be hard to explain if you were at a squadron picnic and stuff, and there was a man with his spouse there—with his husband there—that that would be difficult. He didn't have any problems with anybody being gay. I mean, it's just—It is what it is, everybody should get to do what they want to do, but he thought just in the family setting it would be hard to explain to your little son or daughter why Billy and Harry are standing there together.

TS: And now they are doing that.

JM: Yeah.

TS: Yeah, but your husband didn't live to see that.

JM: No; no.

TS: I wonder what he would be—he's thinking.

JM: I think that—I think he would approve.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I mean, there's no reason that doesn't—it doesn't diminish them in any way. Your sexual orientation doesn't—doesn't dictate who you are and they're just as capable as anybody else, but that was the only part he worried about, was the—

TS: Effects on—

JM: —the social interaction with kids on the base and things like that would be harder to explain.

TS: Oh, interesting.

JM: But in this day and age it probably isn't hard to explain, because kids are used to So-and-so has two mommies or So-and-so has two daddies or something like that.

TS: A lot different from 1969.

JM: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Now, was there anything particularly difficult about being on the ship?

JM: Not really. I mean, I know that sounds so silly. You're confined, but we never really felt that because we had each other; we sat in the lounge; we went into each other's rooms; it was like being in another dormitory; like being off at school—

TS: Right.

JM: —and stuff like that. You worked, and you were able to go—You could walk out on the deck and walk around, and we actually had a place that we were—We'd sunbathe on the back of the ship [chuckles], and stuff like that, so—

TS: Yeah. Well, was there—

JM: You could—

TS: I'm sorry, go ahead.

JM: No, no, that's all right; I can't think of anything. I mean, you're confined but yet you're not. We could go out on the deck and just look at the water and just sit and relax, and lots of patients were out there just walking around.

TS: So you didn't write any letters to anyone and say, "This is—"

JM: No, not at all. Matter of fact, I cried when I left.

TS: Oh, did you?

JM: I didn't want to go home. I was really—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Could you have extended?

JM: I don't think I could have at the time, because I would have if I could have; it was pretty much—

TS: You really enjoyed it?

JM: Yeah. That—That one year and we all left after that time so nobody extended.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I think the only one that did was our [American] Red Cross gal who was my roommate when we got home—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —to California, but—

TS: She was able to extend?

JM: Yeah, she was able to extend. But I don't know, I just—I was sad to leave my friends and the experience of it all.

TS: When you—When you left, and you came back, you—you went—

JM: Oakland; I went to Oakland.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —you went—Okay. So you're back in California, and that would have been '69 or so?

JM: Yes.

TS: And 1970, it looks like maybe. So you—Did you have—Did anyone know that you were a Vietnam veteran; that you were—

JM: Oh, yeah, I'm sure they did.

TS: How were you—How was that received?

JM: It was fine. My friend, as I said, she was talking about being at the airport and her uniform being spit up—spit on, and I never experienced that; never at all. I mean, I never felt disrespected in any way, but she did, and a couple of other people I've talked to had that experience. Like people would yell at the guys, "Babykillers," and stuff like that. I never had that.

TS: Right.

JM: It never happened, and I think people actually admired you for having served over there.

TS: In the crowd that you—

JM: Yes.

TS: —associated with that might have been true.

JM: Yeah.

TS: So you—Did you have—Sorry, I'm going to turn this off for a second.

[Interview Paused]

TS: Did you—When you got back to Oakland, did you have any kind of culture shock to get back to, like, the regular world, so to speak?

JM: I don't think so. I—It felt good to be there and to be able to do different things.

TS: What did you work at?

JM: I worked at the Ear, Nose, and Throat ward and I was in char—I was initially the second in command there and then I was the nurse in charge of that ward.

TS: Did—Are you getting promoted on a regular basis?

JM: Yes. Yes. Matter of fact, I got a medal for that one; for my work at Oakland.

TS: Oh, you did?

JM: I got an individual recognition.

TS: What kind of medal did you get?

JM: I'm trying to remember what it was called. Navy Achievement [Medal] I think is what it was called. That's terrible that I don't remember specifically.

TS: No, that's fine. Yeah. It's a long time ago.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: Yeah, but I enjoyed Oakland because, once again, like—like when I was in San Diego, which is a fabulous town, Oakland is obviously right across from San Francisco, so we

didn't live in San Francisco, we lived in Alameda. There was a naval air station there, but we could go into San Francisco.

TS: Right.

JM: So we did that and we did the wine country tours and everything. So much of my navy experience is tie—is tied into so many wonderful friends, and the chance to do so many things; just the whole camaraderie is wonderful.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I would advise any young woman to go in service—

TS: Would you?

JM: —to try it. I really would. Right now, I would probably say not to go. Obviously, the Marine Corps is my first love, and the [U.S.] Navy, but not to go [U.S.] Army or Marine Corps because of the war that's going on now, and the promises of returning everybody. Maybe someday, but right now they're still going over there.

