

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

INTERVIEWEE: Christy Diaz  
INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer  
DATE: December 17, 2014

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is December 17, 2014. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Christy [Diaz] Hinnant [Note: interviewee later decided to list her name as "Christy Diaz" for her collection] in Burlington, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. [baby fussing in background] We're here with Lucas too. [chuckles] Christy, how would you like your name to read on your collection?

CD: Christy Diaz Hinnant.

TS: Okay. Well, Christy, why don't we start off a little bit about—Tell me a little bit about when you were born and where you were born.

CD: I was born on June 5, 1986 in Miami, Florida.

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

CD: I'm the only child.

TS: You're the only child?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. What did your folks do for a living?

CD: My mom was—She cleaned houses; she was a housekeeper, I guess.

TS: Okay.

CD: And my parent split up when I was six months old, so.

TS: So you were raised mostly by your mother?

CD: By my mom and my grandparents.

TS: Oh, and your grandparents?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Oh, okay. So did you stay with them?

CD: Yeah, we live—my whole life we lived with my grandparents and my mom.

TS: Oh, how neat.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. And did they get to meet Lucas?

CD: Yeah. Well, my grandfather died in April of 2011—

TS: Oh.

CD: —so unfortunately he didn't meet Lucas, but my grandmother has met Lucas and she's excited. It's her—the first grand—great grand-baby in the family.

TS: Very nice. Well, that is exciting. Well, so growing up in Miami, were you—did you grow up in the city itself or, like, in the suburbs or—

CD: Kind of in the suburbs.

TS: Okay.

CD: I only lived in Miami until fifth grade.

TS: Okay.

CD: And then we moved to Naples, Florida, which was, compared to Miami, completely different, because that's more country. It's a city that only had one movie theater when we first moved in.

TS: Is that right?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: So—

TS: I don't know much about Naples, so I'm not sure what it would be like.

CD: Yeah, one movie theater, one [shopping] mall. It was a lot different than Miami where's there's tons of everything. So it was a little getting used to, but after a few years I fell in love with Naples as well.

TS: Yeah, nice. And so, what kind of things did you do—what—Did you—Did you live—When you lived in Naples were you in the city or were you more rural? Where—Where did you live?

CD: More rural. We lived—My grandparent's house is on three acres, so—

TS: Okay.

CD: Yeah, it was a little more country.

TS: Yeah?

CD: And then for fun we would go four-wheeling and fishing, and that's where all of a sudden I became a little bit more outdoorsy than—

TS: Oh, okay, because of that move?

CD: Yeah.

TS: I see.

CH: Yes.

TS: And, so what did your grandparents do?

CD: My grandmother, she was just, pretty much, a housewife, while my mom worked and my grandfather—my grandfather worked at—like, cutting steel?

TS: Okay.

CD: And grandma, she was the housewife; she cooked and cleaned and walked me to the end of the street, which was a mile from the house, so I could catch my bus, and she was there when I got home from school and—so she—she was the one that was always home and making sure everything ran—

TS: For you.

CD: —smoothly. Yeah.

TS: Very nice.

CD: Yes.

TS: Now—So how did you—So at fifth grade, were you a little against moving at first, away from your friends and things?

CD: Yeah, I wasn't thrilled about it. We were going to a place that I didn't really know a-whole lot about, even though my grandmother's sister already lived in Naples; they actually lived right across the street from where we had our house built. But it was—To a kid, that's a nightmare; moving and leaving your friends behind.

TS: Yeah. Now, how were—What kind of things did you do as a kid growing up in Florida? [baby fussing in background] Well, you said about, like, on the—in the rural property—

CD: Yes.

TS: What'd you do back in Miami?

CD: Miami, we didn't live that far away from cousins, so we spent a lot of times—every other weekend either my cousins—I was the oldest one so they would come over to my house or I'd go over there; the pool and the beach and that was—

TS: You've got to get to the beach, right?

CD: Yes. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. And so, where is Naples in relationship to the beach?

CD: It's only—Naples is on the West Coast of Florida, so we were actually about fifteen minutes away from the beach, so it wasn't bad.

TS: Not too far?

CD: Yeah. So—And Naples, we still went to the beach quite often.

TS: I see. Okay. What kind of things did you do growing up, then?

CD: The beach was definitely one of them.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

CD: Girls like going to the mall, so I remember just going with my girlfriends and walking around aimlessly for hours. The movies; Friday night going to the movies. And then I did get into four-wheeling a little bit, and fishing.

TS: Yeah? What were you fishing for?

CD: Just anything.

TS: Yeah? Whatever would catch—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CD: What would bite.

TS: —the line?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Now, was it on the ocean fishing or was it, like, river fishing?

CD: Yeah, it was—A lot of it was just saltwater fishing.

TS: Saltwater fishing?

CD: Yes.

TS: Pretty nice. Now, how did you like school?

CD: School was nice. I feel like in Naples the teachers were more attentive to students, I guess. I felt like the education in the public system in Naples was a little bit better than Miami. I was just a child, so—

TS: Hard to say?

CD: It's hard to say but I did like the schools in Naples.

TS: Were you a studious kind of student?

CD: A little. I was, kind of, more of your average—I wasn't—definitely not your straight A student by any means.

TS: You enjoyed school for the social aspect?

CD: Yes. [both laugh]

TS: I understand. Well, did you have a favorite subject or favorite tech—teacher?

CD: I enjoyed math. Math was one of my favorite subjects. I wasn't thrilled about history, or English for that matter. However, as the years have passed I'm—I'm okay with writing a five, six, seven, even twelve, thirteen page paper. Whereas when it comes to taking a test or math, I prefer not to.

TS: [chuckles] So things have changed a little for—

CD: Yes.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you're—So when you're growing as a young girl, was there anything that you aspired to do when you were older?

CD: Growing up I always wanted to get into modeling, and my senior year in high school I actually went to Las Veg—Los Angeles for a weeklong modeling convention that they had, and that was in January of 2004. And we met with a bunch of agencies; there was a runway show. It was a lot of girls that were up and coming in the modeling industry, and so that was a great experience. And I remember thinking when I got to—because that was the first time I really flew across the country.

TS: Right.

CD: And seeing mountains, because from Florida, we don't have any mountains in Florida.

TS: That's right.

CD: So I remember just that completely taking my breath away and being like, "Oh my—" That was my "ah-ha" moment, like, there's so much to do and so much to see, because growing up in Florida and not really leaving the state you think that's—that's all the world's about, is your little town and your little city, and that just opened my eyes to there's so much to see and I just—I wanted to see more, I wanted to do more.

TS: A lot more possibilities going on.

CD: Yes.

TS: Well, let me back up just a little bit. So when you were in high school, 9/11 happened then, right?

CD: Yes.

TS: Do you remember that day?

CD: Yeah, I was actually sitting in Spanish class and I remember it came on and the teacher turned on the TV and you saw the first tower had already went down, and then you saw the second tower. And at first it was kind of shocking because you thought it was just a replay of the first one, and come to find out that's when the second tower got hit. And I remember I was in tenth grade when that happened.

TS: What did you think about it at the time?

CD: [baby fussing in background] I guess I was just completely in shock. You don't expect something that tragic or that horrific to happen in our country. You—You think we're—we're safe and no one could get to us and no one could do anything. So it was just—You're really taken back. You just—Makes you question everything; all of a sudden, for that split second, our safety, how—how protected our country really is, so.

TS: Did you—Did your family have a military background at all?

CD: No.

TS: No?

CD: No. [baby fussing in background]

TS: Aw. Aw. When you—When you graduated from high school, then, is that when you went out to Los Angeles?

CD: No, it was actually my senior year.

TS: Okay.

CD: So it was January of my senior year that I went to Los Angeles.

TS: Okay. So you were thinking about doing modeling.

CD: Yeah.

TS: And so, what did you do with that? How—And how was that? It's pretty interesting.

CD: It was—

TS: Besides just opening your eyes up to the world, how was the modeling?

CD: I enjoyed it. I love being behind a camera and pictures, and starting up in the modeling world is something that is slow-paced, so you kind of have to—you give your—your

headshots to a bunch of agencies and it's pretty much what they're looking for, right timing.

TS: Like, they're looking for this look right now.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: So it's a slow startup. And—And so, I remember it being April during spring break, and I was like, "Holy cow, I haven't applied to any colleges." I was banking on this modeling gig, and graduation was a month away and I had no clue what I was going to do, and I had briefly considered the military before. I had been talking to a recruiter off and on since my tenth grade year, just my options and benefits, and so that was always on the back of my mind.

TS: Did the—Had the recruiter come to your high school or did you—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —seek them out? So they came and you thought—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —"Well, let me just check it out"?

CD: Yes, they had come out to the school and every time they were there I'd always swing by the table and just chitchat, and being tenth grade they're like, "Well, you know, you're still a little too young for us to seriously talk about anything." And so—so thinking back—and every time they went to the school they were—so here's junior year and senior year, they would always seek—seek me out and ask me what my thoughts were, and I kept dodging them, going to meet in the office, but it was always in the back of my mind; like, I had seriously contemplated—I knew that there was college benefits, there was—just a simple fact of the pride of serving our country, too, was huge, and I remember spring break thinking, "What am I going to do?"

TS: Okay.

CD: And as I'm having these thoughts and just brainstorming, the phone rings at the house and it happens to be the recruiter. And he said, "Hey, Christy, when do you want—When are you going to come into my office, and when are we going to talk?"

I said, "How about tomorrow?" A week later I signed a four year contract for the army.

TS: Oh, my gosh.



CD: And I never looked back.

TS: No?

CD: No.

TS: Now, did you consider any other service or just the army?

CD: I was always—I always knew the army is where I was going to go. And what solidified that decision was the simple fact that the army's the only branch of the military that once you sign a contract—or once you pick a job, that's the job that you're going to do. Whereas, any of the other branches, you could go in for an administrate—administration and you go to basic training and your job training, and if they need you for something else they could switch your job upon graduation. So I don't want that—I knew that. I was locked in for Human Resources. I didn't want to end up as a cook or anything else, and the army was the only one that could guarantee your job being locked in.

TS: And so, what year was this?

CD: This was 2004; April 2004 I signed my contract.

TS: Were you concerned at all about the—because it—there would have been two wars going on then.

CD: Yes. I knew it was part of the process. I knew that there was—There's always that chance that you're going to deploy, and I was okay with it. I was there to serve—I made the commitment to serve my country, and if it meant deploying it was all part of the job.

TS: What'd your family think about your decision?

CD: My grandfather was very proud and very supportive. My grandmother was more hesitant. [baby fussing in background] She was worried about the war and—because every time you turn on the TV all you ever see, unfortunately, is bad news. You don't—They report more of the bad than the good, so she wasn't thrilled about—She wasn't onboard 100%. My mom, she's always supported me, whatever I wanted to do; she's always stood behind me. So we just—we went with it. I was still seventeen in April, so—

TS: Okay, so they had to sign?

CD: Yeah, my mom had to sign my—my waiver, and after a little bit my grandmother, she jumped onboard and they were very supportive. They never were against it or made me question why I did it or anything like that.

TS: How about your friends?

CD: They would joke around and say—They thought it was funny and they would tell me, "Oh, you're trading in your high heels for combat boots." Because I was this—this girly-girl per se; I was into modeling. I was not a tomboy. Yes, I would go four-wheeling or fishing every once in a while, but I was far from your—a tomboy, and so they would joke around and be like, "Oh, you traded your high heels in for combat boots," and a lot of them were taken back and shocked.

TS: Yeah?

CD: [chuckles]

TS: How did you respond to that?

CD: I just, kind of, like laughed about it and told them, "Someone's got to do it, so."

TS: There you go. So you went in month later? How—

CD: I left—I signed my contract in April and I left September 2nd, so—

TS: Okay.

CD: —I had a few months.

TS: A few months?

CD: Yes.

TS: Nice. So—And where did you end up going to basic training at, then?

CD: Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

TS: In South Carolina? Tell me about that. What was that like?

CD: I had really—I was fortunate enough to have really good recruiters. I remember they would tell me, "Watch, you're going to get to basic and a lot of people are going to be upset, and a lot of other kids are just going to be disgruntled because their recruiters lied to them." And I was fortunate enough that my recruiters told me, "This, this, and this is what's going to happen, and you could expect all this," and that's exactly how it played out.

