

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Janice Butler Ryckelely

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 26 July 2015

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is July 26. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Janice Ryckelely, and I'm in Dublin, North Carolina, on a beautiful day to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Janice, could you please state your name the way that you'd like it to read on your collection?

JR: Janice Butler Ryckelely, R-Y-C-K-E-L-E-Y.

TS: Okay. Well, Janice, thanks so much for inviting me in today. Why don't we start off by having you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born?

JR: My parents, Clinton and Margaret Butler, lived here in Bladen County. I was born in November of 1955. I came to live here at this particular house in 1960. My parents built the house where we're sitting now for the interview. My brother and I both grew up here. He is a state highway patrolman.

TS: Okay.

JR: And of course, I'm the nurse, having attended school here in the Bladen County school system for years. I grew up just as a small town, peanut town kind of girl.

TS: Peanut?

JR: For years. Peanuts.

TS: Peanuts. Is that what they grow around here?

JR: This is what they are renowned for in this area, is growing peanuts.

TS: Where is your brother a state—

JR: Benson. He's in Benson.

TS: Benson? Where's that at?

JR: That's near Raleigh.

TS: Is it?

JR: It's in Johnston County.

TS: I was going to say I saw a few state patrollers on my way here. [both chuckle] I was wondering if one of them might have been him, I don't know. But not here, so.

JR: He's actually in Wake County now but he lives in Benson.

TS: Is he? Okay.

JR: Yeah, and he's a joy. He really is a joy. So my brother and I grew up here. We're just very normal. [unclear] We both attended public school here, we have a Y [YMCA, a recreational facility run by the Young Men's Christian Association], we go to church right down the road about a quarter of a mile. We always—We did the things that every kid would want to do. We had normal parents who encouraged us in school. We did—Both of us did well in school. There was not a whole lot of entertainment. You kind of made your own entertainment.

TS: What'd you do for entertainment?

JR: We travelled. We travelled a lot. My father was a truck driver and my mother worked as a bookkeeper for the trucking company where he worked. My father did a lot of different kinds of work, but he was very, very supportive of his family. And as a matter of fact, as I went through—as school progressed I began to look at going to college. It was always a forgone conclusion that we would go to college, okay? And sitting about two miles down the road here is a little community college where UNC [University of North Carolina] Wilmington had an exchange program, so I spent the first two years of my undergraduate life right here at this little school getting credit through UNC Wilmington. And transferred to [UNC] Chapel Hill and had a very, very busy year at Chapel Hill, and wound up transferring to [UNC] Greensboro, where I graduated from nursing school.

Now, part of that came under the mentorship of a lady who lives right here in town, because back in 1980 there weren't that many bachelor's [degree] programs even throughout the state in North Carolina. That was a brand new thing. As I remember, the bachelor—

TS: When did you transfer? That would have been—

JR: Seventy-seven.

TS: Seventy-seven, okay.

JR: I graduated in '80.

TS: When did you graduate from high school?

JR: Seventy-four.

TS: Seventy-four.

JR: Yes. So when you're of humble means you make the most of your dollar as best you can. It was very reasonable that a school [unclear] here at UNCW. I mean, it probably cost me a hundred dollars a term, which was very reasonable to get credit at UNC Wilmington. But I think the culture shock of going to UNC Chapel Hill, I probably didn't get the best of counseling and it was a tough year. But my mother drove me over to UNC Greensboro, and they accepted me that day into UNC Greensboro, and my mission was to go to nursing school.

Now, that came under the mentorship of a lady who lives right here in town who was a director of nursing, and she said, "Janice, you don't want a two year degree. You don't want a three year degree. You want a four year degree."

And being a kid, you don't always fully appreciate what they're telling you, but I had enough cerebral activity to go, "I better listen." It was a good idea; it was a very, very, very good idea.

TS: Well, let me back you up just a little bit before you get too far into your college, because I wanted to ask you a little bit, still, about growing up here. When you were a little girl, and you said you kind of had a normal childhood, when you went to school, were the schools segregated here at that time still?

JR: Yes.

TS: Were they?

JR: Yes, they were. The schools became desegregated when I was in the fifth grade.

TS: Okay.

JR: We had no problems.

TS: Yeah? Do you remember it happening?

JR: I remember clearly when it happened. It was—I started school in 1962; '61, '62. The schools became integrated when I was in the fifth grade, and we had a lovely fifth grade teacher who was from Franklin County, okay, up near the mountains. And she was of Cherokee descent. So she was just totally at ease with the whole color situation. And this is what made it wonderful, because none of us fit the drama that we saw on television.

[chuckles] We were just—We knew each other; we were all neighbors. Nobody really cared. Okay, it was a change, but nobody was particularly concerned about it, and we all just kind of melted in together and just kept going to school and nobody was—

TS: So it continued like that through elementary then high school?

JR: Absolutely, absolutely.

TS: Yeah.

JR: The only time I ever saw any disruption was probably when people who were not from this area came in with an agenda, okay? And there was one very disturbing thing that happened in 1972 in the next town where some damage was done.

TS: What happened?

JR: They burned a store in protest.

TS: Who burned it?

JR: Well, there were people who came from out of town. This was about the time that—

TS: Was this in Tar Heel that it happened?

JR: Elizabethtown.

TS: Oh, Elizabethtown.

JR: Yeah. It was agitation; just agitation. In this community, everybody knows everybody. I grew up here, they know who I am, and they show me a great deal of deference. It's wonderful. I have neighbors over here that I would help in a heartbeat. But back in those days, in 1973—this is back whenever the gas thing really reared up and gas just went out the roof, from, like, fifty cents a gallon to over a dollar.

[The 1973 oil crisis began in October 1973 when members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries proclaimed an oil embargo in response to the United States' support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War. By the end of the embargo in March 1974, the price of oil had risen from US \$3 per barrel to nearly \$12 globally; U.S. prices were significantly higher]

And Vietnam was still churning at that time, okay, so there was a lot of upheaval. There was a lot of upheaval that was manufactured, as well as, I think, artificially created. And during that time there were people who came in from other areas who protested at the next town and they burned a department store one night, and it scared us. It scared the

whole community, because it was—it should never have happened. The people who owned that store were wonderful people. But it taught me that you have to understand the context of where you're living to appreciate the hatred, okay? And in that particular era of time nobody really had any community hard feelings. And we learned that that was the effect of, probably, the media as a whole. I don't say that being disrespectful, it was probably just more outside influence, because do you know that store was rebuilt, and nothing has been destroyed since that day; nothing. As a matter of fact, we don't even have, to this day, any true racial issues in this community. We just don't do them. People kind of mind their own business, they go to church, they practice what they learn at church, they're good neighbors who look out for each other. It's not utopia but it's a lot better than some places I've seen.

TS: Well, let me ask you about when you were a young girl.

JR: Sure.

TS: You're probably just starting school when JFK [U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy] was assassinated, do you remember that?

[President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, on Friday, 22 November 1963, while riding in a motorcade in Dallas' Dealey Plaza]

JR: I remember when that happened.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I was in the second grade here at the Dublin schools—elementary school; grades one through eight. Our principal came to the door—I was in the second grade—and he said, "I need to stop class and tell you the president's dead." I remember it fluently. And that November day—I think it was the twenty-third of November 1963, as I remember, okay?

TS: I think it was the twenty-second, but yeah.

JR: Thank you. We were shocked. But see, that was in a different era of time. This was during the Cold War, and we didn't know what a Bay of Pigs [Invasion] really was. We had no awareness; we were second-graders.

[The Bay of Pigs Invasion was a failed military invasion of Cuba by the CIA-sponsored paramilitary group Brigade 2506 on 17 April 1961]

TS: Right.

JR: But I remember we were practicing—we would have these drills, okay, about once a month where we were told—and, yes, this will make you laugh—that the Russians could come, okay? And we didn't know how they were going to come but they may—they might come. And we were—we would have these drills where we had to get up under our desks if the—if the alarm went off.

TS: The duck and cover?

JR: Yeah, up under our desks. I'm not sure what that was supposed to do for us. [chuckles]

TS: I'm not so sure either, but.

JR: But we did it.

TS: Right. Well, you're following the orders and maybe that was part of it, too, so. So then, I'm not sure what grade you're in, but the sixties, the Vietnam War's going on, and then '68 was a pretty tumultuous kind of year. You would have been about—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: I was in eighth grade.

TS: —thirteen, right?

JR: Fourteen. Thirteen, fourteen.

TS: Yeah. Do you remember that year? That time?

JR: I remember so well coming home from school, riding the bus and getting off here at the front door and coming in, and we would watch Huntley and Brinkley [*Huntley-Brinkley Report*] on NBC News, [WECT] channel six out of Wilmington, and they would show things where they would actually show body counts at the end of each day. And I remember thinking to myself, "What a terrible war."

And right across the road, where that little pasture is that you saw, was a neighbor of mine; he was my Sunday School teacher; his name was Murray Barnes[?]. And Murray was—Murray went to Vietnam, okay? He served with the army infantry. Murray was very good with a rifle, and he came back from Vietnam and he was a recipient of two Bronze Stars and several forms of recognition for having honorably served in Vietnam. And I remember thinking to myself how proud we were of him. He didn't talk a lot about it, but as time went on he would tell us about things that he saw and things he experienced, and it made quite an impression on my life that he would be willing to go, okay, and to serve like that. And as our interview progresses you will see that he was really my direction in joining the air force.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: This is where the story re-engages again a little bit later with [the blue color?] on it.

TS: Oh, good, okay. But he was in the army, right?

JR: He was army infantry.

TS: Army. Now, you're growing up and you are going to school and you're in high school, and you said your expectations of your parents are that you're going to go to college.

JR: Absolutely.

TS: Now, did you know at that time what you wanted to do in college?

JR: No, I didn't. No, not really, I didn't.

TS: Okay.