TS: Right.

JM: So as far as safety—There was a gal that worked in a restaurant here and she was talking about going in the army and, unfortunately, she didn't come—she hasn't been back to work for a while and I wanted to say, "I'm not downing the army, it's a great service, but you could train and—"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: It's wartime.

JM: “—you could be right over there.” It's war time, so—

TS: Right.

JM: —for safety reason, I think I'd do an—do something else.

TS: Yeah. What—So you would recommend service to anyone?

JM: I would; I would.

TS: What do you—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: It's just—You—For young people, you really grow up in the service, so to speak. The old story about—that used to be years ago, if somebody—men, of course it wasn't women at that time—if they were brought up before the judge it was a choice of go in the Marines or go to jail, or go in the army or go to jail, and it literally changed for those young men—

TS: Yes.

JM: —who were kind of adrift; it changed their—their life. And for me, I think it just broadened me because I was exposed to so much. I went—When I was at Oakland, I had a friend, and we got a Eurail pass, and we went over to Europe and did the quick two days in London, two days in Paris. Did the Louvre [Museum], did this, saw the museums, and I thought, "When would I have ever had that experience again?" To take thirty days leave and be able to go over and do all of that.

TS: Yeah, yeah.

JM: So it's just—I don't know. I ju—I absolutely loved it.

TS: Did you?

JM: I did.

TS: Did you feel you were treated well by your peers as well?

JM: I did; I did. I never had any sexual discrimination or any problems with anything like that. Once again, my friend said, "Well, I did."

And I said, "I—I never did, for whatever reason," and I felt very well-treated.

TS: Do you think it might just have something to do with even the leadership of the command that you're in?

JM: Yes.

TS: Kind of sets that—

JM: Right.

TS: —standard.

JM: Right.

TS: And then if you get—you're around a bad apple—

JM: Right.

TS: —it kind of percolates—

JM: Yeah.

TS: —through that whole unit. And then you—the experiences that you have are somewhat related to that.

JM: Yeah. I guess I was just lucky that those bad apples weren't where I was. [both chuckle]

TS: Yeah.

JM: So to speak.

TS: Whoops, sorry. So you're in Oakland for—How long were you there?

JM: Two years.

TS: Oh, two years, okay.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I think I was there two—

TS: And did you stay in the Ears, Nose, and Throat the whole time there?

JM: Yes.

TS: Now, you're still liking the navy; you're enjoying it?

JM: Very much.

TS: Are you—Are you ever thinking about making it a career?

JM: Well, I augmented, which is what you do when you think you might stay in, rather than staying a reserve status, where it's like you're almost like re-upping, although we don't call it that with the officers. When you augment, you're signing on to be in the regular navy, so you have a—no time limit when you have to get out. It doesn't expire in two years and you have to reconsider and resign and everything.

TS: So you think—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: And that was a big step when the—when the supervisor talked to me.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I felt like that was saying, "You can never get out. You signed this piece of paper; you're ours forever," and that really wasn't what it was.

TS: Wasn't the case?

JM: Yeah.

TS: But did you feel like you could make it a career?

JM: I did.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I did, yeah.

TS: What was it that you enjoyed the most besides the—the camaraderie? I mean, what about the—just be—did you feel like you were part of the navy? Because some nurses have said that in the hospitals that they worked in, it's—they're a nurse, and then when they walked off into the—the post or the naval station—

JM: Yeah.

TS: —then that's the military post.

JM: Yeah, I think that's probably true. I think I probably did feel that somewhat, but I don't know, because all our hospitals—like the naval hospital in Oakland was set apart all by itself. So was the naval hospital in San Diego, and some places they're like on an air station so you're interacting with other people in the military a lot more, but we were just hospitals. But I definitely felt like I was still in the navy. [both chuckle]

TS: Yeah?

JM: And I think I like—I don't like a lot of change as far as—It's nice to know that when you went to each duty station, you knew how everything worked. Obviously you'd have to

learn their floor plans and where everything was, but the paperwork was the same. You weren't having to go—like if you go to a—a new hospital, like if I left to go to Boulder, Colorado tomorrow or something, it may be the way they chart is different, the way they give medications, the way they do this. The navy was the same. You knew the corpsmen were trained to do these things a certain way and I liked that. See, you just fell into step, once you—

TS: So that routine was—

JM: Yes.

TS: —like, reassuring.

JM: Yes, definitely.

TS: Okay. Did you ever—Did you have a mentor, at all?

JM: Not really; not really.

TS: No? You didn't have anybody that said, "Hey, maybe you should try this job, or this training," or anything like that.

JM: No, I really didn't.

TS: No?