I'm lucky enough to say none of my recruiters lied to me about anything. They were very honest, so I knew what to expect off of what they told me. It is a little intimidating because you get there and drill sergeants are screaming at you and they're in your face, and I was like, "Oh, boy." [chuckles]

TS: But you were ready for that?

CD: Yeah.

TS: At least you were ready to know that it was going to happen—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —but maybe not emotionally.

CD: Yeah, I was ready for it. I knew that I wasn't going to be the first or the last person that they yelled at and I was okay with it.

TS: Okay. Well, how—how was it then? How—Emotionally, how did you get through all that?

CD: I think one of the hardest things was—

TS: [chuckles] Here you go, Lucas.

CD: One of the hardest things was, probably, not being able to communicate with back home.

TS: Okay.

CD: I'm an only child. I'm very close with my family, and so being away and not being able to make phone calls and things like that, my mom's always—she's always been one of my best friends as well, so not being able to call her and tell her what was going on, I think that was the hardest part.

TS: Yeah.

CD: I remember nights, just—sometimes crying at night, just missing home or being homesick. But after a while I knew I was there for a purpose; it was a good cause; they were all very proud of me. So that, kind of, just helped me push through.

TS: What kind of things physically did you have to do? Were you prepared for that?

CD: No. When you're in the moment, when you're right there you're—you think to yourself, "Oh my goodness. What did I get myself into? This is so hard." But now looking back on it, you're like, "Oh, I would do basic training all over again."

TS: Really?

CD: "That was a piece of cake." Yeah, because a lot of it is—It is all mental. If you're mentally prepared it's just a mind game, in a sense, and, yes, there is—some of the things

are physical, but they're not going to push to where they're going to break you. So the drill sergeants know your limits, and they just, kind of, test you on it. And so, there was push-ups and there was ruck marches, and one of our biggest ruck marches—it was towards the end of basic training. I think it was—I don't know exactly—It was probably three or five miles long. You have your rucksack on and—

TS: How many pounds are you carrying?

CD: I want to say it was fifty, and—and there was a field exercise where you stayed out in the woods for two days before this rucks—this ruck march, so you're just tired, you haven't slept that great, it's been raining, and you just want it to be over. So towards the end of the ruck march you're like, "I'm never going to make it. I'm just—I'm going to fall out. I'm not going to be able to finish this."

And then you have them screaming—the drill sergeants screaming in the background, "Let's go! Push it!" They're just yelling and yelling.

You're like, "If I stop now I'm just going to—they're going to yell at me even more," and, "How am I going to continue?" But you just find it within you to just keep pushing through and make it, and once you're done with those nine weeks of basic training it is one of the most glorifying things, because you're like, "Wow, I did this. I have accomplished this. I made it through this nightmare." [both chuckle]

TS: Now, what was the training like? Like, did you have—Did men and women train together, or—

CD: Yeah.

TS: Were you in a unit together?

CD: Yeah, we had—in my company—or platoon—there was men and women together; everything from the gun range to the ruck march, the exercising in the morning to eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner, it was—it was all coed.

TS: So how was that? I mean, because some people say that that doesn't work.

CD: I thought it worked fine. You call them "battle buddies" and you could have—as a female or a male, anytime you go anywhere where there's—to the bathroom or to talk to a drill sergeant, you got to have a "battle buddy" with you but it's got to be the same sex. So you always had a fe—I always had a female "battle buddy" with me. But while you're doing all these exercises—PT in the morning or ruck marches or—There are times where you get down, or you can't hit the target, or you think you're not going to be able to run that three miles in the morning, and everyone pretty much pushes each other. So you have male "battle buddies" that are encouraging you. You have female "battle buddies" that are encouraging you. I thought that males and females together works great.

TS: Worked great?

CD: Yeah.

TS: In your unit?

CD: Yes.

TS: Now, was there anything about the physical aspect of it that was hard for you at all, or were you physically—

CD: Running.

TS: Running was hard?

CD: I hate running.

TS: [chuckles]

CD: Even to this day. If I never had to run in my life it would be great, even though one of my goals is to run a half marathon one day.

TS: How neat.

CD: But I just—I dread it. I hate running. I just—I'm not a fan of it. I just—I just cringe every time I'm like, "Oh, let's go on a run." So that was—Physically, that was the toughest thing for me.

TS: But, like, carrying the ru—ruck sack.

CD: I would rather do that—like, carry a ruck sack and go on a ruck march—than run.

TS: Yeah?

CD: Yeah.

TS: That was—Okay. So now, you went—you went through basic, and did your—did your family come see you off at graduation?

CD: Yeah, they came for graduation and they were—they drove up for graduation from Naples, Florida, to—for Family Day and graduation. They were very proud and that was so rewarding to see them after nine weeks. That's the longest time I've ever been away from my family, so it was—it was a very rewarding experience. Because you go through—You've gone through all this, you've been away from them for so long, and then just being around them you're instantly in the comfort of your family.

TS: Right.

CD: So it puts you at ease.

TS: Good. And now, you did your advanced training at—at Fort Jackson also?

CD: Yes.

TS: When you did the training for Human Resources, I think you said?

CD: Correct.

TS: And so, did the same people from your unit—was that, like—your basic training unit was—did they all go to the AIT [advanced individual training], or was it—

CD: Some of them. Some of the males and females—Well, some of the males that we were in basic training with, some of them were infantry men or tankers, mechanics. Same thing with some of the females; they were either cooks or legal, dental assistants. So we were—it was—Basic training was just a mixture of everyone and all different MOS' [Military Occupational Specialties].

TS: How was that mixture for men and women for the—for the training? I mean, about how—like, was it fifty-fifty or—

CD: I don't exactly know.

TS: Hard to say?

CD: Yeah.

TS: You'd have to look at your pictures and see.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CD: But—So the ones that were doing human resources, they stayed in Fort Jackson. I remember the day after graduation. Everyone, kind of, just scattered, and people are going to Fort Benning [Georgia] or Fort Knox [Kentucky] or [Fort] Leavenworth [Kansas]. Everyone got split up and put on a bus and shipped out to different areas. Luckily, I didn't have to go anywhere because we were just going across post. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. Now, how was that training? Was it—How long did that last?

CD: That was also nine weeks.

TS: Nine weeks? Okay. And was there anything particularly difficult about that?

CD: It was, I guess, just getting used to typing up different memos and forms, because they teach you all that; all the different kind of forms and programs that you're going to be using once you go to your first duty station. So we had weekly tests, and I wouldn't say it was—it was hard. If you just paid attention and did your assignments it was pretty easy.

TS: Now, a lot more—It's used to be more, like, kind of, IBM Selectric typewriter, right?

CD: Yes.

TS: Now is it mostly computerized?

CD: Yeah, it was computers. We had the big box computers and it was—It was just typing up forms or, "Here. Here's this form. Make a copy of it," pretty much; like, type it exactly the same.

TS: Make it look the same.

CD: Yeah.

TS: So just get used to your forms and stuff?

CD: Yes.

TS: So now, while you're doing that, did you get a chance to, like, put in a dream sheet [list of assignment preferences] for where you wanted to go?

CD: Yes. I think Germany was actually one of my first places on my dream sheet. I can't remember what my other—my other options were, but I ended up getting Germany.

TS: Okay.

CD: And then when I got those orders I was actually surprised, because even though that was my number one on my dream sheet I never thought, "Oh, yeah, they're really going to send me to Germany," and, "I'm really going to go across the country." So when I saw it in black and white, I was a little taken back and I was, like, "Oh my goodness. What am I going to do?" Like, "I'm going to be so far away from my family." And I was taken back for a few days; I was in shock. And then after that I just got excited.

TS: Yeah. Well, because one of the reasons you said you wanted to do it was to travel a little—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —and see the world some, right?

CD: Yes. And that's exactly what I did in Germany. [chuckles]

TS: Okay. Well, tell me about that, then. Let—What—What was your experience like? Now, where did you go in Germany?

CD: Freiburg, Germany

TS: Freiburg, okay, that's right. And that was just a small unit, you said, right?

CD: Yeah, it was a—it was a—PSB [Personnel Services Branch] was my first—well, it was my unit in Germany, and it was a mixture of males and females, and we did, pretty much, all the personnel aspect for all the other units. Because we had infantry on that base, we had armor and tankers, we had scouts. So we did—updated all their records, we typed up their orders when they got new orders; ID cards, promotion, records. That's what we did. And so, I was there for two years and it was—

TS: So—But what kind of a unit was it, then? It was a—

CD: Personnel Service Battalion [Personnel Services Branch].

TS: Okay. It was all—

CD: PSB.

TS: It was all about service?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. So it wasn't like you were attached to a particular—

CD: No.

TS: —type —

CD: No.

TS: Okay.

CD: No. They've actually gotten rid of PSBs nowadays.

TS: Oh, okay.



CD: But that's what they used to be, was—it was like a service battalion—

TS: Like a centralized place—

CD: Yes.

TS: —where you did a lot of the paperwork.

CD: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CD: The ID cards, orders, updating any records, promotions; anything that any service member needed. [unclear]

TS: Okay, I didn't actually realize they had it like that.

CD: Yeah.

TS: [chuckles] So how—How—Describe, like, a typical day.

CD: You wake up around 5:30 in the morning, you go to PT [physical training] at 6:00. You did PT from 6:00 to 7:00. You got done with PT, you would go eat breakfast, then you would hurry back to the barracks, shower, get ready, and work-call usually was 9:00 but you had to be there ten minutes prior for formation. They do accountability and then you got released to go to work. I was in the PCS [permanent change of station –the official relocation of an active duty military service member to a different duty location] orders section, so anytime any service member from the surrounding companies came down on orders, either back to the [United] States or Hawaii or Alaska, that's what I would type up; their orders. Then lunch was from 11:30 to one o'clock, and then we would work from 1:00 to 5:00.

TS: Okay.

CD: Yeah.

TS: And how—And how—How many people were, like, in your office?

CD: In the office, publishing PCS orders, there was—I think there was five of us, and in my detachment—because I was in a smaller unit—instead of a company I was in a detachment—so there was probably about thirty of us.

TS: [chuckles] We're going to pause for one second here.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay. Okay. Took a short break for Lucas there. [chuckles] So you—The typical day, what—Now, did you—Where did you live? Did you live—

CD: In barracks.

TS: What was that like?

CD: It wasn't bad. I had a roommate, and so we shared a room that had a bathroom, and that wasn't bad. My roommate and I got along really good. She became one of my best friends so—that wasn't always the case. Sometimes people end up sharing rooms or getting a roommate that they clash [with] and do not get along about anything. So—

TS: You still room—Have your barracks with your unit; like, is it everybody in your unit in that barracks?

CD: Yeah, for the most part, any single soldier was in the barracks. And on our floor there was also dental assistants and finance soldiers that worked in the finance unit.

TS: Was it coed?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Coed?

CD: Yes.

TS: What—Was it coed on the same floor?

CD: Yeah, it was coed on the same floor.

TS: But not necessarily in the rooms?

CD: Yeah. Just—If you were—females were with females—

TS: Okay.

CD: —and males were with male, when it came to roommates, but the floor, itself, as coed.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was coed. How was that?

CD: It wasn't bad. I remember Friday nights a lot of us girls would just decide, "Hey, we're going to cook for our entire floor." So everyone would open up their bedroom doors, and someone would play music really loud, and you kind of think of, like, your college years, where—I didn't go to college per se, but I was in the military barracks, so I kind of got a little bit of that college life, because there was food and music and a little bit of drinking and—

TS: Yeah.

CD: Yeah. [both chuckle]

TS: Okay. Now, what about for food? What'd you do for your meals, and things like that?

CD: We would go to the PX [Post Exchange] or the Commissary, and we would buy rice, Spam, eggs, frozen pizza, sandwich meat; all those quick-to food that you could make in the microwave or on a flat top. [both chuckle] That's what we would do. There was also an Italian restaurant on post, and a pizza place separate from the Italian restaurant. So there was a lot of ordering pasta or pizza or wings. And then, a lot of times, too, we just went downtown. We would leave the base and just walk a couple blocks down and there was a Mexican restaurant in downtown, there was a—There was tons of German restaurants, so a lot of our food was eating out.

TS: Yeah? Did you enjoy the food there?

CD: I love German food; it's delicious.