JR: In this particular area, because it was very rural—we only had four high schools at the time, now we have two, they were consolidated—I had very good role models and teachers. They were—This was literally "old school," if you will. They were very interested in their students, and my father and my mother always made it clear that if we would study and apply the good brains that God gave us, that it would be in our interest in life to apply yourself and to succeed.

So in the summertime it was my job to raise money for myself to go to school. I bought shoes, clothes, whatever I needed to do; Momma and Daddy of course supplemented. But see, that was a different era of time, and this particular area around here they raised a lot of tobacco and it's a—very much an agricultural-based economy, and sitting right up here, if you look behind me in that—See the horse barn?

TS: Yeah, I sure do.

JR: There was a tobacco barn used to sit there.

TS: Okay.

JR: And right over here behind my house is a little shed, okay? You don't see it from where you're sitting but we laughingly call that Harmony Hall. That little building sat right up there behind those pecan trees in my horse pasture and I barned[?] tobacco at a dollar an hour.

TS: Oh, okay. That's how you made your money?

JR: Exactly. And then we'd go to Lumberton on Saturday afternoon. It was my spending money and I would go to Belk's [department store] and buy shoes, clothes, jeans, a new shirt. And my brother did the same thing, and that's how we learned to handle our money.

So we raised our own garden; sitting right out here on the right hand side of the house we had a garden with butterbeans and corn, tomatoes, cabbage. Anything the family could basically want, we grew it. We had peach trees up there at one point in time and we—they were gorgeous. Elberta peaches was my daddy's little pet project. And these pecans that you see behind us, that was what he did before he died in 1998, and that was kind of his last touch on this place. This is what we preserve in his memory. So these pecans are really what makes this place the home that it is because that's from their generation, okay?

So they taught us a lot. They taught us to be—to work, to always be honest, to be fair to people, to treat them as we'd want to be treated. I grew up in a community where I had a lot of role models, had a lot of good people around me who were interested in other people and their kids. You can learn as life goes by that changes, because life changes. And I think you never really quite ever get that back, but you take it with you, okay?

So becoming a nurse was logical. My mother told me, she said, "You'll be good at it. You have a good heart for people." And it was true. So when I went to UNC Greensboro at the behest of my neighbor. She says, "Get your bachelor's degree."

TS: What was your neighbor's name?

JR: Marjorie [Riddle] Garner. She is an RN [registered nurse], retired. M-A-J-O-R-I-E Garner. She is an MSN [Master's of Science in Nursing] prepared nurse, and she was a nurse executive at the local hospital.

TS: She kind of helped guide you in the right direction.

JR: She was a mentor.

TS: Okay.

JR: Absolutely a mentor. So off to Greensboro we went.

TS: Okay.

JR: Ready?

TS: Yeah, I'm ready. Tell me about Greensboro.

JR: All right. Greensboro was marvelous. Let me tell you about Greensboro from the outsider's point of view.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

JR: People who live in Guilford County don't probably appreciate what we see living down here in Bladen County. I think you have to be on the outside looking in to be able to understand this better. UNC Greensboro has a reputation for academics, okay? And even that year I spent at UNC Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill was a very, very good academic setting. UNC Greensboro was better, okay? I have a neighbor who lives down the—who lived down the road from here and that was Barbara Grimes, and Barbara graduated from UNC Greensboro around 1977 with a degree in mathematics. Barbara was a genius, okay? She got her undergraduate degree from UNC Greensboro; she was always on the dean's list every single semester. And I knew Barbara; I knew Barbara had that gift. Barbara's now a math professor at Columbia University up in New York, last time I heard. And Barbara was—Barbara was in her element in Greensboro.

And in that era of time, that is exactly the reputation that school had. Now, they had gotten out of the Woman's College thing; it was no longer Woman's College, it was UNC Greensboro. So you knew when you went to school there that you were positioned to be challenged, and you worked, okay?

So in my brief year of getting ready for nursing school I met Dr. Eloise Lewis, who was the Dean of the School of Nursing, and I went in to talk to her because I didn't make the first cut for the selection for the nursing school. They only had so many slots and maybe they might pick forty or fifty girls. I think I was, like, fifty-two, okay, out of fifty. So I was asked to go over and talk to her, and I went in and talked to her, she says, "Janice, tell me about yourself. Tell me where you grew up. What do you do?"

So I told her, and I said, "I want to be an RN [registered nurse]." And I said, "I can do this and I want it and that's all there is to it."

She said, "What will you do with it?"

I said, "I don't know yet but I'll figure that out. But I promise you I'm not going to let you down."

Well, honey, I was in within a week, okay? I was thrilled. I was thrilled. Come to find out this lady was a public health nurse with the U.S. Public Health Service earlier in her life, and if you look back through the archives of the School of Nursing, Dr. Eloise Lewis built the place, okay? Deans may come and deans may go. Eloise Lewis was the queen, okay? All of them deferred to Dr. Eloise Lewis.

There was a Dr. Doris [Wofford] Armenaki who was fabulous. But I think Dr. Armenaki died a couple years ago. There was a Dr. Nancy Courts. Dr. Courts was Mrs. Nancy Courts when I knew her, but she's since got her doctorate at UNC Greensboro, and Dr. Nancy Courts was my advisor, okay? I loved her. She was married to a child psychiatrist there in Greensboro, and we always used to snicker about, "What's a child psychiatrist?" But yet she was an excellent teacher and she was the one who kind of kept me grounded.

TS: In what way was she an excellent teacher?

JR: She was— [bright, articulate and sized people up with their strengths and weaknesses accurately. She was a mentor—JR added later.]

TS: What do you think made her so good?

JR: She understood life. She understood life; she understood work; she understood academics. And I remember when I finished my bachelor's program I said, "I don't think I'll ever get a master's degree."

She said, "Janice—" she had a very pronounced Southern accent—"Janice, do you understand that there is much about education that is a business?" [chuckles] And she said, "You'll figure this out, that you definitely will need to have a master's degree and it is only a master's—only a matter of time."

"Yes, Ma'am, I got it."

"Remember that, Janice."

"I will remember." Truer words were never spoken.

So I finished up UNC Greensboro, and during that Career Day that was offered in the spring of 1980 I met the air force recruiter.

TS: You just kind of happened to see it on a table or something?

JR: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

TS: Senior Day, you said?

JR: It was Senior Career Day for the nurses. So I walked up to him and I asked and I said, "Well, tell me about the air force."

TS: Well, off tape you told me that there was this—

JR: It was a model.

TS: A model of a—

JR: Just like that.

TS: —airplane. Do you know what kind—

JR: It was a [McDonnell Douglas] C-9 Nightingale.

TS: And it's got the Red Cross cross on the—I'm just describing it for the transcriber.

JR: Absolutely.

TS: You can describe it if you want.

JR: It's fine. McDonnell Douglas DC-9.

TS: There you go.

JR: It holds fifty ambulatory patients; holds fifty litters [stretchers]. It was built specifically for the air force, okay? It is a modified DC-9 [modified for patient care—JR clarified later.]

TS: Okay.

JR: There were probably fifteen of those in the entire air force inventory. My goal—This was what I lived for, okay? Literally breathed to become an air force flight nurse. It's all I wanted in life; it's all I wanted.

TS: But this is where you found out about it.

JR: Exactly.

TS: That it was even possible, at that Senior Career Day.

JR: Exactly.

TS: In 1980?

JR: Nineteen eighty. And I remember asking Major George Carson, I said, "Okay, what does it take to do this?"
And he explained to me it was a six-week program in Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio, and he said, "Janice, you can do it."
I said, "That's what I want." And that's exactly what I did. He's—He came to the house; I did my oath—my commission—in that little foyer you saw—

TS: Right here in this house?

JR: —the man's cave, okay?

TS: Right.

JR: And I have pictures of that. [unclear] here nor there. But when I graduated from UNC Greensboro he said, "You have a very clean record."
I said, "Yeah," because, once again, this is where I grew up.

TS: Right.

JR: The whole vacation bible school, church community, clean girl thing was just what we did, okay? So it was very easy for them to go through my security clearance and to go through all the introductory check-off lists that you do to get into the air force. The army kept competing but I didn't want to go into the army. I was just not interested in that.

TS: You wanted to get on that plane.

JR: That's all I wanted.

TS: Well, what did your folks think about you going into the—

JR: My father loved it.

TS: Your father? Was he in the service at all?

JR: Yes, he was. He was in World War II, in the navy, and also the Merchant Marines.

TS: Okay.

JR: So he had travelled all over the world. He said, "Janice, you need to do this." He said, "It'll be good for you." So he was very, very proud of me when I took my commission in—September 25 of 1980.

TS: What'd your mom think about it?

JR: She was tearful.

TS: Tearful?

JR: Pretty tearful. I think she was concerned that she would probably—Mama was protective, probably a little overly protective, because I think she realized that I was leaving.

TS: Right. She wanted to keep you around.

JR: Exactly.

TS: Close, at least.

JR: Exactly. And see, Therese, it was unheard of. I was probably the only girl in this part of the country that says, "I'm going in the air force as a nurse."
People look at you, "Why are you doing that? You mean jumping out of airplanes?"
"No, I'm going to be a flight nurse."
"What's that?"
"I'm going to be in a airplane and take care of patients."
"Wow. That sounds like fun."
I says, "I think it will be. We'll find out."
But I was probably the only person that I knew of in this part of the state who interviewed with this nurse recruiter, who went, okay?

TS: Right. You didn't know anybody else going in?

JR: No.

TS: Any boys?

JR: Yes.

TS: Some boys.

JR: I have a classmate from East Bladen High School who became an astronaut, okay? If you go through Elizabethtown—and eventually you may in your travels—there's a mural on the side of this furniture building. Curtis [Lee "Curt"] Brown sat beside me in high school algebra, trig [trigonometry] and calculus, science, physics, biology, chemistry; all of it. Well, he did the same thing and became an [Fairchild Republic] A-10 [Thunderbolt II] pilot and he wound up flying the space shuttle. There were several of the space shuttles that he took on their trip, and of course, he's a local hero; they named the airport for him.