JM: And I think—And nowadays I think that happens a lot more.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Like in talking to some of my other friends, they talked about people calling them in and saying, "Have you thought about, like—"

That would have been the time I could have gone back to school and I never even thought about it. It's called DUINS—Duty Under Instruction—and you apply, so I would apply and get approved to go off two years or three years to get my BSN [Bachelor of Science in Nursing], or you can get your master's [degree]. Many people were smart enough to say, "Hey, I can get this. I can still get my active duty pay plus they're going to pay for my college."

TS: Or may—

JM: So it's a great thing.

TS: Somebody might have put that in their head, too, and said, "This is—"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: Right, that's what I'm saying, is now my—

TS: Right.

JM: —the younger people.

TS: Right.

JM: Like we were talking about Marie. They—They're—They're thinking—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —out of the box and I was not even—Nobody ever said to me, "You don't have your BSN, do you want to go off and go to school?"

TS: Right.

JM: So—

TS: You're talking about Marie Senzig, right?

JM: Yes.

TS: Who we interviewed this summer, I think.

JM: Yes.

TS: So you're—Did you see—The attitudes towards women in the military at that time were not necessarily fully positive, but towards nurses they were.

JM: Yes.

TS: Did you have any doctors, though, that felt like nurses shouldn't be there, or anybody—any interactions like that?

JM: Not at all; I didn't. Like you said, maybe it's bad apples that other people had experience with and I was lucky. I mean, we were all friends; it just worked out really well. We socialized sometimes with the doctors, with their families or something; not a lot, not very often, but—

TS: Right. Well, how—

JM: I never felt that way.

TS: Do you remember Kent State—the shooting at Kent State?

JM: Yes.

TS: Did you remem—have any thoughts about that?

JM: I don't, because I remembered just another—another tragedy and, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe this is happening." And then—

TS: Right.

JM: —it goes by.

TS: What about the women's movement? We—Did you ever feel connected to that in any way?

JM: Not really. I thought it was great that there was somebody that was kind of pushing us all forward and speaking for everybody, but I was never the protest rally kind of person that wants to get out and—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But you supported the ideas.

JM: —and do all that. Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

TS: Oh, okay. After Oakland you went to Subic Bay, right?

JM: Right.

TS: Now, did you request that or—

JM: No, and I really didn't want to go, and I did—

TS: No?

JM: —enjoy it and it's where I met my husband so—

TS: Oh, is that right?

JM: —it was obviously—

TS: Okay.

JM: —the right thing, but I thought I'd just as soon—I—I didn't—That's the thing, is I never had a plan. You just go where the navy sends you—.

TS: Right.

JM: —and some people really do have that plan like you said, to go get—get more of a degree or do something different or become a nurse practitioner. Although, I will say, I don't think at that time either the nurse practitioner or the nursing assistant program—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Wasn't implemented yet.

JM: I'm not saying that right. Wasn't implemented yet, yeah.

TS: So, what was—

JM: But I enjoyed the Philippines.

TS: Did you?

JM: It was another small duty station. And having been there on the ship, not for that long period of time, but I felt like I knew it—

TS: Had you gotten off the ship to go—

JM: —a little bit.

TS: —on the—into Subic Bay [U.S. Naval Base Subic Bay, Philippines]?

JM: Oh, yeah, because we went to the PX and we went to the club and had dinner and stuff like that, so it was a chance for us to dress up and socialize and, of course, Subic was where all the aircraft carriers and everything came in, so when we were there the club was always filled with people from destroyers and carriers. Matter of fact, when we were—When I was stationed in Subic, we knew all the carriers by number. [CV-] Sixty-four is the [USS] *Constellation*, and we'd see a sixty-four coming in the harbor, "Oh, the Connie's coming in," and stuff like that.

TS: Oh, so you just learned their—

JM: You did.

TS: Which ones were—

JM: Yeah, you learned the numbers on the ships and everything.

TS: What was it—What was different about that experience that might have been different from the other ones you'd had?

JM: I don't know. Probably just the location, because, as I said, the hospital ran the same way, the patients came in the same way. Sailors and Marines that were sick with something were sent up to us from the ships and took care of them and sent them on their way. We had nursing quarter—nurses' quarters, so that was great that you were never having to find—like in other places—like in Oakland, I had an apartment. In San Diego—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, yeah, I forgot to tell you about—ask you about your housing.

JM: Yeah, In O—In the stateside—Obviously, on the ship you were there, but in Oakland, and in [Naval Air Station] Lemoore, and in San Diego, I lived in an apartment. I never lived in BOQs, Bachelor Officers' Quarters. With this, we had nurses' quarters right across the street from the hospital, because you—there was no place out in, quote, "town" because there really wasn't a town; the town was the base.

TS: I see.