TS: Yeah? What did you like best?

CD: Their schnitzels.

TS: Yeah?

CD: Yeah. [baby fussing background]

TS: [chuckles] Very good. So you're—What else did you get to do while you were in Germany? Did you get to travel or—

CD: Oh, I traveled everywhere.

TS: Where'd you go?

CD: I went to Spain, I went to Paris [France], I went to Stuttgart [Germany] and Belgium. I went to Berlin. I went to Czech Republic. I went to a ton of places. I can't even—

TS: Did you—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CD: —think of them all.

TS: Did you travel on your own or did you go with a tour?

CD: It was a tour. I actually became the vice president of the—the BOSS Program, which is Better Opportunity for Single Soldiers. And so, I helped coordinate a lot of the trips. Like, my trip to Spain, if I got X amount of soldiers to sign up I was able to go for free, and that was too easy for me to get a bunch of people to go to Spain for Memorial Weekend. So I loved it. I definitely took advantage of being stationed in Germany. There was lots of service-members that do go to Germany, and my husband being one of them. We didn't know each other then, but he was in Germany and he did no traveling whatsoever; he was there for three years. I was there for two years and I was all over the place. And it's just—it's a beautiful country, there's so much to see; I definitely took advantage of it.

TS: Yeah?

CD: Whether it was in a car—a couple of us renting a car and just traveling, or taking the train and going to Belgium or Berlin; we did that.

TS: Did you have—Did you do any of the volksmarches, or anything like that?

[German Volksmarching, meaning "people's march," is a form of non-competitive fitness walking]

CD: Like, the German festivals and things like—

TS: Well, the volksmarch where you can walk and you get a medal or a plate, or something like that.

CD: No.

TS: No?

CD: No.

TS: But you went to the festivals?

CD: Yeah. I—Their Christmas festival—Christmas in Germany is—it's incredible. They have all these little Christmas markets, and it's just very neat, their culture and the way that they live. One of my favorite things about Germany is, I feel—I feel America, we're always go go go, and we live such a rushed life. It isn't a matter of what we need. We could run to the store 24/7. There's always a Wal-Mart or a Target, or something that's open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. And I think that hustle and bustle doesn't really allow us to settle down, relax for a second, and smell the flowers, as they would say.

Germany's completely different. They—Everything's open Monday through Saturday. Everything closes—All the stores close around seven o'clock at night, and the only thing that's open is restaurants and bars. And Sunday, there is nothing that's open. The only thing that's open on Sundays are restaurants and bars. But there is no stores. There is—If you need something it's pretty much you—you could wait till Monday. And I think that's pretty neat, just because it—it kind of, in a sense, forces Sunday to be your family day, and spend time with your family and just hang out, and take everything in. And I think their—that way of living is wonderful, because here I think we get so caught up in everyday work and everyday life, and school and this and that, and we never really take time to relax and enjoy those things around us.

TS: Did you find anything else about the culture that was different from the way that we live here in America? Or even just the way that we live—you were living in Naples [Florida]?

CD: A lot of things are different; their culture, the way that they dress. But I guess that was the biggest thing that stood out to me, was just—

TS: The pace?

CD: Yeah, the pace of life.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —the pace of life.

CD: The taking time to reflect on life, instead of go go go.

TS: Yes. Now, how was the army? How were you enjoying the army?

CD: In Germany?

TS: Yes.

CD: [baby beginning to cry in background] That was my first duty station, so I—I loved it.

TS: It's okay, Lucas.

CD: You're okay, baby. It was my first duty station. I loved it. My mom came and visited me while I was over there.

TS: Oh, she did? How nice.

CD: Yeah. She was over there for about a week. And so far, my first two years were great.

TS: Yeah?

CD: I had a great experience.

TS: Now, were you up for any promotions or—

CD: I did. I—I came into the military as a PFC [private first class], and then while I was in Germany I got promoted to specialist.

TS: Did you have—How did—How did you get along, then, with your supervisors and your peers? Do you think you were treated fairly?

CD: Yes and no. For the most part I got treated fairly, and then we had a—She was an E-6 NCO [non-commissioned officer] staff sergeant that came into our company, and I didn't get fair treatment from her, I guess you could say. Rumor had it that she wasn't that thrilled with African-American or Hispanic females. I had—My supervisor was an E-5 and she was a black female, and this E-6 gave her a lot of grief. And then I had another E-5 male sergeant—he was Hispanic—that put me in for my specialist promotion, and she found out about it, took him outside, smoke him; and that's where they make you do a bunch of push-ups and sit-ups. She wasn't very fair to different nationalities, and that was felt—

TS: Do you think she was prejudiced, in a sense?

CD: In a way. And it's weird, because her husband was an African-American, so—but when it came to other females she just—and it was—she made it clear, too, that we weren't her favorite, so there was a lot of unfair treatment or—

TS: Do you think, maybe, it might have been more of a gender competition, rather than—

CD: It could have been.

TS: Hard to say.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Interesting. So was that near the end of your tour?

CD: She got there about halfway through. So after about a year I was in Germany she got there. So, yeah, I had a year with her; my last year. And there were points—there were times where I just—I remember being miserable, or just calling my mom and being—telling her I'm done with the army. And I think—I think leadership has a huge role in a soldier's career. Unfortunately, there's a lot of leadership that they're out for themselves, so instead of taking care of you because you're their soldier, and having your best interests at heart, what they really want is, "What am I going to get out of it?" or "How is this going to make me look better?" I'm completely against that. I'm a very fair person, even when higher ranking people around me are just telling me to shut up and go along with it. That wasn't me. I always—I was kind of the black sheep because I did stand my ground, I did—If I thought something was wrong, I would say something.

TS: Yes.

CD: And—

TS: What kind of treatment did you get when you did that?

CD: Soldiers that were my same rank or lower valued it and respect it because they were either intimidated or hesitant to say anything, just because these were higher ranking NCOs that were around us, so how dare you say anything. But they were—They were appreciative because they were scared to say anything.

TS: Right.

CD: And—

TS: So they were glad that you spoke up?

CD: And I—my—my attitude was, I didn't care what the backlash was, wrong is wrong and right is right.

TS: What kind of things did you feel like you had to speak out about?

CD: Soldiers getting—and I use this word "mistreated" loosely—But, like, if—Especially being in Human Resources, a lot of things—what—whether it's leave—you put in for leave to come back to the States, and something as simple as—Your NCOs are supposed to give you the courtesy of three weeks in advance approving your leave or vacation, and a lot of our soldiers, even myself included, it'd be a week before I was supposed to start but here were are on the other side of the world.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How do you make plans?

CD: How do you buy a plane ticket like that? Needless to say, if you wait a week—[baby fussing in background] a week before flying out, that plane ticket's going to be—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: A lot more expensive.

CD: —a couple hundred dollars more than it was before.

TS: Aw.

CD: [whispers, unclear]

TS: Yeah.

CD: So—

TS: So you saw that happen?

CD: Yes.

TS: Just, like, out of meanness really.

CD: Yes.

TS: Nothing—No reason to hold [it out].

CD: Yeah. No.

TS: Now, did you opposite too? Did you see supervisors and leaders who were—who treated their soldiers really well?

CD: Yes.

TS: Yeah?

CD: And that's—That's far and few in between, but there are good leaders still in the military



that genuinely do care and stand up for their soldiers, and aren't worried about, "What's in it for me?" And I—And I think there's less of that than—

TS: Really?

CD: Yeah.

TS: You think there's more poor leaders than there are good leaders?

CD: Yes. And that's ultimately one of—one of the main reasons why I got out of the military, was just because duty station after duty station you just see more and more of it, and for me I just—It wasn't fun anymore. It was—I was tired of going and talking to the sergeant major or first sergeant because other leaders were doing the wrong. I was only an E-5 [sic, E-4 corporal]; that shouldn't be my place. But I can't stand to see things—people getting treated wrong or—

TS: Did you think that it was mostly just, like, the person themselves who was "mis—mistreating," as you said in quotes, however—

CD: Yes.

TS: —[level?] you want to use that. Was it just that person's personality and they just picked on people regardless of gender or race or ethnicity?

CD: It could have been but it's just—Whether it's the military or the civilian world, everyone's different, or everyone has a different personality.

TS: Yes.

CD: But at the end of the day, right is right and wrong is wrong. And when you have that same attitude towards numerous people, [baby fussing in background] it's clear that you—you're out for yourself instead of the benefit of others.

TS: Yes. Aw, he's getting tired.

CD: Yes.

TS: Do you want me to pause it for a minute for you?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. Okay.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, we took another little, short break, now we're back.  
Well, Christy, is there anything else about your time in Germany that you want to talk about that we haven't mentioned? You did some travel; what the work was like; the culture.

CD: I think that pretty much—

TS: Yeah.

CD: —wraps up Germany.

TS: [chuckles] Did you want to stay there longer or were you ready to move on?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Oh, you did?

CD: I did want to stay there longer. I actually submitted paperwork to do another tour there, but that, kind of, sat on someone's desk for a little while, and it sat there—the time that it was—it was sitting on someone's desk I came down on orders to Fort Drum, New York, so it was too late. Once—Once you get orders, it was too late to submit paperwork.

TS: To—To extend? Okay. And so, has—Was Fort Drum, New York, any place you ever wanted to go?

CD: No.

TS: No?

CD: Everyone thinks, "Oh, New York. You're near New York City." Fort Drum is so far up north you're actually thirty miles away from Canada; that's how far up north you are. And it is cold, and there's snow on the ground, probably, nine months out of the year.

TS: [chuckles] Being from Florida that wasn't so great? Well, there was snow in Germany, right?

CD: There was but it wasn't—The snowstorms in Germany were not that harsh. I remember seeing a little bit, but nothing like Fort Drum. And it's funny because they say that—there's two army bases in Alaska, and they send soldiers from Alaska to Fort Drum to train for winter training.

TS: Really?

CD: [unclear] training. Yeah.

TS: Oh.

CD: So it was a little shocking. [chuckles]

TS: More of a culture shock to go there, probably—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —than Germany.

CD: Yes.

TS: Yeah. So what kind of a unit were you at now at Fort Drum?

CD: I was in a EOD unit—Explosive Ordinance Disposal—and when I actually got there the unit had already deployed. I got there in March of 2007, and the unit had deployed—I want to say—either November or December of 2006.

TS: Okay.

CD: So I got to Fort Drum, and there was another unit that was just starting up, or starting to get built up—another EOD unit in Fort Drum—and there was probably—So I kind of—they kind of attached me to them because my unit was—

TS: Was gone.

CD: —out of range. Yeah. And—

TS: Where had they deployed to?

CD: Iraq.

TS: Okay.

CD: And so, this new unit that was just starting to build up, there was probably a total of five of us when I got there. I was an E-4 at the time. There was another E-4, and the highest ranking person was an E-5. So it was pretty interesting. We had no first sergeant, no commander; they hadn't gotten there yet. So the E-5 was in charge, and then followed by me and this other E-4.

TS: That would be a different—

CD: It was different. [chuckles] It was interesting. It wasn't bad. As the weeks went by we had

more and more soldiers that were coming; a lot of privates, and privates were private first class. It was a very young unit. The foundation of the unit was very young. A lot of young soldiers that that was their first duty station.

TS: Like, first getting in?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: So we were all very close. It was just myself and another female in the unit, and these guys—It's interesting the different sorts of units that there are, because this was my first unit where it was pretty much all guys, except this other female, and it's kind of like a brotherhood. Like, you become like the little sister, and all of a sudden you have twenty guys that are all your bro—your brothers, and they're super protective of you. Anywhere you go in town or anything—

TS: They want to know who you're seeing and—

CD: Yeah, who you're seeing, what you're doing.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —check them out?

CD: So it was—it was a great bunch of guys. One of—I became friends with one of the guys there, and he's actually become one of my best friends. We're still in touch, and we still talk, and it was—it was an interesting unit. It was an int—the brotherhood, the—the friendships that you built. It was different. It was different than my first unit.

I actually tried staying with this EOD unit instead of going downrange [the combat zone] with the unit that I was assigned to. I had gotten to know these guys, and the first sergeant came, so they did try to call downrange and be like, "Oh, well, you guys have been down there so long without a pack clerk. Can we just, kind of, keep her?" And my first sergeant and the commander downrange were not having it. So—

TS: So you're kind of getting to know this one unit but you're—but you're having to—you're going to have to be sent to the unit you were initially assigned to?