TS: Right.

JR: Curtis L. Brown.

TS: Sure.

JR: Well, Curtis Brown. I can't tell you his middle name.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Now I have a connection to that. I understand it a lot more.

JR: You sure do. Curtis Brown; you'll see it. So Lieutenant Colonel Curtis Brown lives in Michigan now, last time I checked. Michigan or Minnesota.

TS: That's a pretty good state.

JR: It is. Don't we know; don't we know. And I think he flies for either Delta [Air Lines] or American Airlines as a pilot.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: And he comes home periodically because he has a scholarship that he awards to kids.

TS: Very nice.

JR: It worked out quite well. But we're the only two in Bladen County that I know of who are commissioned officers. There was a third gentleman that we learned, who's down in

Elizabethtown, Major Kenneth Pervine. He was in [comm? communication?], okay? But I don't know him as well because Curtis and I were in high school together.

TS: Right.

JR: Kenneth was a little older than the rest of us.

TS: Well, is there anything else you want to add about going to Greensboro?

JR: Yes.

TS: Like, where did you hang out? What did you do for fun?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: It was wonderful; it was wonderful; I loved UNC Greensboro. I had a roommate who was a former Miss New Jersey. She was gorgeous.

TS: Really?

JR: It was Lydia; Lydia Clark. Lydia, I think, lives somewhere up in New Jersey, New York area, and I don't hear from her anymore, but she was gorgeous. And I had another roommate who was from there in Alamance County; she was over at Mebane. Her name was Cheryl White, and Cheryl's father was a pharmacist over in Graham, okay? And her little brother was a couple years behind us and we hung out together. We'd go over and eat lunch in the old cafeteria, eat dinner at night. We had these little punch cards, they'd punch your card. It was back before computers were in vogue. And it was just a healthy, clean place to live. I lived in Ragsdale [Dormitory], Room 325. Ragsdale.

And all of us were just kind of in the innocence stage because Vietnam [War] was winding down. None of us liked the Vietnamese situation; we didn't like people getting killed and dying. And none of us were fond of the draft because we were just not fond of the whole war situation. But nobody was, okay? But at the same time, while you were not necessarily fond of war, you loved your country, okay? And that's what needs to be said here. It's not so much a pro-war thing, it's love of country. And I think as you grow and mature and season you realize what a wonderful country we have, with a lot of wonderful people in it. So that patriotism thing kind of rode in on top of the C-9. I said, "I can handle that."

So when I took my commission in December of 1980, it was very palatable to do something bigger than yourself, okay? And I began to realize Major Carstern[?], my father, my neighbor Murray—Murray told me, he said, "Oh, Janice, you must go in the air force." [unclear] He said, "Janice, the air force nurses have it so much easier." He said, "Usually with the air force they have nicer accommodations." He said, "The army suffers. The marines suffer." He said, "You'll be good to them." He said, "Because you understand where they came from and you understand what they're doing." He says, "A

lot of people may not understand what dirt and deprivation looks like. He says, "They're sleeping in the dirt." He said, "They're hungry. They don't get that much to eat." He said, "You will be good for them."

Well, lo and behold, it did work out very much as he prophesized, because you began to realize the difference in the various services and the difference in how they're trained for their missions, okay? You learned to appreciate the marines as being the first [unclear] as the amphibious force. You learned to appreciate the army going in as the G, or the ground, forces. You learned to appreciate the differences in how they are pre-positioned and how they go in to do their job. And I had great respect for that, so it was always very rewarding when you can take care of people who had been out there doing their best in their jobs, to bring them back to a safer position either in Germany or here in what we call CONUS, the continental U.S.

TS: When you raised your hand and you signed up, what was your expectation for how long you thought you might be in?

JR: I didn't know, to be honest with you. I kind of took it one year at a time. I was very fortunate. I had several wonderful people who were senior to me who were very quick to guide or to mentor or to go, "Janice, do this. Do this now. Janice, you must do this next."
"Okay." I could do it.

TS: Is that as career guidance, you mean?

JR: Absolutely. Career guidance.

TS: To make sure you check off whatever on the list, sort of thing.

JR: Check-offs, and also things that I should learn.

TS: Skills?

JR: Things that I should do. Skills, knowledge.

TS: Leadership issues.

JR: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

JR: All experience-based, because the air force is very—they were very focused on what we call air superiority, and all that is, is control of the air. That's all that is, okay? That's their job. And that sounds strange to civilian ears, but when you realize that that is their mission, is to control the air space component, then you realize then that's what we do, okay?

And I think it teaches you how to work with people; I think it teaches you to work with all kinds of people; I think it teaches you how to avoid—what I'll call—less than

desirable things that civilian people may have to deal with. So the expectations, as you know, of being enlisted or officer are very similar; very similar. First of all, your mission is first and foremost. Your job and how well you excel at your job contributes to that mission. And you learn, and the air force was a great proving ground for expanding your horizons. Because meanwhile back here in this little place where I grew up, an RN is an RN is an RN. They're not in the air force; they're not. And as you proved—

TS: How is it different?

JR: As you proved that you had the abilities to learn—

TS: Right.

JR: —you expanded your role, and as your role expanded you became more valuable to the air force. And what happened—My neighbor, Murray, told me, he said, "Janice, you don't want to do the civilian thing." He says, "My aunt, who's the anesthesia nurse—nurse anesthetist—" he said, "The average RN will wind up pushing a medicine cart up and down the halls giving medicines to various patients. Do a lot of CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] and do a lot of good work. Good work." He said, "Janice, the air force will give you more than that." He said, "If you get commissioned as an officer," he said, "they will challenge you with other jobs." Well, truer words were never spoken, and you understand this.

One of the most gratifying things I was ever done is I was given the chance to be, like, an ambassador on the airplane to foreign countries, okay? We would fly the Aerovac [Air Force Aeromedical Evacuation] missions, and I'll tell you more about that as we chronologically get to it. It was a little sticky sometimes, and you just worked with people and you just were as honest as you could be, as kind as you could be, as professional as you could be. And I've worked through some hairy situations with people where PR [public relations] was everything. So in that respect it broadened you; it broadened your horizons; it taught you to respect people from other cultures. You learned how to talk to them; you learned how to interact with them; you learn, kind of, how to navigate in their lane, versus just being in the lane we knew. And I think in that way the roles that were given to me as a nurse were vastly more educational than I ever suspected. Ever.

TS: Where'd you go to your training? Wichita Falls [Texas] in Sheppard [Air Force Base]?

JR: Yes.

TS: January 1981, you said? When you went there and you went through your officer training, what was that like for you? What surprised you? What did you take from that experience?

JR: This is a very rural environment that I grew up in. We did not have any Mexican restaurants in the area; I think the closest might have been in Fayetteville. But we didn't

do[?] a lot of Mexican restaurants. We had butter beans, corn, tomatoes. This is a farming area.

TS: All good food.

JR: Oh, my goodness. And I remember flying from here to Wichita Falls.

TS: Had you flown before?

JR: Never.

TS: Okay.

JR: My first chance to ever fly. It was exciting.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And I flew in this little airplane from Dallas-Fort Worth into Wichita Falls, and I thought, "This is wonderful; this is wonderful." I'd never been in a small airplane, much less a large one. And my first large airplane flight was obviously from Fayetteville to Greensboro, and then down to Dallas-Fort Worth. From Dallas-Fort Worth we took a little hop over to Wichita Falls. I remember thinking how beautiful Texas was. There were no trees. You could look for miles and just see the horizon because it's essentially flat.

And we got into this little air force base and they began to show us doctrine and teach us about—this is what the air force expects of its medical corps and their MSC [Medical Service Corps] officers, which were the administrators, and the nurse corps. They were all there together from all over the country, and there were probably about fifty to seventy-five of us there together. And I remember thinking I was in awe of those teachers because they're all, like, majors and captains and lieutenant colonels, and I thought, "Wow. They've done this. They know what they're talking about." I was just in awe. And I remember thinking, "I'm going to do the very best job I can. I'm going to do the very best I can. I like this."

So we learned how to pick up our uniform pieces, and we learned how to put the uniform on, and we learned what the hospitals are like, and we learned where the hospitals are, and, kind of, the mission of what we do as medical officers and medical administrators and nurses. We learned. And they said, "Now, we're going to send you to your respective base; you know you're going to Eglin [Air Force Base]," which is where I was going.

TS: That was a real quick orientation you said; like, two weeks?

JR: Two weeks.

TS: Were there any men in your class too?

JR: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. About half and half.

TS: Half and half?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: About half and half. There were lots of doctors and—

TS: Oh, doctors?

JR: —nurses and administrators and they were from all over the country.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: A lot of us were [unclear]—

TS: Just a medical orientation.

JR: Absolutely. That's all it was, just medical.

TS: Not just nursing. I see.

JR: Exactly, medical. You're exactly right. Thank you for clarifying. We call it "the two-week wonder course". So we did the two-week wonder course and I went on to Eglin. And I remember flying through New Orleans to get to Okaloosa County airport, and my sponsor[?] met me; she was from Minnesota. Her name was Janice; Janice—and her last name was, like, Coy—Coyle? C-O-Y-L-E. She was wonderful; she was a lovely girl from Minnesota. And she and another nurse, Laurie, and there was another girl—and her name has escaped me now—they took me under their wing and they kind of showed me the ropes, and they were wonderful. I kept up with them for years because of their kindness to me. I learned to appreciate foods and lifestyles and cultures and people. I learned to love them. I didn't have a bit of problem; we just got along great.

So you see, in contrast to what I had seen as, kind of, a tumultuous thing when it comes to, like, the world, I had—it kind of gave me a sense of stability; that we're all here for the same reason in the air force, okay? We're going to take care of people. And I liked it; I got along great. And I loved Eglin [AFB] Hospital. That's where I met Mike.