JM: And there was a town; it was almost like what Tijuana, Mexico is to San Diego. There was a town called [City of] Olongapo in the Philippines that bordered the base of Subic Bay, that the sailors, let's say, frequented a lot. [chuckles] It was that kind of thing. So we were pretty self-contained, but there was an officers' club, and there were a couple of swimming pools, and of course, the commissary, and—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Bowling alley, movie theater.

JM: —clubs. Yeah, yeah all that. So it was like a self-contained little city, so you didn't think about it. But I liked to travel, and so we brought—we had our cars over there; they shipped your car from the states to Subic Bay. So I drove to Manila.

TS: What kind of car did you have?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I drove to—I had a Mustang. And I drove to Manila, and I drove by myself, and people were, like, "Are you crazy?" Because you go through—they call it the barrios; this was—it was what the little towns were called then. "What would happen if you broke down?"

And I said, "They'd throw me a party," because that's what—The Filipino people are incredibly warm and friendly, and they like Americans. This is way back when, but they really did. And so, if you're—if you were driving and something happened—what I meant they'd throw me a party was—they'd say—they'd see this American and fix your car, and then have all the people come in and bring some food so you'd have something to eat before you went on your way.

So—So there was our base, which was a navy base, and then there was Clark Air Force Base. We would go between—When I think about it now, I think, "Was I crazy?" From Subic to Clark, I'd go by myself to go shopping, because they had a much bigger exchange, and they had a lot of import/export stuff, so we'd drive down there for the day and then I—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How far was it?

JM: I can't remember; a couple of hours, maybe?

TS: Day trip, though?

JM: Yeah, definitely a day trip. But then there was a place up north called Baguio, which was an air for—an old air force base [John Hay Air Station], and now it's a recreation center, so it's in, quote, "the mountains" of the Philippines, if you can call them mountains. It was nice up there. It was a nice place to go, get a room, and just walk around. I didn't golf, but they had golf courses and things like that; just a little getaway.

And then I wanted to see some of the other places, and I kept asking the nurses, "Doesn't anybody want to go to Iloilo?" which is an island to the south, and a couple of others. I went by myself; I took a plane; got off; got in a taxi; went to a hotel; laid on the beach; walked around and stuff like that and—

TS: Why didn't the other women want to go with you?

JM: I don't know; I think they had some fear. It was just crazy. I wasn't going for more than, like, a long weekend, but you got to see other parts of the Philippines. I always feel like when you get someplace, like when I've gone on cruise ships, don't just get off and go to the pier and buy a Coke and get a Christmas ornament and get back on and say, 'Oh, yeah, I've seen the Bahamas,' or, 'I've seen—I've seen Puerto Rico.' Go see it.

So while I was there I decided I wanted to go to India, so I went by myself to India, to the Taj Mahal, because one of—We had another Red Cross lady that was at Subic with us, and she had been, and she had the name of a guide who was an older man; he was married with a couple of children. So she put me in touch with him, and I guess we must have—we wrote letters, obviously; there was no internet. We wrote letters and he met me at the airport, and I remember—I don't remember where I stayed the first time. I don't remember even how long I was there, but he asked me to come to his house and meet his wife and his children, and I stayed with them, and they cooked me a meal. Then he took me to the Taj Mahal. I wanted to be able to say I've seen the Taj Mahal. I remember saying something dumb to him like, "Can—Want me to take your picture in front of the Taj Mahal?" Like he had never been there before and he'd be so excited. [both chuckle] After I did I thought, "This is what he does for a living; he's here, probably every day."

TS: Right.

JM: But it was just great; people just couldn't believe it. My now husband, or at the time my husband, but he was just my—I was—I guess I wasn't even dating him then, or we had just started dating—I remember we were with a group of people, and I was trying to reference something, and I said, "On my way back from the Taj Mahal, such and such happened."

And he said, "Do you realize how that sounds?"

TS: [chuckles]

JM: "On my way back from the Taj Mahal?" Like you were saying, "On the way back from Harris Teeter [a grocery store chain]," or something like that.

TS: Right. Exactly. Yeah. Well, that sounds very exciting.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I loved all that. I really thought, "Take advantage of what you've got." People just complain. Like when we were stationed in Okinawa [Japan], with one of—

TS: This is with your husband?

JM: With my husband, yeah. There were people that never left the base. I mean, what did they think was going to happen? Nothing happened outside the gate. My five year old son at the time—We lived on the top of a hill— and he would go down to the bottom, and he could—We didn't speak any Japanese, but he could say, "milk," or something like that, and they loved him down there. He was this cute American kid, and we just had such a good time going different places.

TS: I don't need to ask you if you have—are independent.

JM: No; I'm independent.

TS: But you were that way before you went in the military, it sounds like.

JM: I don't know that I was; I really don't know that I was.