CD: [baby crying in background] Yes.

TS: Where you didn't really know the people.

CD: Exactly.

TS: Where were they? Were they in Iraq already or were they—

CD: I have to stop.

TS: Yes, it's okay.

[Recording Paused]

TS: You ready?

CD: Yes.

TS: Okay, so you are at Fort Drum and you are—You were training with this one unit but you're going to have to be deployed with the other unit that was at Fort Drum. Now, were they already in Iraq or were they at a training [unclear]?

CD: Yeah, they were already in Iraq. They'd been in Iraq since November or December.

TS: Okay. So when did you—So then you had to go.

CD: Yeah, so I left Fort Drum in August, and it was just a bunch of miscellaneous soldiers that were pretty much all, kind of, deploying on their own to meet their units that were already down in Iraq.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That you went out—That when—you went out with?

CD: Yes.

TS: Now, how did your—How did you feel about deploying to Iraq, and how did your family and friends feel?

CD: My mom wasn't—She was hoping that I wouldn't go. A lot of the war in Iraq, they just—social media is horrible in the sense that they broadcast a lot of the negativity and a lot of the bad, and they don't show the good that the military is doing and has done overseas. So she was hesitant; she wasn't thrilled. She kept asking me, "Is there any way that they could keep you and you don't have to go?"

My grandfather, he just pretty much said, "It's part of the job. All you can do is just pray and hope that nothing happens."

TS: Had he served in the military at all?

CD: No.

TS: Okay.

CD: He wanted to. He came from Cuba and when he got here he registered and signed—I guess—the draft card, or I don't know how they used to do it back then but they never—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was it, like, during Vietnam or—

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: And he never—They never—

TS: They never drew his name?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. I remember.

CD: Yeah. So—And my grandmother, they actually never told my grandmother [until] halfway through my deployment. She's a worrywart and she gets super antsy and her nerves and stuff, so they're like—my grandpa and my mom decided not to tell my grandmother that I was in Iraq.

I was—I was sad because I was leaving this unit and these group of guys that—like, that was my family. We've all gotten so close, and I felt protected and safe, and now you want me to go to war, to a unit where I don't know anybody, and I'm supposed to trust these guys to, kind of, have my back. So those were my concerns and my fear. I guess we're all guilty of not being big fans of the unknown.

TS: Right.

CD: We all prefer to stay in our little comforts. So I remember leaving in August, and then I was—I was going downrange and I had to bring two of the rifles with me because they were requesting them. So I had—I had my two duffel bags, I had a big ol' tote—one of those foot lockers—and then I had this pellet case—this gun case—with two guns as well. So little ol' me trying to, like, haul all this stuff. Luckily, these other soldiers that

were going down there to meet up with their units, I had a lot of help, and this guy would grab a duffel bag, this girl would grab my ruck [sack], and we all made it happen.

We flew into—

TS: Now, what kind of a flight did you take?

CD: From Fort Drum they put us on a bus, and I want to say we went to—don't quote me on this—it might have been Philadelphia; we took a flight from there I think.

TS: Was it a commercial airline?

CD: Yeah, it was commercial.

TS: Okay.

CD: And from there we went to—I want to say Germany was our—kind of like our hub, and then from there we took a military craft to Kuwait. And then we did training in Kuwait for about a—a week; shooting ranges and getting us any extra gear that we didn't have. And then from Kuwait they put us in another military plane and we got to Iraq, and it was Baghdad. But my unit wasn't at Baghdad, we were at [Forward Operating Base] Warhorse [in Baqubah, Iraq], so my commander ended up coming and then somehow we ended up—I ended up going on a helicopter with him from Baghdad to Warhorse. I remember getting in at, like, two or three o'clock in the morning that day.

TS: Had you been on a helicopter before?

CD: No, that was—Well, I take that back. I guess when I was a kid at a fair, like, one of those—

TS: Okay.

CD: —small, little helicopters, but nothing like—

TS: In a war zone?

CD: Yeah.

TS: How was that?

CD: It was kind of cool. I'm all about new experiences, so I just try to take everything in and—

TS: Yeah?

CD: —I thought it was pretty neat. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. So you didn't—You went through all that just to get to your unit, then.

CD: Yes.

TS: And then, so you finally get to your unit, and that's at Warhouse?

CD: Warhor—Warhorse.

TS: Warhorse, okay. And how—How was it when you got there, then? How were you treated as a—

CD: It was okay. I was—The unit was completely different, because the guys that I was at Fort Drum that I mentioned, it was a—a younger unit. A lot of these guys that was their first duty station. Young group—Young unit; everyone was pretty much in their twenties maybe, except the first sergeant, and he was still in his mid-thirties, so it was a very young group. My unit in Iraq, they were much older.

TS: And how were you—How old were you about this time?

CD: I was—

TS: Like twenty-one?

CD: —twenty—Yeah.

TS: Twenty-one?

CD: Yeah. Yeah, twenty-one, so I was—I was young, and there was just a handful of younger guys. I know some of the older guys would joke and be like, "Oh, you're the baby of the unit," but there was—A lot of the guys were in their forties. I think our first sergeant was probably early fifties, mid-fifties, and the majority of the rest of the guys—the senior NCOs, senior sergeants—They were probably in their forties; early forties, mid-forties. So the dynamics was completely different than at Fort Drum.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Harder to relate?

CD: It was harder to relate. I was single, I was still young, and the majority of these guys were married and had kids that were teenagers. And I remember one of the NCOs, he had six kids and his oldest was three years younger than me. No—Well, yeah, he was eighteen so—oh, he was in his senior year of high school. I remember getting back from



deployment and he—they—They were joking and said that his son wasn't going to go to prom, and I was like, "How can you not go to prom?"

And Tony, this—this NCO, he's like, "Christy, you can say no. Can you do us a favor?"

I was like, "Yeah, what?" And I've always been told I look younger than what I really am.

So he's like, "Would you go to prom with him?" They said, "You could pull it off."

So his son was not going to go to prom and I was like, "Sure. Why not?" And I went to prom with him.

TS: [chuckles] Did you really?

CD: Yeah, and it was—it was just funny because all these high school kids are like, "Who's that? Where is she from?"

I just played it off. I was like, "Oh, yeah, I'm eighteen, from another school."

TS: [chuckles]

CD: But it was just—it was interesting—

TS: Sure.

CD: —because—just the dynamics; here I am three years younger [older?] than—

TS: Yes.

CD: —one of the guys' oldest kid.

TS: So before you're like the sister, now you're like the daughter.

CD: Yeah, pretty much. A lot of the guys, they're like—There was another guy, his daughter—his daughter was fifteen, so he's like, "God," he's like, "I'm old enough where I could be your father."

So it was—it was very different. The unit was not as close as the guys that I had just left.

TS: Well, you didn't have any time to bond with them, either.

CD: No. And even amongst themselves there were little cliques; like, this little—This little group of guys didn't necessarily get along with this group, and they didn't like them, and it was—it was different.

TS: Now, were there any other women?

CD: When I first got there there was a female—another female in my unit, and they ended up—well, I heard there was—Initially there was three females that had deployed with this group of guys. One of them was a lieutenant; she got pregnant while they were downrange so they sent her back. Another one—When I had just gotten to the unit, they had just switched out the first sergeants, so I never met the original first sergeant. Original first sergeant, he was reci—relieved from duty. There was a couple that was in the unit and they were both E-4s; they were married.

TS: Yes.

CD: And this—The male was always constantly being sent on missions and the wife had an affair with the first sergeant.

TS: With the first sergeant?

CD: So he got relieved of duty.

TS: And they were both in the service?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: Everyone—They were all in the service, all in the same unit, so—

TS: Oh, and this is while they're deployed?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: The first sergeant got relieved right before—I think it was a week before I even got there.

TS: So that would cause disruption.

CD: Yeah.

TS: And morale issues.

CD: Yeah. So the unit was very broken down, torn apart. The first sergeant, which is someone you're all—everyone's supposed to trust, just had an affair with one of their soldiers—one of their soldier's wife, which is also one of his soldiers. So it was—it was very—There's no morale; it was very just broken up.

I remember Christmas was—I got there in August, and then we had Christmas and everyone—I'm a very happy-go-lucky person, and I like to look at the world as a cup

half full type of person. So I remember Christmas in the office, I just—I would print coloring pages—Christmas coloring pages. I would color them and stick them on the wall. I had my mom send me a garland. Someone—A church donated, like, a small little tree and it got sent to us. So I remember decorating the office and—and getting some of the guys to help me just put this little tree up, and—because it's the holidays.

TS: Right.

CD: I would love to be home. We're not—We're not home, this is their second Christmas away, because they had deployed in November of 2006; here we are December of 2007. So their spirits are down because it's their second Christmas in a row that they're not home. So I tried making the best of it, and tried just to cheer them up as much as I possibly could.

TS: Right.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Well, how do you think—When you talk about social media and the media not really depicting what soldiers do when they're deployed, or the positive things. Why don't you describe some things you think that people should know about?

CD: There is bad in Iraq. They're not—All the Iraqis are [not] fans of Americans; that is very well known. But there's also hundreds, and possibly even thousands, of Iraqis that are glad that we were there. They would see us and kids would run up to you and they would be excited, and you provide—if—If soldiers go out on a mission and they had water, they would give these kids water; toys; whatever.

The military, too, they helped the Iraqi military. They trained them up a lot. They taught us a lot of new skills, in order to help them deal with the [terrorists or terrorism?] they have in their country. And I think that all that is shadowed by the negativity. Yes—Excuse me. Yes, we have lost a lot of soldiers in the Iraq war, but if you look back at previous wars, unfortunately it's said to say, but we've lost a smaller amount than previous wars.

We have done a lot of good over there. Will Iraq or Afghanistan ever be fixed or a peaceful country? I don't know. Sometimes these places are set in their own ways and all we can do as Americans or military and going over there, is try to help them the best that we can, and I think that—that gets shadowed by the negativity or the explosions or the deaths that have occurred. And yes, let's recognize those soldiers that have lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice, but at the same time some of these soldiers that have lost their lives did so much good over there. They helped train and they—they helped some of these families out, and I think that doesn't get enough recognition.

TS: Well, what kind of role did you play while you were there?

CD: I did paperwork for the guys. We make sure that all their paperwork and everything

is—is running smoothly so they all continue to get paid and—because while you're deployed, no soldier wants their paycheck to be messed up. And something as simple as that, their morale could go down, and they've got families back home, so I just tried making sure our unit, all their paperwork and everything, was up to date and try to make that be one less stressor; something they didn't have to worry about.

TS: Well, since they didn't have anybody for a while was it—Did you have a lot to catch up on when you got there?

CD: Yes. I remember the first sergeant and the commander telling me, "Christy, we're going to give you two months to see if you could catch us up, and if you do we'll send you to the promotion board." And within, like, a month, a month and a half, everything was up to speed, and I had created databases and Excel spreadsheets and I knew where everything was, and they sent me to the promotion board in November and I did well. And then that—Once you go to the promotion board then you're promotable, but every month in the military every MOS comes out with different points. So let's say I had six hundred and something, the points that month could be 789 or 798 or whatever, so you don't make cutoff, as they would say.

So I—I went to the promotion board in November. I want to say it was December, points came out and I missed promotion cutoff by one point. And you always hear about that in the military and you don't believe until it happens to you, and it is one of the most devastating things, especially for administration because our MOS is so stacked or overpopulated, promotions don't come easily. Our points pretty much sit at 798 ten months out of the year, and they had dropped and I missed it by one and I was like, "You've got to be kidding me." So I had them give me another P tes—PT test, I had them take me out to the range—to the shooting range so I could requalify.

TS: To get some more points?

CD: Yeah, to get more points. I did online classes, and I finally made points 1 May; so the first of May 2008 is when I got promoted; when I got pinned as sergeant.

TS: Yeah?

CD: Yeah.

TS: And what rank was that?

CD: E-5.

TS: E-5?

CD: Yes.

TS: So that—You're probably pretty proud of that, though, even though—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CD: I was.

TS: —it was frustrating back in—a few months earlier.

CD: But I worked so hard, and once I missed it I did everything to try to boost my points up to ensure that I would make it the next go round.