TS: Oh, your husband?

JR: Yeah, Mike was there as a T-39 [Sabreliner] pilot, so that's where we met. We lived across the street in the Bachelor Officer Quarters, then we met, and four years later we got married.

But moving on back to what we learned, it was a very rewarding work. I learned through, kind of, trial and error that I loved hearts; I loved cardiology nursing, okay? And

I thought, "I could do this. I can get into this." So every chance I got I always worked in the ICU [Intensive Care Unit]. I worked in the male surgical floor and the ICU at Eglin, and then when I left Eglin and became a flight nurse, of course that was a different environment. But I went right back to the ICU when I was in the air force, and it was a higher level ICU; it was much busier. So that's, kind of, laid the foundation for the cardiology thing.

TS: I see. At Eglin you're working in cardiology in the ICU.

JR: [unclear] care.

TS: You were there—let's see—two and a half years you said?

JR: Yes.

TS: Now, did you have to apply for the flight nurse? When did you become the flight nurse?

JR: In '82.

TS: Eighty-two.

JR: I went to Brooks Air Force Base.

TS: Oh, while you were at Eglin?

JR: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JR: It was TDY [temporary duty assignment]; just TDY.

TS: Okay.

JR: And see, you're just a baby. You're learning. So they sent me to the equivalent of the six-week flight nurse course at Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio.

TS: What kind of things did you have to do there to qualify?

JR: Oh, it was wonderful. Well, you had to pass a Class 3 flight physical, which was a FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] physical, and I passed it with flying colors. Learned the technical aspects of what it's like to take care of people at altitude. And they literally taught you the bariatric [correction: barometric]—the pressure-related concerns of dealing with sick people—how to deal with illness and injuries and different kinds of trauma—at altitude. We had to learn all the risks of taking care of people, as far as hypoxia [oxygen deficiency]—the different kinds of hypoxia, the effects of hemorrhage and hypoxia—learning the different implications of how to make the equipment—

particularly the ventilators—work at altitude; how to count and to take care of, kind of, the technical aspects of what the patients needed to do, and how to get them off and on at various places. So you learned a lot about management of people, and management of illnesses. It was a very autonomous job and they prepared you for that. Because unlike living in a hospital where you worked and you're surrounded by doctors and nurses all over the place, there were two nurses on this airplane.

TS: That's what I was going to ask you. You said there were about fifteen planes?

JR: Yes. Two nurses per mission.

TS: And so, about how many flight nurses were there?

JR: Oh, my gosh. The active duty side of this, there were one, two, three places for the active duty nurses world-wide.

TS: Where you could be stationed?

JR: Exactly. Rhein-Main [Air Force Base, Germany], Scott [Air Force Base, Illinois], and over in Japan.

TS: You get two of those, right?

JR: Or Philippines—Clark [Air Force Base] in the Philippines. I hit two of them. I never went to Clark.

TS: Okay.

JR: That was in the Philippines, and that moved to Japan.

TS: Okay. After they closed down Clark.

JR: Exactly, exactly. So those three places were the only places active duty nurses could go.

TS: I see. Okay.

JR: But primarily, these missions, particularly for those over the strategic missions, with the 141s [Lockheed C-141 Starlifter], were flown by the reserves and the International Guard. A lot of reservists, particularly out of Charleston [Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina] and out of McGuire [Air Force Base, New Jersey].

TS: Okay.

JR: A lot of people—and the reserve flight nurses. And the air force did that a lot. They tended to train a lot of the reserves as back up resources, but they kept the active duty nurses doing the job right there on the spot because that was an active duty-oriented job.

But we all—Everything was done by hand; everything was done by hand. The little tickets that went on the patients, all their records, all of them were manually done.

TS: When you were on the plane, there weren't any doctors?

JR: No.

TS: Just two nurses.

JR: Yes.

TS: Well, probably a different number of patients—

JR: Three med techs. We had three med techs and two nurses.

TS: Three med techs, two nurses.

JR: And we took care of fifty people.

TS: Up to fifty people.

JR: Yes.

TS: Did you ever have that many?

JR: Yes.

TS: Was that the average, or it just depended on what you were working on?

JR: The truth—Depending on what leg of the mission—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —you'd have fifty people. Sometimes less. But on the way back into Germany it was always full because they were going to engage with the 141s coming in from Charleston and McGuire. They would come in the day before [unclear] prepositioned.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: And then they were going to take them out.

JR: Exactly.

TS: I see.

JR: They were prepositioned.

TS: So they needed to have them full.

JR: Exactly. That's exactly right.

TS: Very interesting.

JR: It was a fascinating job. They prepared us for that. They taught you, kind of, how to manage it, okay? So it was everything I ever wanted.

TS: You didn't have to jump out of a plane?

JR: No, never did. [both chuckle]

TS: But did you have to prepare? Did they prepare you for something like that?

JR: Yeah [unclear]. It was remote. I think if we had ever had a problem over the Mediterranean, yes, we could have done it. Because part of what you learn—and this is part of the idiosyncrasy—people who are flight attendants on commercial airlines are truly safety representatives. They're not there to pass Cokes and peanuts, they're there to get you out of the airplane, okay?

TS: Right.

JR: And I think sometimes you forget that. People think about the flight attendant thing as being a little bit fluffy. But it's never fluffy; it's called pop the hatch, pull the hatch out of the side. The overhead hatches won't[?] get you out, okay? And I think the intellectual challenge to that was if you had someone who could not move, and we moved a lot of people who were paralyzed, where they were so sick they couldn't get up.

TS: Right.

JR: The challenge was, if we ditched or if we crashed, how would we get them out?

TS: Right. That would be problematic, I would think.

JR: It is; it is problematic. And what happens, you had to know every single exit on that airplane. You had to know the commands; you had to know the order of the emergency processes; you had to know what to do if we had a rapid decompression, if you had an issue with the airplane; how to drop the hatches; how to drop the tail; how to eject the slides. And then in what order to get people off the airplane.

TS: Did you ever have anything like that happen?

JR: No, thank God.

TS: Well, that's good.

TS: Thank God, no. It was a very regimented kind of thing, but it was done for a reason because we all knew what each other's roles were. And we even had—We were even tested on it, to know what other people's jobs were; so my job was synchronized with theirs, and theirs was synchronized with the next person. Very team oriented. And I loved it; I just loved it because it was effective. And I think that's why I kind of fell in love with the whole air force thing, because somewhere along the way somebody thought and put their head with somebody else's head and said, "Okay, it might be smarter if we did it this way," okay? "To synchronize our efforts." And that appealed to my sense of logic.

TS: Right.

JR: That every single person was a team member and we all worked together and it was called a "crew" for that reason. We were crews.

TS: You learned it, you went TDY to become a flight nurse. Did you get orders soon after that, then you were going to head to Germany?

JR: My chief nurse at Eglin was a Colonel Eileen Ruotsala. She's now deceased. She was from Minnesota. No, she was from Michigan; I think she was from Flint, Michigan. Eileen Ruotsala. You'll see if you look up R-U-O-T-S-A-L-A, Eileen, she was—She's deceased now, but she asked me several times, "Janice, what do you want to do?"

I said, "That's it. I want to fly."

"Fine. Where would you like to fly?"

I said, "Germany."

"Well, Janice, you seem to know what you want."

I said, "I do know what I want. I want to fly as a flight nurse in Germany. That's what I want."

"Okay." And she came to me one day and she said, "I have something to tell you."

I said, "What's that?"

She said, "You're going to Germany."

I said, "Really?"

"How about August?"

I said, "How about August."

She says, "Would you like that?"

I says, "Oh, yes, would I ever like that."

So that's how that went and I was just ecstatic.

TS: This is August of '83?

JR: I was ecstatic.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Oh, Therese!

TS: Now, you weren't married, you were still single.

JR: No, no. I'd just met Mike. I was single—We were just as happy as two puppies off a leash, because he was flying T-39s and now I'm going to Germany. He said, "Well, I'll meet you."

"Fine, I'd like that."

He went on to Dover [Air Force Base, Delaware] and [the week that?] I was in Germany he came to see me.

TS: Oh, he visited you.

JR: It was wonderful. And then the next two years in Germany—Now, is this giving you enough content?

TS: Yeah. Oh, yeah, you can go into what happened in Germany. That's great.

JR: Second Air Evac [2nd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron], Rhein-Main Air Base, which was formerly a *Luftwaffe* installation beside the Flughafen at Frankfurt. I'm sure you're familiar with Frankfurt.

[The Luftwaffe was the aerial warfare branch of the combined German Wehrmacht military forces during World War II]

[Flughafen-Frankfurt is a city district of Frankfurt am Main, Germany, and contains the whole airport ground for Frankfurt Airport]

They serve—They used joint air runways. That was formerly a WWII—World War II—*Luftwaffe* base, and they even had the underground garages, if you will, where they can show you where the *Luftwaffe* would hide their airplanes through World War II. Pull open the hatch, the airplane pulls out, they pull it out, off you go. It was a very historically rich place to live. Right across the road was Zeppelinheim, where the first zeppelin was built during World War II. And you learned. It was just rich in history.

I remember when I first got there, kind of feeling a little overwhelmed because I thought, "So this is Germany." And it was as beautiful as I ever thought it would be. It was beautiful. And I know you understand when I say, "Springtime in Germany," I'm not making a joke. A lot of window boxes, a lot murals on the sides of the houses. The German foreign nationals liked us, okay? My landlord, for example, would only rent to nurses because he knew we all flew for the same organization. He could depend on us; we didn't tear up his property. Lovely people, just lovely people.

TS: Did you live on base or off base?