TS: No? You think—

JM: Because being an only child and losing my parents early. My—My peers in nursing school, they—they lived—a lot of them came from Long Island [New York], and they'd go home on the weekends to see brothers and sisters and family, and I never did that. So I don't think I was independent, because I didn't have anybody to go see, basically. I didn't have a car, and I didn't think about—They were able to take a train into the city, and then out to Long Island, so—That's a good point; I'm glad you brought that up because I think the navy gave me that.

TS: You think so?

JM: I really do. I really think the idea to go places and do things. I mean, I don't remember being in high school and saying, "I want to see the world; I want to do this; I want to do something different."

TS: But once you're in maybe that—maybe it was an adventurous streak that you had—

JM: Yeah; yeah.

TS: —that allowed that in—the idea of you to do things on your own—

JM: Yes.

TS: —to foster—

JM: Right.

TS: Yeah; interesting.

JM: It was like the opportunities were there. When people are talking about going places you're like, "Why not?" Because, like I said, there are people that lived on a base in Okinawa and never left, and they missed the chance to see other beaches and go other places, and drive up to the northern part of the island. My husband took snorkeling there. There were things to do. I took snorkeling in the Philippines when I was there when I was in the navy.

TS: Did you—You met—You said you met your husband in the Philippines? Did you—When—

JM: Yes, because he was—He was a Marine pilot; they were stationed in Iwakuni, Japan [Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni], and they would rotate the squadrons down to the Philippines because the weather was so consistently summer-like, so to speak. The training for pilots was good down there, so they'd bring different squadrons; like, he flew Harriers [military jet aircraft capable of vertical/short takeoff and landing]; they'd bring them down; they'd bring A-6s [Grumman A-6 Intruder]; they'd bring F-4s [McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II], down, and they'd stay for three months. So I met him there.

TS: What was his name?

JM: Ben.

TS: Ben.

JM: Ben, yeah.

TS: When did you get married?

JM: We got married when I got out, in '76.

TS: Okay. And so, after—You're in the Phil—Did you stay together for a while, or did you just keep in touch?

JM: No, I'm trying to think.

TS: So you're in the Philippines—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: I'm trying to remember.

TS: —for a couple years.

JM: He was still—He was still overseas when I got back, and I was actually dating somebody else before I had met him, and then I wanted to be with him, so I met this other guy that had come home to basically say, "I'm sorry, this isn't going to work out."

TS: "I met this other person"?

JM: Yeah, and then he came back, but my husband had been at University of Florida where he went to school, but he hadn't completed his degree. He put in—He was smart enough that he put in to finish up two years at the University of Florida. So that's—After that we decided to get married; we stayed in touch, and then he came to visit me, and we decided we'd get married, and he finished up his degree at the University of Florida.

TS: Then when you left Subic Bay, though, you went—you ended up in Lemoore?

JM: Lemoore.

TS: Lemoore. And you spent—

JM: Just a year there. I was—It wasn't that I was unhappy there; this is when you say you were independent. I was—I think I was—I was so happy when I was with lots of roommates because I was so used to that, and here I was at Lemoore; it's a very small hospital and—out in Fresno, California, so it's—it's kind of out in nowhere in California. I was by myself and I didn't know anybody, and I'd been used to going to duty stations after I left the ship. I went to Oakland but I knew a couple people there, and that's one good thing about the navy; when you're assigned someplace you're like, "Oh, yeah, Nancy and Susie are there," or something like that, so you had this continuity of friends.

TS: But you didn't have that at—

JM: I didn't have that.

TS: —Lemoore. What made you decide to get out of the navy?

JM: Well, I got out because we got married and I got pregnant right away, and that wasn't a problem, but the problem was if I couldn't get stationed with him at [Marine Corps Air Station] Cherry Point, and at the time there was not an opening so I decided, "I better get out. I don't want to be doing this on my own."

TS: Yeah. You didn't want to—Were you—Were you married when you got out or you got out—

JM: Yes.

TS: You were.

JM: Yes.

TS: Okay, so you got married while you were in the navy.

JM: Right. But just a few months before I got out.

TS: And—But you'd already decided that you were going to get out then?

JM: Yeah, by that time I thought, "Well, I want to be wherever he's going to be," and we can be at the same place in certain situations, and other situations they don't have a—a joint thing, but since the—the [U.S.] Navy supports the Marines—

TS: Right.

JM: —that they take care of the Marines, and so if there's naval bases there, that would work, but he could possibly go someplace else where there wouldn't be any place for me to be.

TS: So—

JM: I meant to tell you—I don't mean to change the subject—

TS: No, no, no, that's okay.

JM: —but tell you a funny story about—

TS: Oh, yeah.

JM: —being adventurous. I—I love to buy things. Not—Not like clothes shopping, but in the Philippines they have this monkeypod wood; and they have all kinds of interesting things. So when I went to Baguio, I went and bought all kinds of stuff, and then I couldn't get it back, so one of the Marine pilots was taking—I don't know; I can't remember how this came—how this happened—but he was taking furniture and stuff that other people had bought back to Subic. Years later, when my husband was—I can't—No, I know; this is when we were still dating, I think. It's all kind of running together. But he was sitting in a vehicle getting ready to go someplace in the squadron and some guy mentioned—they were talking about Subic and he said, "Oh, I took—There was this nurse and I took all her furniture back."