TS: Yeah. Now, at this point are you thinking about—what are you thinking about the army; do you want to stay in, do you want to get out? What are you thinking?

CD: I do—For the longest time, especially while I was in Germany, I was like, "I'm doing my four years and I'm getting out because of the leadership." And then I got to the EOD unit and I had a good first sergeant, I had a good commander, and they kind of changed my mind. So November—I got to Iraq in August, that November I reenlisted. That's when my reenlistment window came, because there's a time where you're able to—eligible to reenlist. So I reenlisted in November, while I was deployed, for another four years.

TS: Yeah.

CD: Yeah, and I enjoyed my time in Iraq. A lot of people dread it or—I guess it all depends on your job, too, obviously, because you could be talking to an infantryman or a scout right now and their experience is going to be completely different. I was administration; I never had to go outside of the wire [when service members in a warzone travel outside the perimeter fence of a camp, base, or forward operating base] that we had. Even though I did; I went outside twice.

TS: What did you do on those times?

CD: My first sergeant and commander—well, the commander, he would—at this EOD, they're very—I guess, not as strict as—because it's such a high risk job and they're such smaller units, so sometimes a lot of it is first name basis, which that's a no-no in the regular army. But they all used to call me—instead of calling me Specialist Diaz or Diaz, they—Everyone used to call me Christy Diaz; they used to call me by my whole name. And I remember the commander telling me, "Christy Diaz, you're not leaving this compound; there's no reason to." And it's true. I did administration; there was no reason for me to go outside.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did you want to go out?

CD: I wanted to go out.

TS: Okay.

CD: I was deployed and I just—I wanted to see what was outside those—those gates; those fences. And he went on R&R [rest and relaxation]—which that's where they send you back home for two weeks—and one of the—

TS: This is your commander?

CD: Yeah, the commander.

TS: Okay.

CD: And one of the senior NCOs, they got a mission, because whenever there was—there was a roadside bomb or anything, EOD's the one that gets called to clear it out, and he's like, "Christy Diaz," he says, "we just got a call." He said, "Go ask first sergeant if you can go with us."

I was like, "Oh."

And the first sergeant—the commander had told me, "You do not need to go. Do not do anything crazy while I'm gone."

TS: Oh, he was [chuckles] warning you while he was—

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: And the first sergeant said, "Yes, grab your stuff and go." So we went, and it's funny because—so it was two guys, myself, and then there was any army girl that went because they would—her unit, kind of, collected evidence from any explosion.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Weren't you an "army girl" too?

CD: Oh, sorry, she was navy; navy.

TS: Okay.

CD: Navy, my bad.

TS: That's alright. I'm like, "Okay—"

CD: No, and—

TS: So she's in the navy and she did what role? I'm sorry.

CD: They collected evidence. So if there was an explosive or anything they would go and collect evidence and bring it back, and that way they could be put in the database; if there was any fingerprints or anything like that.

And I remember going out and I had my vest on, and they would always take candy out to the kids, so our vest have little, like, loops and we just filled up my entire front of my vest with Tootsie—Tootsie Roll lollipops.

TS: Right.

CD: So—

TS: Tootsie Pops?

CD: Tootsie Pops, yeah. And I was just excited. I was giddy to go out. We drove out there. They—There was an IED [improvised explosive device], they detonate it, we turned around to come back, and in that short period that we had gone down there—up this road maybe forty minutes or so—They had planted another IED. And you always go out on a convoy, and I think our vehicle was either the third or the fourth vehicle, and on the way back we got hit. We're the ones that—So here's EOD; we're the ones that ran over [it].

TS: Which vehicle? Was it one that you were in?

CD: Yeah, it was the one that we were in.

TS: Oh, you're vehicle ran over—

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. And then what happened?

CD: It was—Luckily, we were in a—The vehicle that EOD has, they're fully—

TS: Protected?

CD: —protected and armored; Thank God for that. So the vehicle did—got shaken up, and they got out and the senior NCO that's driving, he's—he's just cursing up a storm. The guy next to him, he's like, "Are you guys all okay? Are you guys all okay?"

And I don't know if it was shock, I don't know—the adrenaline, I don't know what it was, but I had the biggest shit-eating grin on my face and I was just so giddy, and I was like, "Wow, that was so cool." [chuckles]

And the guy in the front seat, he's like, "Are you f-ing kidding me, Christy Diaz? Are you okay?"

I'm like, "Yeah, I'm good, I'm good."

And—And I guess it was just because, like, a little part of me wanted to be in the action, just because you're administration; you don't see anything like that. That's not normal for us, so to get a little bit of the action, I was like, "Oh, that was kind of cool." Although you think back and you're like, "Yeah, it could have been a lot worse." But we were lucky; just a little minor damages to the outside of the vehicle.

And we went back on—on base and two days later there was another mission and they said, "Christy Diaz, do you want to go?"

And the first sergeant's like, "Don't get blown up again."

So we went out and this time there was a—there was an explosive at a—at a school. There was no kids in the school or anything like that, so EOD's job was to detonate it. So I got to push the button, detonate it, and we went back. And the commander wasn't too thrilled when he got back and found out that I had—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I was going to say.

CD: Yeah, I had left and we had gotten blown up, and he just—He would shake his head at me. But—I mean, overall, like, for me personally, Iraq wasn't bad. It's—Your priorities change while you're downrange. It's not, "Oh, this bill is due," and groceries and—So everyday stressors that we go through here on a day to day basis, whether it's, "I've got to mail out the rent check," or, "My cell phone's due," or, "Oh shoot, we ran out of milk," or—like, little things that we stress over, that's not even a concern when you're downrange because anything could happen. You're constantly getting mortared. Things could go from good to bad in [an] instance. And I think—So since your priorities shift, bigger problems are what you're concerned about; those are your stressors.

But personally, my experience in Iraq, it was a good one. I felt like those everyday stressors aren't there. It's a little bit more simpler because you have fewer things to worry about, even those these—these things they do worry about are a lot bigger than everyday back here stateside. But I enjoyed my time. I knew that what the military was doing over there, it's a good cause. I knew that we're—we're trying to help.

TS: Yes. Do you think it would have been different if you'd had Lucas then?

CD: I—I definitely agree. It would have been completely different. I wasn't in a relationship. I didn't have a child. I know many female soldiers that do become pregnant while they're in the military, and according to the regulation—I want to say—I can't remember if it's



ninety or 120 days from when you have your child, but after that timeframe is up they could—if they need you downrange they could deploy you, and that was—If I had him that would not fly. I would—I would rebel, I would try to get out military. I just—I can't imagine leaving him. And kudos to mothers and fathers that can and are strong enough to. Then, when—Then, when I was still in, my mentality was family first, and all I had was my grandparents and my mom. I understand it was a commitment in the military and I signed a contract, but to me my grandparents are my life because they raised me. So I always used to say, God forbid something happens, I'll ask for forgiveness later but I'm packing my bags and I'm flying home or driving home or anything. And that's just my grandparents and my mom, so having a child and a husband now—especially having a child is just—I don't know how some of those parents do it, and kudos to them, and I just—I'm not that strong. I just—I can't be away from him or—for—for thirteen, fifteen months, I just—

TS: Do you think that the—I don't think I've ever asked this question before but it made me think about it. Do you think that the military could operate, though, if those parents could just go home today? Because there's so many men and women who have child[ren].

CD: I absolutely think that they can function without them. There are so many servicemen or women that have been in ten plus years and have never seen a day of deployment. They've never—They've never deployed, they've never—and they've gotten lucky. I'm not saying that some might have dodged those deployments or found ways around it, but there's others that kind of—right place, right time; you're here and all of a sudden you got orders, and as soon as you got orders that unit got orders to deploy but now you're—you're moving on. So I think when it comes to deploying, the military could do a better job of tracking how many deployments each soldier has, and who deploys and who doesn't.

Because some of these infantry are scout guys. Excuse me. They've been in five, six years and they have four, five, six deployments under their belt already. And maybe they're only six month deployments here and there, but those—Every deployment is different, and those deployments take a toll on someone. So I personally don't think it's fair that someone has six deployments under him and has only been in six, seven years, and then you have someone that's been in ten, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years and has never deployed.

TS: Do you think that some of that is the actual MOS that they're in or—it makes them deploy more?

CD: Yes and no. Infantrymen, and scouts, rangers, Special Forces, they are going to deploy a little bit more, but I also think that some is—It all comes down to right place, right time, because you come on orders and now you get sent someplace else and you're not going to deploy; you get sent to a schoolhouse or a drill sergeant position or a recruiter. Those are three year gigs where you don't get deployed.

TS: So I guess—and the longer you're in you get—you get those roles and maybe that's where

you're missing out.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Why—Why the—the disparity in time—

CD: Yes.

TS: —and service, is a little skewed maybe.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit about what the conditions, physically and environmentally, were in Iraq.

CD: It is a dry heat like none other. I've been asked before how would be the best way to describe it, and my best way to describe Iraq is turn on your oven to four hundred degrees, let it preheat, and open it and let that heat wave just smack you in the face when you open the oven, and that's what it feels like all day, every day. You have all your gear on, you're in your uniforms, it's hot, and there's no humidity, it's just dry heat; like, it burns.

TS: You're used to that humidity from—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —being in Florida, right?

CD: Yes. It was a completely different heat than the Florida heat because this is just dry, so it kind of takes your breath away a little bit.

TS: You're baking rather than—

CD: Sweating and—yeah.

TS: [chuckles] Swimming in water.

CD: Yes. And it's—it's weird because, I want to say it was probably December or January and it's super-hot during the day—ninety, a hundred, hundred plus—and I remember at night the temperatures would drop to fifty [degrees], forty, and one night it did snow in Iraq. It didn't stick but it—it was cold enough to snow, and it's just—it's crazy how drastic from the daytime to nighttime that temperature ranges downrange.

TS: What kind of sleeping environment were you in?

CD: They were called CHUs [Containerized Housing Units]. They're kind of like little trailers. And I had a roommate, and we had beds, and I mean, for it being Iraq they weren't—they weren't bad.

TS: Did you have air conditioning?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: There was air conditioning. They were—They were comfortable for the place that we were in.

TS: Like travel trailers, you said, somewhat?

CD: Yeah, kind of. They were smaller. They were—They were just big enough for two beds and—

TS: Okay.

CD: —a wall locker, and that was pretty much as big as they were. And—But they weren't—they weren't bad. I know that there's some service members that are in tents and on—in cots; that's what they sleep on.

When we were leaving Iraq, we went from—Well, halfway through the deployment, around November, we moved from Warhorse to [Forward Operating Base] Kalsu [in Iskandariya, Iraq] and—but towards—as our deployment was coming to an end we had to go back through Baghdad, so when we were in that transition phase we did—we did sleep in tents; they had tents for the guys and then tents for the males [females?]. And then the bathrooms were Port-a-Johns, and then there would be a trailer for showers. And so, that was—that—During that time I did sleep in tents.

TS: For that little transition period?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Now, how about for food? What was that like?

CD: We had the chow hall, and that's where you eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Food wasn't bad. They—You had your surf and turf night, you had—there was fried chicken, there was—there was a sandwich station.

TS: Someone told me the food was better there than it was back in the States—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —for them.

CD: Yeah. And I agree; food downrange was—was really good. They had, like, a dessert area where there was every pie you could think of, from pecan to pumpkin. There was an ice cream—cookies. Food was—Food was good.

TS: They fed you really well.

CD: Yeah, they did. And then they had a little—like, a little shop and you could go and get chips or beef jerky or little things to have in your room as snacks. And then there's always midnight chow, so at midnight you could go and get food, too, if you wanted to.

TS: How about for healthcare?

CD: There was—There was a clinic on every—on the majority of compounds downrange, and they functioned just as good as—as the ones that we have here, and anything that was wrong, whether you had lower back pain or this or that, you could go and they would treat you.

TS: Did you have to use it for anything?

CD: I went one time. I—When I left AIT I—When I checked out of AIT I checked in to a hotel to—because I was flying out the next day, and I ended up getting raped, and so I—I dealt with this—I guess I didn't get the proper care; I didn't seek counseling; off and on.

TS: Where were you at when this happened?

CD: Fort Jackson.

TS: Okay.

CD: I guess I forgot. [chuckles] So when I was in Iraq it—It all started coming back, and that's where I was diagnosed with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder].

TS: So did—You hadn't reported it?