JR: Off. I lived in Mörfelden in Germany, and Mörfelden was a Communist-run city, to be honest with you. It had Communist management and had a Communist governor—mayor. And the people that lived in the same house—there were all these three level houses that I'm sure you remember—that's how the Germans taxed their real estate. For example, they had three levels. I lived on the top level of this tri-level house and my neighbors immediately underneath me were German foreign nationals, and they weren't even that fond of Americans but they liked me. We got along great. I babysat their children. The children loved me; I loved them. It was just normal. And my neighbors on the ground floor, of course, worked with me at Rhein-Main Air Base.

But you learned to appreciate the international flair, okay? That was a good introduction to how to live in a foreign country, because my job took me places on the back of that airplane where we learned other cultures. We learned the variations in environment and people, culture, expectations, how to talk to them, how to interact with them. I remember we flew a lot to Turkey. We flew a lot of missions in and out of Turkey, out of Cyprus, out of Egypt; all over the Middle East.

TS: Who were you picking up?

JR: Active duty.

TS: Active duty.

JR: From classified and unclassified locations.

TS: Okay.

JR: We even picked up retirees out of Africa. It was an opportunity; I'd never seen Kenya. Flew into Nairobi; Nairobi was wonderful. And of course, because we were these strange-looking people, with these short haircuts, they—I think they were probably as fascinated with us as we were fascinated with them.

I remember going to pick up this retiree who was a tour sponsor and he was going to organize a tour of Kenya. He got sick and he had a GI [gastrointestinal] bleed and we had to go pick him up. They had him in this little hospital, they had these steel hospital beds—[actually made of?] steel—and glass IV [intravenous] bottles. We walked in and picked him up—and we always had our flight suits on—we walked in there and he said, "Boy, I'm glad to see you all."

I was like, "I'm going to take you home." And the sisters—what they call the nurses in the Nairobi health system, they were sisters—they were wonderful people.

And I remember going downtown in Nairobi with the pilots in the [C]141—that was a 141 mission—and the pilots were from Charleston and they cautioned us, they said, "Now, you're going to see a lot of disease that you're not used to seeing back in the United States. You're going to see a lot of polio. You're going to see the effects of polio. You're going to see a lot of people on the streets, even in downtown Nairobi, and they're

very, very poor. So do not give them money, because if you do they're going to take you over."

I said, "Okay."

So we walked down to this marketplace in downtown Nairobi and there were people all over the place, and they were heartbreaking because they were paralyzed; it was polio. Their legs would be permanently contracted [shortening of a muscle or joint] and they would push themselves around on the palms of their hands. They'd walk up to you and hold their hand up and they were asking for money. I'd tell them, "I don't have any money, I can't give you money," and they were okay with it. It was okay. But I quickly appreciated just the public health system and how we vaccinate out children, and polio is basically an eradicated disease. The World Health Organization for years proclaimed that polio was gone. Well, not really, but we thought it was.

Part of my education was learning how other places managed their healthcare. We flew into Spain and Italy, all over Europe. I learned a lot about the Spanish health system and how they didn't have even the neonatal resources that we enjoy and take for granted in this country. See, this is truly the greatest country on earth. This is it; we're looking at it. Over in Spain I shuddered because we would have sailors, particularly at [Naval Station] Rota and other places where the navy was prominent, and they would have their wives deliver babies in those Spanish hospitals, and if those babies were sick we had to go get them because the Spanish hospitals had no NICUs [Neonatal Intensive Care Unit], okay? And they would literally take the baby and tell the parents, "There's nothing else we can do for you," and kind of pushed the baby over to the side, and that was it.

We would get these emergency calls, "Can you get here to come get this baby?"

"Of course we can. We'll come." And it was nothing to launch an airplane during the night to go pick up a sick baby or a pregnant woman.

TS: Did you do that very often?

JR: Every night that I was on duty.

TS: Really?

JR: It was just routine. Between Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Turkey, Greece, Crete. Those are the prominent countries on the Mediterranean. England, [Royal Air Force] Lakenheath, [Royal Air Force] Mildenhall. And you know what these places sound like. Mildenhall in the U.K. [United Kingdom] was not so much a problem because it was the U.K., but any time you got into Spain, into Italy, and the further west you went, the sparser the resources were.

It was routine to pick up some poor pregnant girl who was in preeclampsia or pre-hypertensive crisis and to bring her back to [U.S. Air Force Hospital] Wiesbaden or the 97th General Hospital, which was a huge army hospital in downtown Frankfurt. To bring them in, particularly if they were army, they always went to 97th General. If they were air force or navy they went to Wiesbaden. We did that all the time and it was a huge clinical education to take care of these people.

I will never forget flying into Cyprus to pick up an active duty guy who came out to the airplane with a chest tube, and a chest tube is normally a device that's put into your

pleural cavity—that's the sac that holds your lungs—and it's a tube inserted into the sac to literally re-inflate that lung by negative pressure. So those lungs are kept expanded because of the vacuum. Not because of positive pressure, but negative pressure. And bless their hearts, they brought this guy out to the airplane and he had that tube just open to ambient air. And he walked up to the airplane, I said, "Where's your suction device for this chest tube?"

He said, "They didn't have one."

I said, [unclear]. And we had the equipment on the airplane to do it so I did it, okay? And we began to decompress his pleural cavity to make his lung re-expand, and by the time he got to Wiesbaden, I remember the surgeons calling, going, "What did you do to him?"

I said, "What do you mean, what did we do to him?"

They said, "He didn't have—He had a chest tube and his lung's not re-expanded."

I said, "Baby, he had no negative pressure on that tube. There was nothing for him out there. We fixed it." And they were mortified, because even at Wiesbaden their sense of reality was that everybody should have this, but they didn't. So we had to fix it, okay? And we did that a lot on the transatlantic flights from Germany to [Joint Base] Andrews.

TS: Did you ever go to a place where you were impressed by their medical care?

JR: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

TS: What places would those be?

JR: Oh, all over. All over. Any time you had active duty troops, they are—it's the best health care system in the world.

TS: I mean outside of the military.

JR: Oh. Well, yes, yes, yes. I think probably there in Germany for sure. Germany is very state of the art.

TS: Did you go to any of the Scandinavian countries?

JR: Never had the chance.

TS: No?

JR: Never really had the chance.

TS: That's one of the ones I was wondering how that was like.

JR: See, I never really had that opportunity. We might go pick up somebody but we never had a chance to go in.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I think you were busy in a lot of other places.

JR: You can see the flavor of it. But by far, Germany was state of the art.

TS: Yeah.

JR: By far. I think that the quality of the health care in this country is second to none. Even then. And Saudi Arabia was a lot like that. The Saudi government has state of the art, okay? Now, they are very much modern, but even they will hop a jet to Duke [University Medical Center].

TS: I was going to say, do you think that's accessible to all the people though?

JR: No, no.

TS: Just certain—

JR: Of course not.

TS: —certain levels.

JR: Just certain class—certain classes of people.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Economic—It's economically driven; very much economically driven. As you know as well as I do, there are demographics and there are economic demographics, and I think part of what sets this country apart is that no matter how rudimentary our third-party insurance system has proven to be, regardless of that, people can still avail themselves to the health care system and receive the care they need, because they're going to get it one way or the other. But I think, by far, when a Saudi prince hops a private jet to Duke, there's your answer, okay?

So yes, it was a tremendous learning experience because you began to appreciate that glass bottles and steel bed frames and sisters were all over the world, okay? I met a lot of people who were crucial to bringing these people home from all over Europe, Africa, the Middle East. We were on a first name basis with each other because we knew these people; we knew these doctors; we knew these nurses. When they called from Greece we knew who they were, and that was Hellenikon Air Base.

TS: What was the air base?

JR: Hellenikon. Hellenikon. It closed about twenty-five, thirty years ago. Hellenikon—H-E-L-L-E-N-I-K-O-N—Air Base, and that was in Athens, okay? And then Crete; there was a little air base at Crete [Iraklion Air Station].

So the work was very rewarding work because it was you—it was you—and if you flew an urgent mission at night it was you and one med tech; that was it, okay?

TS: Just going to pick them up?

JR: That's exactly right. Now, that one mission might be a C-141 going to the States, and it was you and one med tech and you might be on a C-5. You might be on a 141 with all that cargo that you're oh-so familiar with [and they hang?] one stanchion, and you would hang your litters on the stanchion and they'd put a trip seat—the triple seats—in the back, and your job was to watch that patient.

TS: This job, then, wasn't, like, one particular plane you flew on.

JR: Three.

TS: It was the C-9A.

JR: Yes. The C-9A, the 141 "A" and "B", and the C-130.

TS: Okay.

JR: And back then it was, like, the—I think it was the "F" model, I think.

TS: Oh, that's okay.

JR: It's up to the "H" model now.

TS: Some people might be interested in that.

JR: Yeah.

TS: "Typical" is the wrong word to use here, but, like, a typical week for you would look like what in Germany?

JR: Just normal; just normal life.

TS: No, I don't think so because most people aren't jumping on a plane to go to Crete.

JR: [laughs] You're so funny. I lived in Mörfelden[-Walldorf], which was about five miles away from Rhein-Main Air Base, so we'd go into work, this beautiful stucco-colored building with these three planes prepositioned on the tarmac outside. And you always knew who was gone because we all stuck together; we all knew where we lived.

TS: About how many of you were there?

JR: There was about twenty-five flight nurses.

TS: Okay.

JR: And there were probably fifty med techs, and then we had all the staff people. I worked for Colonel [Anthony, Jr.] "Tony" Trezza and Colonel Iris Evenson[?], and Colonel Iris Evenson was a mentor to me. So was Colonel Trezza. I loved Colonel Tony Trezza. He would tease me a lot, he'd said, "You're like Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*."

I said, "I don't think that's such a compliment."

He said, "I think it is." He said, "Because you're going to make it." [laughs]

TS: That's right.

JR: That was one of her last words, "I will survive." So what we did, we were like the high vis [visibility?] medical piece from Rhein-Main.

TS: Sure.

JR: We couldn't go out and goof around; we had to get it right, okay? Because the vis—I mean, all the people at Scott knew that you knew what you were doing, and they depended on you to put the right PR [public relations] light on what we were trying to do.