And he's sitting there going, "Wow." [chuckles]

When I was in Vietnam, I met this other guy who said, "You want to fly in an F-4?"

And I said, "Sure!" I wasn't qualified to go up in an—I mean, I wasn't flying, but I didn't have any reason. I mean, I was an officer, but I wasn't entitled to sit in the back. What did I know? So I sat in the back and—

TS: How was that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: —we flew all over the Philippines; it was wonderful.

TS: Oh my gosh.

JM: Then we landed and he got in a lot of trouble. He got taken out of the squadron—

TS: Oh, no.

JM: —and sent to another plane. So when we have these Harrier reunions, because he flew the same plane as my pilot, we still say, "Can you remember; that was so crazy." So I have all these things, and once again, my husband was someplace and somebody said, "Do you remember hearing that story about that nurse that flew in the F-4 with Bob?"
[unclear]

TS: Did he just hang his head?

JM: He did; he would never say anything.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: He wouldn't say, "Oh, that was—I'm married to her now"?

JM: "That was my wife." [both laugh]

TS: That's hilarious. Okay. So you—So you got out and—Now, what did you think about that? I mean, were you okay with that decision?

JM: Yeah, I was, because I was married. Had I not been I would have—I would have stayed; I loved it.

TS: You would have stayed?

JM: And that's why I joined the Reserves for two years.

TS: Okay.

JM: I drilled down at Cherry Point, but then they stopped the pay billet, and it wasn't the money that bothered me, but what I'd have to do was go to Raleigh once a month and stay up there at my own expense—

TS: Oh.

JM: —and they weren't sure how long that was going to last when they closed the pay billet here. Luckily, he hadn't deployed but we never knew. We had two kids and I thought, "You know? I just don't think this is worth it." Now? Am I sorry? Yeah, I'm sorry because I could have gone ahead and gotten my retirement. But when you're thirty-something, sixty sounds like—"People really live that long?" Now I'm sixty-eight. At the time, thirty sounds like a hundred and thirty.

TS: Right, and you think everything's going to work out.

JM: Oh, yeah, and it did because he stayed for thirty years, and I had the military id and stuff like that.

TS: Yeah.

JM: But I was—When I went—Talking about this Vietnam Memorial, when I went when they first—twenty years ago—when they started it, I saw—there was a nurse there that had been on the ship with me, and she hadn't even stayed in the navy. She'd done three or four years and got out. She came back in, she was called back in, and I said—during the Gulf War, and I said, "How did that happen?"

And she said what they do is they take your chronological age and they subtract—because they certainly aren't taking you at forty-five years old—they subtract your years of service which puts you much younger. So they would have taken twelve years off and I could have gone back in. But then, once again, with a family—

TS: Right.

JM: —there's no guarantee that I could have stayed at Cherry Point and everything. But I could have stayed—I probably could have finished up in the Reserves, but at the time it seemed fruitless to do something once a month and two weeks active, so—

TS: Well, now a lot more women stay in and have families.

JM: Right.

TS: What—Is that—And have the kids and children and things like that. Is that—Do you think that's okay?

JM: Oh, I think it's great. Absolutely. Having to get out like Mary did because you were pregnant—

TS: Right. Back in '55.

JM: —was—Yeah, yeah, that was just crazy.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Mary McCaffrey.

JM: Mary McCaffrey, right, right. But no, I think it's great that they can do—they can balance it all. Of course, the doctors have children, and we have female doctors who have children, and I think it's wonderful. I mean, that's what everything should be. There shouldn't be restrictions—

TS: Right.

JM: —for anything.

TS: Do you think maybe there's more support there now than there had been?

JM: I do; I do. They have all these family readiness programs at Cherry Point where when the guys deploy the wives get together and do things with the kids, and make care packages, and they—they have call lines; if you're having a hard time with the kids or something you could call a friend. There's a whole network of support for—for wives in the military and for active duty people, and I think they're better about listening to you, telling you—telling them where you want to go and where you don't want to go, when they can.

TS: When they can?

JM: When they can, yeah. Before it just seems like you got your orders, and if you were smart—and that's still true somewhat to this day—you didn't balk because obviously when there's a promotion board looking at you, if you're a team player, so to speak, and you're willing to go here, there, and everywhere, that speaks to your integrity and the fact that you want to make this a serious career.

TS: Right. Well, do you consider yourself a trailblazer in any way?

JM: I don't know; I never thought about that. I really don't. I—I just—Going to Vietnam was different, but there were so many of us out there; I certainly wasn't the first.