CD: I did report it. I reported it in Fort Jackson and got—reported there by the civilian, like, authorities. My first duty station was Germany. I was flying out the next day from Fort Jackson to go home for two weeks before I went to Germany. I didn't know how to deal with it, so I went home and I didn't tell my mom about it. I kind of put on this—this front and tried to be in denial about the whole situation. I told one of my recruiters about it because I was home for hometown recruiting, and he was just in disbelief and wanted to tell my mom but my mentality was, like, "I'm the only child; their baby, pretty much. Like, my mom and my grandparents, if I tell them this it's going to devastate them," and two weeks later I'm going to Germany. Which now looking back, if I would have told

them those orders would have gotten, probably, canceled and I would have gotten state—stationed somewhere stateside.

I was in denial in Germany for the longest—a couple of months until one day I remember I was taking a shower and all those memories just, like, came rushing back and I started having nightmares. So I went to a little bit of counseling in Germany and talked to CID [Criminal Investigation Division], and they never caught the guy. And then—

TS: Did you know who it was?

CD: No.

TS: Somebody that you didn't know.

CD: Yes. And so, it was—it was a struggle. So when I was in—in Iraq, it was around January, February time frame—this happened in February—I guess the environment and so many men—because there are more men deployed than there are females—It just all caught up to me. And I remember being in the chow hall that—the cafeteria—for lunch and a male soldier bumped into me and I just—like, I—like, it—I snapped, in a sense. I just—I yelled at one of them. One of the senior supervisors that I was with, he apologized to them. He had known the situation and he said, "Christy, you need to—You need to go to counseling. You need to get help." So I went while I was downrange.

TS: So you went in Iraq?

CD: Yeah, and that's where—

[Recording Error- Second half of interview redone on 16 June 2015]

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

INTERVIEWEE: Christy Diaz

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: June 16, 2015

[NOTE: The original interview was done on December 17, 2014. Part of that interview was lost due to a technical malfunction.]

[Begin Interview]

TS: Okay. Well, today is June 16, 2015. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Christy Hinnant [Note: CD later decided to list her name as "Christy Diaz" for her collection], and I'm in Burlington, North Carolina, to conduct a second part of the oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. So Christy, did we ever decide how you wanted to have your name on the collection?

CD: I think Chris—

TS: We have it in the—

CD: I think Christy Diaz, because that's—When I was in the service that's what I was.

TS: Okay, so that's how—

CD: Yeah.

TS: I'll check the paperwork on that. But we have to do a re-interview just because there was an error on the tape. So let's stop and see how this picks up.

Well, Christy, thank you so much again for letting me come back and redo some of the stuff that was lost. So we were talking—You were talking about a lot of different things on the last tape that was really quite interesting, and some of the things—I know when we left off on the last tape, we'll get into that in just a second, but I wanted to ask you, was there anything in particular that we didn't cover that you wanted to talk about before we forget? Or did we cover most everything?

CD: I can't remember of anything specific, but I think we covered pretty much a lot.

TS: We did cover a lot, yeah. Well, we—you had gotten back to—let's see—your last base, Eglin [Air Force Base], where you spent a long time there, right? [200]9, '10, '11, '12, four years.

CD: Four years.

TS: Four years. And you had said that's where you had some issues with the PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder], that had come up?

CD: Yeah, I started—I guess I had my first moment, or I wouldn't call it a blackout, but while I was in Iraq, so that's where I started going to counseling for the first time, and while I was in Iraq, that's actually where they diagnosed me with PTSD.

TS: Was in Iraq.

CD: Yes.

TS: And so, you had talked on the last transcript a little bit about that had occurred not because of necessarily being in Iraq, but it was be—it was because you were in Iraq that the PTSD triggered, but it was because of a rape that had occurred.

CD: Yes.

TS: When you were in your initial training, right, back in Fort Jackson.

CD: Correct.

TS: In 2004.

CD: Yes.

TS: So you also had—You said you had been talking about it a little bit more.

CD: Yeah, I had started talking about it a little bit more and that's where I started counseling, was in Iraq. And then I got to—after Iraq I got to Fort Drum, New York, and I went to counseling there, maybe just a handful of times, because I was getting ready to go to Eglin Air Force Base, so I didn't finish the treatment while I was at Fort Drum. And then I got to Eglin and I saw—I went to a little bit of counseling and—[baby making noises in background]

TS: This is Lucas, he's joining us a little bit, right?

CD: Yes. And I didn't realize when I was in Eglin, the, I guess, counselor, or the mental health specialist, she was just training so I didn't feel super comfortable, and after, maybe, five or six sessions with her I just stopped going. And then it was a few years, probably until about 2011, that I didn't go see counseling again. But when I went in 2011, I went to counseling all the way until I got out of the military, so 2000—October 2012, and that's where I feel like I got the best treatment, and I really came to terms with my PTSD and how to handle it and cope with it.

TS: And you said—You had started to say on that tape before it cut off, you actually tried to—You went in Iraq because it was a trigger there, right?

CD: Yes.

TS: When you said you bumped into somebody in the—

CD: Yes, correct.

TS: So how was that? How was your counseling there? Did you feel that was inadequate?

CD: No, the counseling in Iraq was—I thought it was good and it was very helpful, but when I had that trigger that was probably sometime in January and we left Iraq in—we started packing up and getting ready to leave in the middle of February, so I wasn't there—we didn't have enough remaining time for me to continue counseling.

TS: [unclear] Okay, and so then when you were at Fort Drum it wasn't the kind of experience that you were looking for?

CD: Yes.

TS: Okay, so it took a while. What do you think about when you hear on the news the issues both of PTSD, the issues of military sexual trauma? Those kinds of things are, like, out there a lot in the media. Do you—Does that—Are those any triggers for you, or do you reflect on that at all when you see that?

CD: They're not any triggers for me anymore. I've—The counseling I did go to at Eglin, and the counselor, she was very—She was very helpful. She helped me overcome a lot of things, she helped me how to cope with anxiety and depression, and I really—it was a 180 [degrees] for me. And because of that I'm able to handle situations whether there's big crowds, or going to a place by myself, I'm able to handle those situations a lot better now. I think there's a lot of misconception in the media about what PTSD is, what people believe that PTSD is, and that's why—I just graduated in December with my bachelor's [degree] in psychology, but I'm going to pursue social work because I do want to have my own practice one day, and work with families and soldiers that suffer from PTSD. Because I think that sometimes when a soldier suffers from PTSD, the family, the spouse, the children, are confused and they just think—And there's different ways of PTSD, it's



just—It doesn't affect everyone the same way. Someone could be extremely depressed and anxious, someone else could be extremely mad all the time and just show anger, and that's hard for families. They don't understand what's going on with their soldier, they don't understand what's going on with their spouse, so I hope to be able to bring light to that and some understanding, because a lot of marriages do end, and come to an end, because of the PTSD.

TS: Yeah. And you feel like you've had a lot of support?

CD: Yes. Jesse [Diaz's husband], he's—[baby crying in background].

TS: [speaking to baby] "Looks like I'm not getting any support." [both chuckle] It's okay, buddy.

CD: [unclear]

TS: It's okay, I can pause it for a minute if you want. There you go.

CD: Jesse's my rock and he's always been there and helped me through anxiety attacks or panic attacks, or anything that I've gone through, so I've had great support with him.

TS: That's good. That's real good. And do you ever—Is that anything you have to bring up with the rest of your family ever; your extended family?

CD: I actually—My mom, I kept the rape from, and some of my family still doesn't know. My mom actually found out about the rape—October of 2012 is when I finally told her. It happened right out of AIT [Advanced Individual Training], which is job training, and it happened while I was in transition. Like, I checked out of the unit, I was staying at the hotel, and the next day I was flying out, and it happened in those twenty-four hours. So when I went home, my next duty station was going to be Germany.

TS: Right.

CD: I was the only—the only child, so it was hard to—I guess it wasn't hard, my mom would have understand, but I didn't want to break their hearts, or I didn't want to—here they are, their little girl, this just happened to them and in two weeks she's going to Germany, so—

TS: So you're trying to protect them from—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —their emotional reaction to what happened with you?

CD: And that's where I blocked it and pushed it back deep in my mind, and I confided in my recruiter because I was actually home for two weeks of hometown recruiting, and I confided in him and told him and that was the only person I told back home.

TS: Oh, was it really?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: And—

TS: How was your recruiter?

CD: He—I actually called him the night that it had happened, and like—

TS: Oh, you did?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

CD: And he was—he was—he took it hard. There's a lot of people that don't get along with the recruiters. When you're going to boot camp you hear stories of, "Oh, my recruiter lied to me," and I was very lucky and fortunate my recruiters told me everything that was going to happen, they told me what to expect, and as they told me that's exactly what happened. So I stayed in contact with all three of my recruiters. The station commander, which was the recruiter—the main recruiter in charge—he's the one that I called, and he got a little emotional about it, and he just couldn't believe, and he told me that he would be there if I wanted to tell my mom or anything, but I just—I made that choice not to.

TS: Right.

CD: So when we were home in October, for our wedding actually—

TS: That's when you told her?

CD: That's when I told my mom.

TS: Yeah.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. How did she take it?

CD: She cried and she was—She couldn't believe that that had happened and she took it hard, but I told her I had gotten through it and I'm in a lot better place now and I know how to cope with it, so not to worry. I wasn't telling her to worry, I just—I told her because she is my mom and I've always told my mom everything, and that was the only thing I've ever kept from her.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Kept from her, yeah. Now, do you—I think we talked about this before, like, the perception that—you still wanted to stay in the army?

CD: Yeah.

TS: That wasn't the reason that you got out, was it?

CD: No, no.

TS: And so, that's sometimes difficult for people who haven't been in the service to understand; how can you separate that from your whole experience? [baby crying] He's like, "I can't."

CD: [speaking to baby] You're a disaster.

TS: [chuckles] He says, "I'm one [year old]. I'm just one."

CD: So how do I separate the PTSD—[baby fussing] Aw, goodness.

TS: He's still sleepy. I know. He's like, "Yes, I am."

Well, how do you separate—and maybe not separate, it's probably not the right word—but how do you deal with, or cope with, having a traumatic experience that's related to being in the military and still want to stay in and have—at that time I think you wanted to make it a career—

CD: Yes.

TS: —or for a long time, right?

CD: Yes. It wasn't—I just tried remembering, like, it wasn't—when I say I have PTSD—There's a lot of service members that do have PTSD that are combat related. Mine wasn't combat related. Mine happened as I was leaving job training to go home for two weeks for hometown recruiting, so it's a little different, and I guess I tried—at first, when it first happened, I thought that a part of me's like—well, I was in denial [baby

makes noise, both chuckle]—and I was in denial about it and I felt like if I never would have joined the military this never would have happened.

TS: Right.

CD: But, like, that's not the case, that's not what it was. It happened because I was naïve and I was young and I just made a bad decision. I thought everyone in this world was good, and I trusted this guy to give me a ride to the hotel that was across the street. And looking back, that had nothing to do with the military; that was just me being naïve and innocent. So I couldn't—

TS: And that guy.

CD: Yeah, and that guy that had no tie to the military, so that's how I tried—

TS: Oh, that's falling. [noise in background]

CD: It's okay. [both chuckle] So that's how I tried viewing it, and that's why—like, it happened while I was in the military but it wasn't because of the military.

TS: Right. Okay. Well, do you want to talk a little bit about your experience at Eglin? I think we missed a little bit of that too.

CD: Yes.

TS: So you went there after—

CD: Fort Drum.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You went there straight from after Iraq, didn't you? So from Fort Drum.

CD: Yes, I went—when we got back from Iraq—We got back in March and I left Fort Drum in June to go to Eglin.

TS: Tell me about that experience, then. How was the job? Did you enjoy it?

CD: I did enjoy the job.

TS: You had two different jobs there, didn't you? I'm trying to remember. Did you—

CD: No, it was the same.

TS: Okay.

CD: It was Human Resources.

TS: Okay.

CD: The job was fine, I enjoyed it, it was just the leadership wasn't the best. I think Eglin—finally, that was my—I guess my breaking point where I just had enough with not the best leadership, and that's where I made my decision to get out of the military.

TS: What was it about the leadership that was so troubling to you?