TS: What you're saying is that you couldn't go out and party hearty and make a nuisance of yourself?

JR: You had to maintain—You really had to maintain your integrity; you really had to.

TS: Off and on duty.

JR: Exactly. You really had to. Now, that doesn't mean you didn't have fun. Oh, yeah, you had fun. Oh, I went skiing in places; I'd never learned to ski before in my life. And you know what that's about, because down around Garmisch-Partenkirchen and down around in the Alps you learn to ski, and I learned to go cross-country. Not downhill, cross-country. And I thought, "I'm from Dublin."

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And you see this.

TS: Yeah.

JR: "I'm from Dublin, and I'm learning how to cross-country ski in the Alps." I loved it. And it was just worn out, cross-eyed tired. As a matter of fact, one of my friends from Hahn,

she and I went together, one of those Garten [Germany, meaning "garden"] Germany tours.

TS: Right.

JR: And that's how we learned to ski. We did—We took tours; overnight train to Paris. It was easy just to hop a train and go because that's what you did, and you know this because you saw that.

TS: Did you take as much opportunity to travel as you could?

JR: Every chance I could I did. Every chance I could.

TS: Because you weren't traveling on your job at all.

JR: No, never, ever.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: But what happened—All my neighbors were so good to me. I had a little rabbit at the time and they would babysit the rabbit for me. Everybody wanted to take Snickers over that weekend if I was going somewhere. I said, "Please." I could pick him up like a child whenever I came home from one of my missions. You couldn't help but love these people.

I remember so fluently, one night—and this was probably a little out of character because I don't really go to these places—but some of the pilots and the nurses were, like, on to me. They said, "Janice, come to the O [Officers'] Club tonight and let's go eat dinner."

I said, "Okay. That's fine."

"When you get home from the mission, come on to the O club. We're going to eat dinner and maybe we'll dance a little bit. We'll have a good time."

I said, "Okay. Let's do it." And I learned to dance. I did. And it was good—it was good stuff. None of us were doing anything obnoxious, but I learned to dance. And, Honey, I'm from peanut country. Here, you see this.

TS: They don't dance here?

JR: Well, not every day, no.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And here's what was kind of rewarding; it was fun. You'll probably appreciate this, Therese. When I was here, my father and my mother both kind of kept their eye on us so we never really did anything, never really got into trouble, never had a need to get in trouble. But we didn't go to places where they danced a lot. We just didn't do it, okay? We didn't have any kind of hang-ups.

TS: Right.

JR: There just was no real opportunity.

TS: Just wasn't on your radar screen.

JR: Exactly. So when I was in Germany I had—I was on my own, and these were very nice people, and we danced. We had a great time. And all of us, I think, were in a certain stage of innocence where nobody was really trying to scam anybody else. I remember one night we went to a place called Sachsenhausen, okay? Now, Sachsenhausen in Frankfurt is a very historically rich part of Frankfurt. It was not destroyed during the Allied bombing of World War II. But World War II, not all of Frankfurt was destroyed. Sachsenhausen was not destroyed and it's beautiful, okay? So once in a while a bunch of us would get in a couple cars and we'd go down to Sachsenhausen on Friday or Saturday night. And we were down there with all these German foreign nationals, and they would have bands and we would just have a nice time listening to bands and dancing and just enjoying life.

Now, another part of that was living in the Rhine Valley, as you appreciate. There are lots and lots of vineyards and they're gorgeous. Now, over here it is a different lifestyle. Over here people kind of take the wine thing with kind of a negative connotation. But the Germans don't see it like that. The Germans have an appreciation for the produce that their country is known for. They are dignified, by and large, in how they live their lives. And I think sometimes they probably looked at us, kind of, askance; kind of, like, "Crazy Americans. Why do you insist on getting drunk in public?" Well, we never did that, okay, because that was not how I grew up.

TS: But plenty of GIs did.

JR: Exactly, and then made utter fools of themselves. There was always that "Ugly American" stereotype that we never upheld, okay?

["Ugly American" is a derogatory term used to refer to perceptions of loud, arrogant, and ethnocentric behavior of American citizens abroad and at home]

But I remember so fluently having a chance to go to the wine tastings they had in various towns on Sunday afternoon, and different little towns would celebrate their orchard—their vineyards, and they would celebrate their wines being marketed. They'd be out in the street with a little oompah band, and we danced again, okay? It was fun. And you learned to do the "Chicken Dance." It was good for you.

TS: You want to sing that for us on tape? [chuckles]

JR: No, because people would run. [both chuckle] People would run holding their hands to their ears. But you learned to interact with the German people. I think that there's a part of that that—it makes your life richer because you understand what their economy's driven by, and you understand how they live. And nobody ever got silly. We enjoyed them.

TS: What did you think about the pace of, like, if you went into a restaurant?

JR: Oh, you took your time. It might be all night.

TS: Different than here.

JR: Exactly. You might bring the dog with you. He goes up under the table and has a seat; very well-behaved. They didn't care. There was a place called the Pig Farm outside of Frankfurt and we did all of our hail and farewells at the Pig Farm. They had tables similar to this and they obviously were partially outdoors.

["Hail and Farewells" are military events whereby those coming to and departing from an organization are celebrated]

TS: Long tables.

JR: Exactly. This is twelve feet.

TS: Okay.

JR: And you know they would have—they never had ice. They always had limeade, Coca-Cola. Never had caffeine, as you remember. You get the picture, I know you get the picture. Checkered tablecloths and they might bring you some Wienerschnitzel [thin, fried veal or pork] or Jägerschnitzel ["Hunter's Schnitzel," served with mushroom sauce], or whatever you really wanted, with a salad that might have cucumbers or tomatoes. It was relatively healthy. Huge portions. Huge portions, because the Germans—a lot of the agriculturally-oriented Germans were out in the field working. A lot of those older people were out in the field.

Which brings me back to a different point. See, when I was there in '83 to '85, a lot of the people who were in their sixties and seventies were kids during World War II. My landlord, for example, made it eloquently clear that part of the reason why he liked the air force, and the army, too, he said, "Janice, I was a child when [Adolph] Hitler [leader of the Nazi Party] was part of the Third Reich during the war." And he said, "Janice, they took me from my home and I had to work in a camp as a child. When the Allied Forces basically regained control of Germany," he said, "I didn't have to work in a work camp anymore." He said, "Now do you understand part of why I love Americans?"

I said, "Yes, I do." And that was amazing to me, Therese.

Here in peanut country we learned from a book, okay? In Germany I learned from the people. And he actually had been forced to work; he was forced labor during World War II. So you learn to appreciate the treatment, of why you were honored—basically honored as an active duty person in Germany, because we weren't there to make trouble; we were there to fly patients in and out.

I will never forget his mother-in-law was—she spoke no English. His wife was wonderful, but Tante Anna[?] was elderly; she was probably in her eighties at the time. Sometimes Peter would ask me, he says, "Janice if you ever get a chance to go to the commissary will you bring me some Breyer's Ice Cream?"

I said, "You mean you don't have Breyer's?"

"Janice. Janice, we love Breyer's."

I said, "What do you think?"

"I'd like some vanilla."

I said, "Okay, I'll bring you some vanilla." And it was nothing to bring them a half a gallon of ice cream, and they loved Breyer's, and if you brought them a different flavor they thought they had died. I said, "Yeah, I'll bring you some ice cream." And you realize the differences, and I'm sure you understand that.

TS: I definitely brought my landlord ice cream.

JR: They loved it.

TS: Cremora [non-dairy creamer] was the other thing he really liked.

JR: Well, I'd forgotten that. But I remember when I left to come home they gave me a farewell party, and there was very little English spoken. Didn't have to be, because they made a Black Forest cake for me and we had dinner together. And my neighbors who were the Germans on the second floor, shortly after I left the wife got killed in an accident. The autobahn was very, very busy and the Autobahn 5 ran right past the Frankfurt front gate, and she got killed on the Autobahn 5. That was part of the richness they added to my life. Not only was I busy trying to move people who needed to be moved, but we lived in a place we were valued as people, and valued for what we did.

Do you have any more questions about Germany?

TS: Did you want to say something more about the people who lived in your building?

JR: No, I think that's pretty much what needs to be said. There was a little girl named Eva, and I'm sure Eva's probably thirty-five, forty years old now.

TS: That was the one you babysat?

JR: Yeah. She came to my door, and she'll come to see me, and she said, "Do you have any bob-bons? [unclear] bon-bons?"

I said, "Yes. [unclear] bon-bons," and I'd give her some candy and she was happy with it.

She'd go running back downstairs, "Mommy, mommy, [unclear] bon-bons from the Amerikaner."

Yeah, I was the Amerikaner. I was their mascot Amerikaner.

TS: Was there any place that you enjoyed traveling to when you were in Germany?

JR: I enjoyed all of it.

TS: All of it; it didn't matter.

JR: I enjoyed all of it. I enjoyed Turkey; Turkey was fun. We would fly into Turkey twice a week and they would wait for us downtown. There was a little place outside of the gate of Adana, it was Incirlik Air Base; I-N-C-I-R-L-I-K. Incirlik Air Base was very friendly to Americans and we would stay downtown sometimes in a hotel in Incirlik, and I began to appreciate the fact that that was part of the Roman Empire. See, that—See, you appreciate that. You understand the language I'm speaking to you.