TS: Nurses, you mean?

JM: Yeah, nurses.

TS: Yeah.

JM: So I don't know that I did anything that—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How many—

JM: —broke through any barriers.

TS: —nurses do you think served on a hospital ship in Vietnam?

JM: I think the—I think the ships were out there for four years, and there were probably several hundred if you total it all together. Probably three or four hundred if you total everybody doing one year—

TS: Yes.

JM: —and being twenty-five or thirty at a time.

TS: I think there were about—In Vietnam, there were about ten thousand women. On the ships, I'm not sure; I'll have to look that up. But then if you think of the millions of men that were in the theater, the percentage of women who went there is very small.

JM: Yes, absolutely.

TS: So in that sense, you—you were a trailblazer.

JM: Yeah.

TS: To do something different. Not necessarily that women hadn't served, because they'd been on hospital ships during World War II, right?

JM: Yes.

TS: Were they in Korea too?

JM: No, I don't—Yeah, yes, I think they were.

TS: Yeah. But still, you're a small percentage.

JM: Right.

TS: Yeah.

JM: Right.

TS: It's interesting how much you enjoyed being on the—

JM: I loved it.

TS: —ship.

JM: The funniest thing about it, when you were talking about, like, things with the men be—and we're talking about the movies before—

TS: Right.

JM: —because the XO, the executive officer—the destroyers would come up—the destroyer escorts that refueled us and sent us supplies would pull up next to the ship. So we'd be up on the back of the ship and the XO would be there, and they'd be giving us the movies. They would hold up a sign, and so he would have the nurses come up and all he wanted was what we called “spaghetti westerns”. He wanted John Wayne, and we were all with, like, chick flicks; “No, let's get this, let's get that.”

TS: So you could trade up pretty easily.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JM: So, I mean, that was just a—a funny story.

TS: Yeah.

JM: So he'd give us one that we want, and then there'd be all these movies, because the majority of people on the ship were men.

TS: So they'd want—

JM: They'd want those other kind of movies.

TS: You'd get a couple for—for the nurses.

JM: Yes. Yes.

TS: Well, what—

JM: But I have such good memories of that. One of the radiologists—and I have not seen him—He lives in Morehead City [North Carolina] and the plastic surgeon lives in Jacksonville [North Carolina]. I have not seen him either, but it's amazing how many people—and I have been to—

TS: That had been—that were on the ship?

JM: —that were on the ship.

TS: Oh, okay.

JM: I have been to two reunions, but they were from the 1968 crew; that's what they call themselves. We were—I was there at the beginning of '69 to the very end of '69. Got to see Bob Hope.

TS: Oh, you did?

JM: Could have gone home before he came; said, "No way am I going home. How often do you get to see Bob Hope?"

TS: Right.

JM: Because he came the day after Christmas.

TS: How was that?

JM: It was wonderful, but he wasn't—it was very interesting—he wasn't going to come. He was on an aircraft carrier, and our chaplain, who is a priest—and he radioed over there with the signalman doing all the radioing—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —saying, "You're on a ship with five thousand well sailors." I mean, literally, there's nobody injured over there.

TS: Right.

JM: "We're on a hospital ship, and we have wounded Marines, and we have—we have some army people, and we have some children. How do you not come to us?"
Well, we're much smaller, but they—they sent him over with Neil Armstrong [first astronaut to walk on the moon], Connie Stevens [singer], and one other person who I don't remember. They didn't do much of a sh—They really just came to see us, and to walk through the wards—

TS: Walk around.

JM: —but it was like we called him on it. “Don't tell us you're here being a humanitarian and you're dancing and flouncing around out there with these women in next to nothing clothing on an aircraft carrier. These guys are well; come here.”

It's terrible to say, but I remember not being that impressed—none of us were—with Bob Hope because it was very mechanical, because there were, like I said, twenty-five of us, thirty, but we were standing up on the deck, and he stood there, and he'd say, “Hello, hello, hello, hello.”

And I thought, “We're unique, because we're women over here.”

I thought he would say something like, “Ladies, it's so nice to meet—

TS: Right.

JM: —females in combat.” But it was very mechanical. It was not—

TS: Right.

JM: —very warm—

TS: Interesting.

JM: —and I—Yeah, we all thought that—And I thought——

TS: He didn't exude much charisma to you.

JM: No, and I thought, “How do you go home and say, ‘I wasn't impressed with Bob Hope.’” Whereas Neil Armstrong was very nice and we shook his hand.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I mean, we knew he couldn't converse like, “Where are you from? What's your name,—”

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Didn't have time to do that for everybody.

JM: —because he had to move it along—

TS: Right.

JM: —so he could go see the men on the ship, but was an interesting experience. And people said, “You could have gone home and you stayed over Christmas in Vietnam?”

I said, "Yeah. It's Bob Hope." [both chuckle]

TS: And Neil Armstrong.