CD: I was in—They had different—There's different companies, I guess, because I was at the schoolhouse for EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal]. So there's different companies. Like, one company had certain soldiers and another company had different soldiers, and the company that I was at [background noise]—Oh, sorry.

TS: It's going to be fun for the transcriber. [unclear]

CD: There was a lot of favoritism. The—I guess you could call him the platoon sergeant that was in charge, he was a black—

TS: [to baby] Want to come here?

CD: —he was a black male, and there was a lot of favoritism because there were other soldiers that were guys or that were also African-American, and he would favor them over the women. And it wasn't just a race thing, it was—I think it was just gender thing, because even one of his—one of our coworkers, she was also—She was a rank below him, she was a staff sergeant and she was a drill sergeant along with him, and he gave her grief all the time. He gave her a hard time. She was a single mom, and it just got so bad, to the point where she ended up—when you're in the military, if you're a single parent there's—it's called a chapter, and—a chapter—There's different chapters for getting out of the military. This is—

TS: Okay.

CD: I can't remember exactly what it—I think it's a Family Care Plan, is what they call it, so if you're a single parent you've got to have some kind of plan in action in case you get deployed or anything like that; who's going to take care of your kids.

TS: Right.

CD: And she didn't have a Family Care Plan in place, and it just got so bad with him, and him always giving her grief, whether she had to leave half an hour early to pick up her kids, or

whatever the case may be, that she ended up saying, "You know what? I'll just get out of the military." And she had been in twelve, thirteen years, and she took this chapter and she got discharged just because she couldn't take it anymore. And he was just that type of person, like—

TS: So they lost somebody really good.

CD: She was a great drill sergeant, she was a great soldier, and for lack of better words, he made your life hell.

TS: Yeah.

CD: And I ended up getting moved from that company by the sergeant major because he knew how bad it was, and I just—I couldn't take it. It was something as simple as, "Can I leave thirty minutes early to go get the oil changed on my car," or something like that.

And he'd be like, "No," or if he was okay, he'd be like, "Oh, well, you've got to be here in thirty minutes."

I'm like, "It's going to take me twenty to get there and twenty to get back, five o'clock traffic," whatever the case may be.

TS: Not realistic.

CD: Yeah, not realistic, and it was always something. There was another soldier that was a male soldier and, "Hey, I've got to leave. My wife has to go into work and she has to be there at 1:00 [p.m.]. Can I take—Go pick up the baby or bring him," or whatever.

"Yeah, go ahead. Just take the rest of the day off." And it was just—You could see the favoritism, and it was just awful.

TS: Was there anything that you could—you could go up the chain of command to talk to anybody about it?

CD: I tried going up the chain of command. He was an E-7, which is a sergeant first class, and sometimes when you're up that high power there's very little that they could do. They moved me to another company. I was still—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Rather than deal with him, they just move you.

CD: Yeah.

TS: I see.

CD: They moved me to another company which was just up the hallway, and I just—I never—I didn't care to talk to them, I didn't care to—If I saw him in the hallway it was just like if he wasn't there. So I went—I got moved from one company to another where there was another leadership. That wasn't a great—the greatest either. His issues was he was one of those NCOs—non-commissioned officers—that just worries about himself. He's all out for himself and how he looks on papers and he could care less if you're a soldier and what's going on with you. So I guess I go the less of the two evils but it was just—it wasn't—

TS: It's still not a good situation.

CD: Correct.

TS: So you're in, kind of, a toxic environment, regardless of who was in the leadership.

CD: Yeah.

TS: His wasn't really about discrimination, it was just about—

CD: He didn't care. [both chuckle]

TS: Yeah. Well, now, if—Would you have liked to have stay in?

CD: I think at that point I just—if I had had [baby fussing in background]—If I had had better leadership I probably would have stayed in, but from one bad leadership to another to another, it just—it was—

TS: What are you going to get next?

CD: Yeah, and I just got—I hit my breaking point, and I had sergeant majors and majors and lieutenants telling me, "Christy, you're a really good soldier. You would make a great leader one day," because I was just a sergeant, so I was just starting to climb the ranks.

TS: Right.

CD: And it was one of those things where if I had better leadership I probably would have stayed, but I had just gotten to my breaking point, and I would wake up in the mornings and I'd be like, "Unhh. [signifying dread]."

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Stressed to go to work?

CD: Yeah, stressed to go to work. I remember a few times just crying because I didn't want to leave the house. It was just there was no coming back from that. I always kind of felt like the black sheep because—I say sometimes there's fewer good leadership in the military than there's actually leadership that's out for themselves, or—I don't know how to really, like, pinpoint it. I was the type of sergeant that—I didn't care if you were a private or lower ranking, if you were right, you were right, and I would admit that I was wrong.

TS: Right.

CD: And no matter what was going on I would stand up for my soldiers. That was the type of leadership that—my style, and you saw a lot that—

TS: [referring to baby] Yeah, I'll take him.

CD: You saw a lot that wasn't the case. A lot of higher leadership, they would either be out for themselves or not worry about their soldiers as much, and that wasn't me; like, that wasn't my style. I had many high-ups tell me, "Just keep your mouth shut sometimes, Diaz. Just—It's okay, just let it go." But that wasn't my nature, that didn't sit right with me; I couldn't just sweep something under the rugs. If someone lower ranking was correct, or they were fighting for something, or something wasn't fair, I was always the one knocking on the first—or sergeant major's door and exercising that open—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So you're [unclear]—

CD: —open door policy.

TS: But sometimes you did that on behalf of the other people, too, right.

CD: Yes.

TS: That drains you as well.

CD: Yes.

TS: Did you have some good mentors?

CD: I did. I had a few good mentors throughout my military career. My husband was actually one of them.

TS: That's good.



CD: He was a good leader. He still is. Not just because he's my husband but—

TS: Is he still in?

CD: He's still in. He's a recruiter here in Burlington.

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

CD: But it's just—There's leaders that care about their soldiers, that care about not only themselves moving up in the ranks but also the well-being of their soldiers and helping their soldiers excel.

TS: Not just looking out for themselves.

CD: Exactly.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you decided to get out, was that—in your transition into the civilian world, what did you—How did you go about making that decision, then?

CD: I had reached—I think I had about thirteen months left, and they give the option of reenlisting or not, and I had made the choice not to, that I wasn't going to reenlist, so I just finished out my last thirteen months at Eglin and got out.

TS: And then what did you do after that? When did you just decide that you wanted to go to school?

CD: I had started going to school while I was in Iraq, actually. I did online classes, and I finished my associates [degree] in June of 2012. So when I got out I already had my associates, so I knew I wanted to pursue my education. The transition was very tough. I didn't go back to school until January 2013; I got out in October. But from October to December—

TS: [speaking to baby] I know. I know. Here, try this. Want to throw that some more? [both chuckle]

CD: From October to December [noise in background] it was very tough.

TS: What made it so hard?

CD: I think just—One thing was that was a first time since I was fourteen that I didn't have a job, and I'm a very independent person, I'm a very independent women, so getting out and now, all of sudden, having to rely or depend on someone else just—like, my self-esteem and my confidence, I really took a hit, because—

TS: [speaking to baby] Here you go, here's another one.

CD: —I didn't want to have to rely on anyone. I didn't have to want to depend on my husband.

TS: Your husband, right.

CD: But now it wasn't just transitioning out, it was, "What am I going to do? I have no job. I haven't signed up for school." We're in a new place, because we had just gotten to North Carolina as well, and I just felt lost and it was very, very—

TS: Took you a while to get to a place you wanted to be.

CD: Yes, tough couple of months. I finally signed up for school and I was like, "Oh, I'll start in January," and I did, and I went to school nonstop from January of 2013 till December of 2014, and I found myself again and here we are.

TS: What was it that was good about the schooling? Did it help you? I mean, was it—How was it in the classroom?

CD: It was good. I was a little nervous just because when I was at the—In the military I did online classes, so in my mind I was like, "Oh man, I'm going back to a classroom. I'm going to be the oldest person in the classroom. I'm not going to relate to none of these students," but UNCG—It sounds cliché, or I don't know how to put it, but it's a very diverse school.

TS: It is.

CD: So it almost made me feel like the military, in the sense of diversity. And there's as young as, like, seventeen in there till—I've seen—I think I had in one of my classes someone that was sixty-five. So it's just all different walks of life and it wasn't bad. I fell right into—

TS: So you didn't feel like the odd person out?

CD: No, not at all.

TS: Like you thought maybe you would.

CD: Yeah.

TS: [referring to baby] He's going to be, like, a ballplayer or something.

CD: He throws everything. [both laugh]

TS: He definitely has an arm.

So in the classroom, and in the—I've had some returning vets say, especially some who've been deployed, that when they get in the classroom and some of the discussions and things, when they get to—sometimes they talk about the military, they would be a little agitated because of the lack of empathy, I guess.

CD: Yes.

TS: Did you ever have anything like that happen?

CD: Yeah. Some—Whenever things would get brought up, or military or anything, it was—I remember telling my husband sometimes, "Oh, you're veterans' status," or, "Serving in the military doesn't mean anything in the civilian world." And not just in the classroom.

But I've talked to a lot of people [background noise] —Don't worry about it. I've talked to a lot of people, I've met a lot of different people, employers, and there are some people that you being the military, they don't even bat an eye. It does nothing for them. So you do feel like discredited, because I did eight years, and granted, I didn't retire from the military, but I'm very proud of being a soldier, I'm very proud of being a veteran. So when you have people that just disregard that, or don't even bat an eye, I kind of, like—in my mind I get defensive and I'm—I want to be like, "You're enjoying your freedom because of me, because of my brothers and sisters, and not everyone's come back. Some of them have paid the ultimate sacrifice."

So it's just—I think it's just the world that we live in. I think our country is changing a lot every year, and sadly enough, some people don't really understand the sacrifice that service members make, and that's sad. My husband and I talk about it all the time, and I feel that everybody—Everyone should serve at least two years. Bring back the draft. Why not? And there doesn't have to be a war or anything for them to go, but I think the military's a good experience. It teaches you all kinds of skills; leadership skills, integrity, how to be responsible.

TS: But do you think there's maybe some people who could—who would be best not to be in the military? Maybe there's some other kind of service that would be better for them besides military service. Or do you think everyone should just have to try it?

CD: I do agree everyone's not cut out for the military, but I feel like there's got to be some kind of—I don't know. I think it'd be great if there was some kind of program or something that was, kind of, just—we have to go to school from kindergarten to high school, and then college, yes, it's a choice, but just something to give—

TS: For service?

CD: —for service, to understand sacrifice, to understand responsibility. You look at these younger generations and, sadly, they feel entitled. They've never struggled, they've never—They don't know what it's like to fail. A big—Something that I think it's—

TS: It's interesting that you say that, yeah.

CD: Something that bothers be a little is—and with Lucas, we're going to put him in sports, but now all sports teams, I'm all for them getting participation awards, and things like that, but now, whether it's football, baseball, whatever the case may be, everyone's a winner; there is no losers. And I got it a certain age, tee-ball or—three, four, five years old, that's perfectly fine, but when we get into we're talking middle school, high school, there is a loser and there is a winner, and you're not always—and that's not a bad thing; like, it's okay to fail in life, it's okay to hit rock bottom, but—

TS: You have to be able to overcome that.

CD: You have—Exactly, and it builds character, and I think that if you never experience that in life, after you're eighteen and you go for your first job, or whatever the case may be, you're not—you're going to—something so small as your boss talking to you, or you getting reprimanded for something—something little—

TS: How are you going to handle it?

CD: They're not going to be able to handle it. And over something so small they're going to hit rock bottom.

TS: Yes.

CD: [referring to baby] I'll to try to give him a toy or something.

TS: Yeah. Well, here, let me pause it for a second.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, so we're starting up again. Well, let me ask you a little bit about some general questions. First of all, did you have any heroes or heroines during the time that you were in the service? It doesn't necessarily have to be a military person. Is there someone that you really have admired in your life?

CD: I really admire my grandfather. He passed away in 2011. But my grandfather, he raised me. He was a father figure, and he was just—He was just a strong man; like what I think of what a man should be I kind of envision my grandfather. He was very hardworking. He made sure that his family—my grandmother, my mom, all of us—had everything that we needed; he was a provider. And I just learned a lot from him; how to be strong. He always told me that I could do and be anything that I wanted. He was very proud of me joining the military. He came over from Cuba when he was, probably, nineteen or twenty, and he signed up for the draft, but back then it was kind of like a lottery—

TS: Right.