When I went into—When we would fly into Incirlik, this little strip mall, for lack of a better term, was right outside of the gate, and the rugs that you see came from there. Those lanterns in the boys' room—I'll show you the lanterns; they were made of brass and copper—came from Turkey. We would go downtown sometimes if there was no room on the base and stay, and we'd stay downtown in a hotel. The gentleman who owned that store would always make sure that we had a place and a good place to eat, okay? Now, of course, the base on orders took care of our hotel, that was easy, but the place to eat, he made it easy. He would make sure we had taxis to take us there, and once again, I learned to dance.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: Now, in Turkey we were a little more reserved because it was not quite as Westernized as other countries were. It still has a strong Muslim influence but it was considered a Westernized Muslim country. And it was amazing to me when we would go downtown sometimes and eat in these places and we would have, like, fish and lobster and different kinds of shellfish, and you picked up what you wanted. And there would be a huge room with a podium [unclear] have an organ, and there was a—just tables everywhere, and we would sit there and begin to eat our food. And the Turks, I'm not sure where this came from, they are fascinated with blonde hair; they really like blonde ladies. I think it's because most of the—most of their women are brunettes. So if we had any blonde crew members they would always make an excuse to come over and talk to the blonde crew members; they wanted to talk to them. And I remember thinking to myself, "That's amazing." And one night we were sitting there at this one particular place eating and this girl jumps up and she is going to sing for us, and this man's playing the organ.

TS: One of the people that you worked with?

JR: No, it was a foreign national.

TS: Okay.

JR: Turkish foreign national. These were all Turkish foreign nationals. So she begins to sing this song where she [unclear] a lot. We had no idea what she's singing. She could be singing anything, we—"Food's good, huh?" I remember watching—all these people got to their feet and they were just having a ball dancing. I remember thinking to myself, "They were having a good time. They actually know how to enjoy their lives." And then when we could tell there was a certain amount of energy in the room where they were—no one was in trouble, no one was doing anything that was not aesthetically pleasing, nobody was doing anything that was culturally criminal, they were just moving their feet to the organ. I thought to myself, "I get this."

TS: Dance is an international language.

JR: It really is. I think you learn to appreciate that more and more and more. So that's—

TS: It opened your eyes to a lot of different cultural—

JR: It did. It was wonderful.

TS: —episodes of language and—

JR: Absolutely.

TS: —food and—

JR: People.

TS: —culture.

JR: Culture, lifestyles, technology. Probably—And that was in the mid-eighties. You learned to adapt. You learned to overcome any kind of little obstacles. Their electrical system over there is 220 [volt], ours is 120 [the U.S. electrical system is based on 110 volts]; you learned to use these adapter boxes. You learned that you conserve your heat, because it's taxed to the hilt. You learned to tank up [get gasoline] on the base because it's outrageous off base. You learned how to use the autobahn system and how to get all over Germany. I mean, you learned that Autobahn 5 takes you going south. You learned—I learned how to get to Hahn Air Base, which I thought was gorgeous, because my friend, Diana, was a nurse at Hahn Hospital until they closed it.

Now that I'm thinking about it, you probably knew my friend Diana.

TS: I probably did not know her but it's because I worked offsite.

JR: I get that, but she was a nurse at the hospital.

TS: Yeah.

JR: We met at Eglin. She went to Germany as I went to Germany.

TS: Neat.

JR: You learned how to think in terms of kilometers, you learned to think in terms of metrics, and I think it was probably a very rich experience, as it taught me that the world's a lot bigger than where I came from.

TS: One thing I remember was we had to have these cups and it had to have a secure lid on it, and they had them in Germany like we have today where you just put your coffee in it and you could turn it upside down.

JR: Oh, yeah. You could.

TS: They had them there in the eighties, but they didn't have them when I came back here until however long it took. The idea of only the best things coming—ideas—from the United States, that world was altered when I realized really good things were made elsewhere in the world.

JR: You're exactly right. You are exactly right, and it's almost like they lived five to ten years ahead of us; it seemed that way.

TS: Something like that, yeah.

JR: It did, it did. Because their cars were reflective of that. A lot of my co-workers would bring home a new BMW [Bayerische Motoren Werke, or Bavarian Motor Works] because the exchange rate was very good.

TS: Right.

JR: It was like three [dollars] to one [dollar].

TS: We were there at the same time, so yeah.

JR: Deutsche marks. Deutsche marks were the thing, buddy.

TS: Oh, yeah.

JR: And there was, like, three to one as I remember. Close to three to one.

TS: Yeah, it was three to one.

JR: I thought it was. People bought BMWs, Mercedes, they brought them home and they were considered gray market at the time, but they had them customized so they were okay for their catalytic converter.

TS: Right.

JR: And they brought them home at a steal and that was something that—I guess if you wanted that, that's what you did. A lot of people bought things like shrunks. Shrunks, the great big wooden—

[A German shrunk is a type of tall furniture that can be a combination of cabinetry, shelving, drawings, and closets]

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: Those big stereo cabinet things. They were huge. There was a place—I won't say too much about it, it's not really relevant—I think some of these marketplaces that you saw, particularly around the army—the army had a lot of these little—they were like IKEAs; I-K-E-A.

TS: Yeah, IKEA.

JR: IKEA. IKEA was every day over there, okay? And when I came back to the states, IKEA was [unclear] like, "Oh, okay. It's new to y'all." And it's like IKEA was just every day in Germany. And that's how—that's a good parallel, now that you've said that, because you learned to realize that it's not always here, it's over there too, and it was fun to learn.

You'll appreciate this too, Therese, because Christmastime was beautiful; Christmas time was drop-dead beautiful. You cannot probably adequately take a photograph in your mind of the things that you see and taste and experience at Christmastime. The Chriskindlemarkts [Christmas markets] were all over the place and I know Hahn had one. Rhein-Main had a beautiful Christmas market, okay? It was in an airplane hangar, come on. But every vendor in that part of the world would come with their goods and services, and you would see things like these beautiful rugs and different kinds of—there were crafts and things that they made.

TS: Yes.

JR: Some of my friends and I, not only did we have a chance to go to Friedberg around Christmastime but we also took off and went over to Nuremberg. Aside from the fact that the Nuremberg trials took place in Nuremberg for obvious reasons, that's another historically rich place, as is Munich, and the closer you get to the Alps, okay?

[The Nuremberg trials were a series of military tribunals, held by the Allied forces after World War II, and were notable for the prosecution of prominent members of the political, military, judicial, and economic leadership of Nazi Germany who planned, carried out, or otherwise participated in the Holocaust and other war crimes.]

We—Diana from Hahn—my friend from Hahn—we took a side trip one day on a skiing trip and went to Dachau [concentration camp], and we did our one day "everybody should see this one time in their lives" trip to Dachau. I think that's probably—That would be intellectually helpful to anybody who studies history, okay, because you're not only reading "Arbeiten—" excuse me— "Arbeiten Machten Frei" [correction: Arbeit Macht Frei;" "work sets you free"] across the gate when you walk in, you see what was done to those people and it has truly helped me to appreciate the authenticity of what I saw versus what I knew from a book. And as you get older you really never forget that.

But back to the Christmas side of things, going to Nuremberg and seeing snowflakes at Christmastime leaves an indelible mark in your head.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And that was—as in comparison to bringing home those—the bombed marines in October of 1983 who were so appreciative of everything you did for them.

TS: Why don't you back up a little bit and explain what that was about?

JR: Okay, wonderful. I'd be happy to.

TS: That would be a good time to talk about that.

JR: When the marine barracks was bombed in October of 1983 I had a friend who was actually in the area on a Turkey mission and their airplane was diverted into Beirut to pick up those marines. They brought them into the air base at Rhein-Main and there was such competition for them, and I don't want to say a whole lot.

[The 1983 Beirut barracks bombings were terrorist attacks, specifically against United States and French service members, that occurred 23 October 1983, in Beirut, Lebanon, during the Lebanese Civil War when two bomb trucks struck separate buildings housing Multinational Force in Lebanon peacekeepers, killing 241 U.S. and 58 French peacekeepers, six civilians, and the two suicide attackers]

TS: Competition?

JR: For the patients.

TS: I don't know what you mean by that.

JR: The doctors from 97th General and the doctors from Wiesbaden wanted those patients. They were trauma patients.

TS: Okay.

JR: It was competition for them, to the point where there was a fistfight on the tarmac. And I remember so fluently going, "I wonder what will happen next?" Because that was the beginning of terrorism, okay? That was the beginning of it. Up till then I don't think we truly appreciated bombs, and it was scary.

TS: You mean directed at the United States?

JR: Exactly, exactly, exactly. Thank you for clarifying that. We had never—I didn't have any experience with that.

TS: You didn't actually fly over there but you were—

JR: I was present on the ground when they came in.

TS: When they came in.

JR: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

JR: Now, I was upgrading to the C-141 to fly as a flight nurse and within a week we moved those same marines to Andrews and I was on that same mission taking care of them. I had my instructor with me and we had fifty to sixty marines in the back of a 141, and we flew them from Rhein-Main to Andrews, because that was my job at that point in time; was to learn how to be a flight nurse in the 141. And that's an eight hour mission to Andrews.

TS: So do a transatlantic kind of flight.

JR: Exactly.

TS: A lot longer.

JR: Much longer. And very fatiguing.

TS: Sure.

JR: But it was good work. Good work.

TS: How many hours was the flight?

JR: Seven—seven to eight—because you're flying against the Gulf Stream. We put that airplane down at Andrews and the commandant from the Marine Corps came on board the 141 and pinned Purple Hearts on those marines. Oh, Therese, it was the most rewarding thing. Those gentlemen, everything you did for them was, "Thank you,

Ma'am." Everything. They are so disciplined, and they are so war-hardened that anything you did for them was of great importance to them because it was a favor. It was care; it was someone was concerned about them; it was medical care, and they got it. Oh boy, did they get it. We treated them like kings and queens.

TS: Was there any one of them that struck you; like, you have a memory of?

JR: Yeah, there were three of them. My job was to pick out three to go out and talk on the—in front of the airplane. They were pinned with their Purple Hearts and those little blue and white striped pajamas. Do you remember those? Little house robes, little—It was like seersucker.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Seersucker material. They had their heads all bandaged and they had their legs all swabbed and dressed, and part of them had their arms immobilized, part of them had splints on their legs because their legs were fractured. A lot of amputations, okay? A lot of head injuries. My job was to pick out the three.