JM: Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

TS: And Connie Stevens.

JM: Yeah, exactly.

TS: That's really neat. Well, what—what do you think—How would you describe patriotism?

JM: How would I describe—the willingness and to serve your country; to—to want to be where you're sent; to want to do the job you're asked to do; to just feel like you are an integral part of serving this country in whatever capacity you're called to serve. Being willing to do that and go where they want to send you, and support the Constitution [of the United States] and everything. Basically, apple pie and all that stuff. [chuckles] Just—Like I said, just being willing to stand up and be counted; stand up and serve your country.

TS: Would you do it again?

JM: In a minute. I'd do it tomorrow if they'd take me back. I'd have to lose a hundred pounds. [both laugh]

TS: Well—

JM: It just—It was just such a great experience.

TS: Yeah.

JM: It really was. I mean, I guess I can say I grew up. I'm not the—the kid standing before the judge that had to go in and turn their life around, but it really does open your eyes, and when you go to see other cultures—Who could have that experience?

TS: People all over the country.

JM: Exactly. Yeah, and all over the world, and then you're meeting—like you said—meeting people just within the [U.S. Navy] Nurse Corps from all different places, and the—and the friendships you've maintained afterward. We have an organization—Marie probably spoke about this—the Navy Nurse Corps Association, and we have—there's a meeting every year for the people that are on the board, but every two years there's a reunion, and the last one was on a cruise ship.

So these—I—There were two nurses that were on the ship with me, but they were on very early—I mean, they were on the '68 cruise so they were leaving a month after

two—after I did, but to see them, and to see other people that I looked up to. One of the admirals was there, and it was—it is just—it's like a sorority. We're just so close-knit; it was wonderful. We had the best time.

TS: You've talked a lot through—like a theme throughout your—your interview here has been, like, one of bonding in different places.

JM: Right.

TS: The camaraderie.

JM: Right.

TS: And so—

JM: And maybe because I'm an only child that meant so much more to me.

TS: Like of the family that you didn't get to have?

JM: Exactly; exactly.

TS: Yeah.

JM: And so, I'd be thrilled to visit with my friends and meet their family and—

TS: Yeah.

JM: —and everything. And just shared experiences. Like I said, this girl said, "Do you want to go to Europe with me?"

And I'm like, "Yeah, I guess!"

TS: "When we going?"

JM: And she had friends—We went all over, but she had family; she was Italian. She had family down in the very southernmost part of Italy, and I thought, "Oh, boy, we're going to spend most of the time in Italy." Well, it was wonderful. We got to see Rome, and all the big things, and then we worked our way down to this very small city where her family—that she'd never met before—

TS: Right.

JM: —distant relatives, and I thought, "This is—What are nurses that are working in—at the medical center in New Bern, North Carolina—and I'm in Italy, and I can do this, and I can do that, and stuff," so.

TS: Yeah.

JM: It often—You give a lot, but you get a lot; that's the way I feel. You're told where you're going to go and everything, but still, what you get back, and the friendships and the learning and the experiences and the chance to do things. Like, I've—I've flown in a helicopter, an A-4, an—an A-6, an F-4—none of which I was supposed to be in; not a single one of them. At the time, when they said—like when I was in the Philippines, these guys said, "Do you want to go up in the EA-6 [Grumman EA-6B Prowler]," and we were flying all over the Philippines and, "See there's the island of this and that."
And I thought, "Wow."

TS: "This is great," right?

JM: Yeah, "This is great."

TS: Nice.

JM: "This is great."

TS: Well, I don't have any more formal questions. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that I may not have asked?

JM: I can't think of anything; just to say how much I really enjoyed it. I think it's something that men and women should try. I know it's not for everybody.

TS: Right.

JM: But it depends on where you're sent, what you're experience is, and for me it was just wonderful; it was absolutely wonderful. And for—All my friends feel the same way. The only time—There was a girl on the ship that was married; on the hospital ship. She did not want to get those orders; she probably never should have been given those orders. She obviously wanted to get home to her husband.

TS: Right.

JM: But other than that, we didn't have any disgruntled employees, as they say.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, okay. Everybody—

JM: We all—

TS: Everybody was glad to be there.

JM: Yeah, we were all happy and then we were all planning our R&Rs [rest and relaxation] and trips and things that we were going to do, and where we were going to be stationed, and did somebody want to be your roommate. That's how the Red Cross gal and I hooked up.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I don't know, it was just a great, positive experience. I hope yours was as good.

TS: It was.

JM: When you were in.

TS: It was.

JM: Yeah.

TS: Well, I'm so glad that you came and we met.

JM: Oh, thank you. Me too.

TS: Yeah.

JM: I enjoyed it immensely.

TS: You, too, Jill. Well, I'm going to go ahead and turn it off then.

[End of Interview]