CD: —type thing and he never—His number never came up. But he was very, very proud of being in this country. He got his citizenship—he became an American—and he was just very, very prideful. So when I joined the military you could tell—he would just—you could—

TS: He would beam?

CD: Yeah, he would beam. And I mean, he just—He'd always tell me to go after my dreams, and he just always pushed me and motivated me, and told me that if there was any—there was nothing beyond my grasp. That if I had—If there was something I wanted to do I was able to do it, and it didn't matter that I was a woman or not, and—I don't know, I've always looked up to my grandfather.

TS: So he's very inspirational—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —in a lot of different ways. That's really neat. Well, is there any political leadership that you respected or admired?

CD: You have your—I guess, your presidents; certain presidents that stick out to different people. For me, I would say [John Fitzgerald] Kennedy.

TS: Why for Kennedy?

CD: I just—I think he had a lot of good plans, a lot of good that he wanted to do. I just thought he was a good leader. He knew what he was doing, he—I don't know. I think it would have been interesting if he wouldn't have been assassinated. I think it would have been interesting to see him do his full term, and what he would have been able to bring to the country.

TS: Right.

CD: There was a lot going on, and I just think that he handled everything that he was presented like a leader should, like a president should.

TS: Right. What about the idea of—Oh, I know what we didn't talk about. Like, you had "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

CD: Yes.

TS: And then it was repealed while you were in the military.

CD: Yeah.

TS: So what are your thoughts on that issue, with homosexuals in the military?

CD: I honestly—It doesn't bother me. I don't think your orientation has anything to do with whether or not you could serve and protect this country. We're—We all have one mission and that's—when you sign that contract and you put on that uniform, it's all the same. It doesn't matter who you're attracted to and who you're not, and who you want to marry. We're fighting for the same thing. We're fighting for the U.S., we're fighting for our freedom, we're fighting for this country not to be attacked by terrorists or other countries out there and to me it doesn't matter. I've never had an issue with it. I have really good friends that—I have really good guy friends that have partners, and I don't look at them any different. Just whoever you're attracted to or fall in love with, that has nothing to do—in my opinion, have anything to do with whether or not you could fight for this country.

TS: Or about what—if you can do the job.

CD: Exactly.

TS: Yeah. Were there ever any issues while you were in that you can recall, anybody that you knew?

CD: I didn't see anything while I was in, or any problems or anything like that. At least not in my—

TS: In the areas that you were in?

CD: Yeah.

TS: How about the idea of what women can or cannot do in combat? Are there positions you think that they should not serve in?

CD: No, that's another topic that I just—I don't know. As a woman and as—being a veteran, and I served our country, I don't—I don't think there's anything that we can't do. If anything we could bring so much more to the table. You could have a male soldier and you could have a female soldier, and you'd give them the same situation and the outcomes are going to be completely different, because a male's going to have that male perception and a female's going to have a female perception. The male's going to bring things to the table that the woman might have not thought about, and vice versa. A woman could bring so much more to the table, or view things in a different light that a man might not be able to, and those could help the situation, help the mission. So I think that—I think it's good. I mean—

TS: Did those kind of situations come up in Iraq or anywhere? I mean, did you ever see that—or that was a working—men and women working together, was that beneficial because of what your describing?

CD: I can't think of a certain incident.

TS: Just off the top of your head, I know that's hard to—

CD: Yeah, I can't think of anything, but it's been in the news in the past twelve, twenty-four months; a lot of "Can women do this? Can women be on the front line?" And I think so. I mean, we all get trained the same, we all know how to shoot a weapon and we know how to get out there and be vigilant and be aware of our surroundings, and I just—I don't see what the problem is.

TS: So you don't think there's anything that they shouldn't be allowed to try to do?

CD: No. And different countries, and different people even here in the U.S. are completely against it; Women shouldn't be on the front line. And my thing is, why not? It took the longest time for us to vote and we finally were able to vote. It took the longest time—nurses were the first ones that started in the military, and slowly different jobs—throughout the years and centuries different jobs have opened up, and why not? We try to stress that. [baby making noises in background]

TS: He feels strongly about it too. [chuckles]

CD: I know.

TS: Thank you, Lucas. [both chuckle]

CD: We try to stress as this country—not only is this country a melting pot, but we try stressing that we're all equal. You can't say that we're all equal if you're not going to allow women to be on the front lines or do a certain job because they're female; because of their gender.

TS: Yes.

CD: That's not the way it works. You can't claim that you're this or you're that and then pick and choose your battles.

TS: Right.

CD: Either we're all equal and we're able and capable of doing the same thing or we're not.

TS: If you had a daughter would you—if she wanted to go in the army would you—what would you—Would you support her?

CD: Absolutely. I would be a hypocrite if I—if I didn't want any of my children—or if they said, "Hey, mom, I want to be in the military," and I was against it. I did my time and I think it's a great experience. Now, as a mother, do you worry about things that you normally wouldn't? Yeah, absolutely, because the—your number one is your child's well-being, and you don't want anything to ever happen to them. But if that was their choice and they wanted to sign up, by all means. I'd walk down to the recruiting station with them. The military has a lot of good things to offer and a lot of benefits, and it's a learning experience whether you do four years, eight years, or retire.

TS: So it's still the same—Along the same lines as you saying everybody needs to have that experience.

CD: Yes.

TS: For different reasons. Did you consider yourself a trailblazer at all, in any way? Like, you were in—when you went to Iraq and you were out—like, you volunteered, I think, for—to go out—

CD: Yes.

TS: —outside the line, and things like that. I mean, that's really new.

CD: Yes.

TS: So that's, like, a new experience, and so blazing a trail for women behind you. Did you ever consider yourself a trailblazer in that way?

CD: No, I think it would have been cool to be considered that, by all means, but I just—I don't even. Even when I was in Iraq and I volunteered for the mission, there was no question, there was no hesitation; I was there and I wanted to see more than this FOB; this area that we were fenced in, pretty much. And that's why I was always so eager to "leave the wire," as we would say, because I wanted to see what else there was out there. What was our—Not what was our mission, but what was Iraq really like. Everything there's ever in the news is the bad and killings and the deaths and the explosions, and we never show the good, we never show what's being done over there. We're training—We trained Iraqis, we trained Afghanis, to help them protect their country. And so, I was—I was intrigued by that; I wanted to go out and I wanted to see it for my own eyes.

TS: Well, have you ever used any of the veterans benefits, like the GI Bill—Well, you used that for school, right?

CD: Yes.

TS: How about for housing, have you used it for that?



CD: We have not. We are actually moving to Fort Bragg at the end of the year. We should be leaving here in October, and hopefully into a new house in November, and we are going to use our housing VA.

TS: To buy a house?

CD: To buy a house.

TS: Do you use the Veteran's Administration; the VA?

CD: I get a VA—I guess, a VA rating; I do get that monthly.

TS: Okay.

CD: I have used their offices while that was pending and before I started receiving.

TS: Do you go—Are the services for women, do you think, adequate?

CD: I haven't gone to any of the services. I guess—

TS: Okay.

CD: I guess I fall in a little different category just because I'm married to a service member.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, you're—That's right, [so you fell?] under that.

CD: So I'm considered a veteran but I'm also considered a dependent.

TS: So you haven't had to—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —just use it on your own yet.

CD: Yes.

TS: Do you think your life has been different because you decided to join the army?

CD: Yes, definitely. I think I learned so much just from being in the military; skills, different ways to look at life, perspective, responsibility, selfless service; the list goes on and on,

and I wouldn't—I strongly believe I wouldn't have gained that if I never would have joined the military.

TS: Do you think—Well, do you think maybe that some of those traits were already in you and maybe they were drawn out more by being in the army, rather than that they weren't there to begin with?

CD: Possibly some of those—[baby sneezes]

TS: Bless you.

CD: Some of those—[baby sneezes] Could you stop trying to choke yourself?

TS: [chuckles]

CD: I think—It is possible that some of those traits were there, and the military brought them to surface, but there's no telling.

TS: Right.

CD: I have no regrets and—[baby fussing] and if I had to do it all over again I would.

TS: You would? Would you do anything differently? Retrospectively, I mean, knowing what the—it's hard to say you could change anything.

CD: Yeah.

TS: [referring to baby] He's like, "I'm done."

CD: Yes. I guess—I mean, if you're ever given that question, "Would you do anything different knowing now what you do?" I guess I—I don't know. I guess I could do some things differently, or maybe I would have viewed that bad leadership as—in a positive way, or not have let it drag me down so much to the point where it made my ultimate decision to get out of the military. Maybe I would have approached it differently, and in a way where it wouldn't have dragged me down.

TS: Right.

CD: I would have said, "You know what? That's fine. There's not—That's bad leadership but I'm going to stick around and be a good leadership for these younger soldiers."

TS: Right, but at that time that's wasn't—

CD: No, that's wasn't even a—

TS: That wasn't in the cards.

CD: No, not at all.

TS: It's hard to—That's a hard question to answer because you don't know. What about—Is there anything in particular that you would want a civilian to know or understand about what it's like to be in the military that they may not understand or appreciate? You have kind of touched on that.

CD: Military and the service is not just about war, and I feel like everyone thinks of any of the branches and they just instantly think war. You could serve your country, you could sign up to do your time in the military, and it doesn't instantly—"Here's your ticket to go downrange." [In military slang, downrange is a term for being deployed overseas, usually in a warzone] That's not the case; it's more to it. And—

TS: In the human resources side that you're in you—

CD: Yes.

TS: —you did a lot of that work—the paperwork—

CD: Yeah.

TS: —that goes behind all the things going on.

CD: Exactly.

TS: Yeah.

CD: And there's so much like that; you could be a pharmacist, you could be a vet—a veterinarian in the military. I just think that a lot of—A lot of civilians think military and associate it with war, and that's not the case. I mean, when there's not war, there's not war; we're here doing everyday jobs. And even if you deploy your over there doing—I was—I was downrange and I did paperwork. I was the secretary for the first sergeant and the commander, which is the captain. So I just wish people would see that there was more to the military.

TS: It's not just an infantry soldier—

CD: Correct.

TS: —with a gun or weapon.

CD: Yes, correct. [chuckles]

TS: That's my air force coming out. [chuckles]

CD: It's okay.

TS: Well, what does patriotism mean to you? [talking to baby] Come here. Come here.

CD: Patriotism to me means—I don't know. I just think of being patriotic and I think about this great country that we live in, and taking pride and being prideful of this nation and the freedom that we have, and because of service men and women we're able to enjoy this freedom and that's what patriotism means to me; just standing up for what you believe in. And we live in a great country because of brave men and women.

TS: Yeah. Now, is there anything that—I asked you probably at the start of this, but is there anything, since you started talking, that you haven't been able to—that you'd like to add, because I don't have any more formal questions? You said you'd do it all over again and—

CD: Yes, I'd do it all over again, and even now that I'm out, and with this new title, being Mrs. North Carolina [state competition for the Mrs. America Pageant beauty competition], my platform is actually to—

TS: Oh, yeah, talk about that a little bit; we didn't.

CD: My platform is to actually bring awareness to veteran unemployment and homelessness. I don't think any veteran should get out of the military and not have a job, or even worse, be out on the street and not have a home. That's very saddening and heartbreaking, and Louisiana is actually the first state that has pulled all their veterans of the street and—

TS: Oh, really?

CD: Yes.

TS: You think that's a good model?

CD: That is a great model and I've—I would love to challenge North Carolina, or follow suit and be the second state that pulls all their veterans off the street, so that's what I've been doing this past year, and that's what I hope to continue to do, is just bring awareness. And I go to job fairs and I talk to employers and see if they have any veteran programs, and the majority of them do and I'm happy to hear that.

TS: How long does your "Mrs. North Carolina" last?

CD: Till November; November the new queen, I guess would say—you could say, will get crowned. I go to Mrs. America in September, so we'll see where that goes.

TS: And now, you're not sure exactly where that's going to be at; they're trying to figure out a venue?

CD: Yeah.

TS: Okay. Well, thanks so much for talking with me again.

CD: Yeah.

TS: Sorry I had to come—Actually I'm not sorry I got to come back because I got to see this little guy. He's such a cutie.

CD: Thank you.

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

[End of Interview]