Now, this was prior to Fox News; there was no Fox News then. It was all the big three: NBC [National Broadcasting Company], CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System, and ABC [American Broadcasting Company. Maybe CNN [Cable News Network], maybe. But all that press corps was sitting over there when that airplane taxied up and we stopped and turned their engines off. They went out to a sea of microphones and interviewed all the press—NBC, ABC, and CBS—and they had their Purple Hearts on. I'll never forget them.

TS: These three that you picked out?

JR: All fifty of those marines were pinned with a Purple Heart from the Commandant of the Marine Corps. That Marine Corps thing will make the little hairs on your arms stand up because each—to each one of those marines, the commandant—who's a four-star [general]—walks up and says, "Well done, son. Well done, son."

I didn't know them personally, but since I've come back from the States I've taken care of people who were in the Marine Corps during that time and I'd say, "You're in the Marines."

"Yes."

"I was in the Air Force."

"Really?"

I said, "I brought back the Marines from Beirut."

"You did?" And they go, "We study that in school now."

"What do you mean you study it?"

"Oh, Janice. Janice, Janice, Janice. That is, like, part of the Marine Corps indoctrination now." They said, "When you go into the Marine Corps they teach you this is where we made our mistakes. We're not doing this again."

And I go, "Really?" So they actually took lessons learned from that and they teach the marines now, "We're not doing that again," okay?

TS: When I talk to some nurses who were in Vietnam, especially, and they talk about helping the soldiers, they describe the same, "Yes, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am," sort of atmosphere.

JR: Wonderful people.

TS: But one of the things they said was they're patching them up sometimes to get them stabilized and sent somewhere else, sometimes longer care—

JR: It was. [unclear]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —but they don't always know their names.

JR: You didn't; you didn't know their names. You'd never see them again.

TS: Yeah. Do you wonder about some of them?

JR: Sure I do. All the time. One day I was [unclear] little local hospital and I was just working as a civilian, going to school at Duke, and there was a gentleman who was an EMT [Emergency Medical Technician] and he just happened to mention one day that he'd been in the Marine Corps. I said, "[unclear]." I said, "When were you in the Marine Corps?"

He said, "Oh, I was in Beirut." He said, "They brought me home from Beirut."

I said, "Did you get injured?"

"No, ma'am. I was one of the few that didn't get injured."

I said, "Really? I brought home your friends." And his eyes got big. I said, "Yeah, in the back of a 141." I said, "We brought them back to Jackson—[unclear] hospital in Jacksonville[?]. We went to Bethesda [Maryland; Walter Reed National Military Medical Center] because it's all navy. Those marines go to the navy facilities. And do you know the relationship between he and I was never the same from that point? It was like a blood sister and blood brother.

TS: Certain bond.

JR: It always is.

TS: Yeah.

JR: It's always like that. Every time I ever run into anybody who ever had an encounter with that chapter of time there is a bond of, "we took care of business." We took care of those marines.

As time went by, the other event that was very rewarding was the TWA [Trans World Airlines] mission with Robert Stethem and we were—

[Robert Dean Stethem was a United States Navy Seabee diver who was murdered by Hezbollah terrorists during the hijacking of TWA Flight 847, which occurred over a period of seventeen days in June 1985]

TS: That was '85?

JR: Yes, and that was in July of '85. We were sent to Damascus, Syria, to wait for those hostages to be released from that TWA flight which had been hijacked, and this was probably the second experience we had with—what I'll describe—and I say this with all chagrin—terrorism, okay? Because that plane was hijacked, and that airplane was moved from place to place to place as you know, and unfortunately Robert Stethem gave his life. He'd been in the navy.

But I remember waiting out on the tarmac in Damascus, Syria, and when they released those hostages there was a pastor in the back of that bus. I had to go out to the bus to talk to them and to welcome them back.

TS: You described to me earlier how you were sitting on the plane.

JR: Yes.

TS: And then the two busses came.

JR: Yes, pulled up. It was at one or two o'clock in the morning.

TS: Right.

JR: And I walked out to the bus because my job as second flight nurse was—the two flight nurses, that was the role of second flight nurse, was to go out there and to explain to them that we're fixing to load. We're going to take the litters first, then we'll take the ambulatory next, so this is where we're going to put you in various seats. We're going to feed you, we're going to keep you warm, comfortable; we're going to give your medicines; and we're going back to Germany tonight. And they cheered. [chuckles]

TS: Well, they probably weren't sure what was going to happen.

JR: I said, "We're going to Germany tonight."

TS: Yeah.

JR: There was a pastor from Asheville in the back of the bus. His name was Pastor Moon. M-double O-N. He stood up and he said, "I want to know where you're from."

And I said, "I'm from North Carolina."

TS: It's okay, Janice.

JR: He said, "I never thought I would ever see anybody from North Carolina again." He said, "I didn't think it was going to happen."

I said, "I can certainly understand that."

And I remember seeing on NBC news—really it was AFN [American Forces Network] for us over in Germany—there were these faces of these people that had been, like, representatives for these poor men who were being held hostage, and there was this one man that was real dark haired, he was like their spokesperson, and these terrorists would let him speak, okay? Versus the pilot and the copilot. This one man was, like, their spokesperson and you always saw this face and he was, like, the person that would say, "We're okay. They're not beating us. They are giving us a little bit of food and we're going to try to come home, and please do what these terrorists say because we're trying to stay alive." There he was looking at me.

TS: That was the pastor?

JR: The spokesperson. There he was, as close as I am to my chair, looking at me going, "Thank you." Over here was the pilot and the copilot. The gentleman whose name was [John L.] Tetrake. It was like James or Jim or Rob Tetrake; T-E-S-T-R-A-K-E. He was from St. Joseph, Missouri, and he was the pilot for the TWA flight, and there was his copilot.

I asked them, I said, "Are any of y'all hurt? Is anybody sick? Is there anything I need to do right now for you?"

"No, ma'am. Can we get on that airplane? Let's go. Let's go."

TS: [chuckles] They just wanted to go, right?

JR: Even the copilot had been stung by a bee. He says, "Not a problem. Let's go." [chuckles] I'll never forget it. Said, "I'm not worried. Let's go." And we marched[?], we got them off and got them on the airplane, got them all positioned, and I remember them sitting in these little trip seats—triple seats, we called them trip seats—and they were sitting there, like, "Thank you." They were so relieved. And I remember the crew we flew with was out of Charleston and the pilot—I don't want you to print this, okay? Do not put this in the transcript.

TS: Do you want me to pause it?

JR: Yes, pause it for just a second.

[Recording paused]

TS: Okay, we got that covered.

JR: Thank you. The pilots and the crew members were very, very accommodating and kind and professional to all these poor civilian people. We reassured them we would be in Germany in less than about six hours. So as we were buttoning up the aircraft, as we call it, and everybody was seated—we were all in our positions, we all have our checklists open and everybody was okay, we're ready to go—the airplane starts to taxi out and we knew what to expect, and suddenly the airplane came to a halt and it kind of snatched us around.

TS: Jolting you.

JR: Very much jolting me.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I remember looking at the loadmaster going, "What's this about?"
And he says [gestures].

TS: He said he didn't know?

JR: He didn't know. And it's like, next thing I knew they gunned that aircraft; gunned it straight up in the air. And I'm going, "This is not how you taxi a 141 off of a runway."
So as we got up to altitude—and of course everybody on the airplane knew this was strange, okay?

TS: Right.

JR: I got hold of the loadmaster, I said, "What's up with the pilot?"
He said, "Janice, he did not call for clearance." He said, "Janice, we didn't wait for the tower to release us. We left."
I said, "In Syrian airspace?"
"Yes, ma'am."
I said, "What if they decided they didn't like that?"
He said, "Oh, we were concerned about that."
I said, "Yeah."

TS: Oh, my goodness.

JR: So we gunned it out of Damascus, Syria, got up to altitude, and we were out of their airspace on our way to Germany. We got back to Rhein-Main Air Base.

TS: Was there any, like, announcement when you were over—

JR: The cheer when we got down to Germany.

TS: Yeah.

JR: They announced, "We're clearing into German airspace."

TS: There we go.

JR: And they cheered. They were so relieved.

TS: I can imagine, yeah.

JR: They were so relieved.

TS: Sure.

JR: And of course their job was to get over to the Flughafen and catch a flight as soon as they could get their flights coordinated back to the U.S. But do you know when we got there, George W. Bush—George H. W. Bush, number forty-one, was waiting for us when we got there.

TS: The vice-president?

JR: Came onboard the airplane and stood right here.

TS: Yeah. Right by the entryway?

JR: Right to the left entrance door, okay? Service door.

TS: To greet everyone?

JR: To greet everyone. President Bush was President Bush, okay? I don't know if you know much about President Bush. He was in the navy; he graduated from the Naval Academy as I remember, and he was a fighter pilot. Well, honey, he was in his element. [chuckles] I remember how impressed I was that he would come over to kind of re-greet these people, "Welcome back." And then, once again, every media person you ever thought about was out doing the rounds, "How was it? How was it?" I wasn't talking to people; I was tired. I just wanted to get these patients where they needed to be.

TS: Right. Doing your job. Finishing your mission.

JR: Exactly, exactly, exactly, Therese. And, Therese, it was so rewarding.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Because you felt like you made a contribution to somebody's life that day. So it was probably the best assignment of my entire career. From there I went to Andrews. Andrews was marvelous. I worked with a lot of VIPs [very important person]; worked with a lot of people who were VIPs, okay? From all walks of life there were VIPs. Learned a lot about critical care nursing.

TS: Were you a flight nurse there?

JR: No, I was in the hospital.

TS: Did you go back to cardi—No?

JR: ICU [Intensive Care Unit].

TS: ICU.

JR: ICU, Coronary Care.

TS: Okay.

JR: And then from Coronary Care and ICU went to management. Learned hematology, oncology, how to give chemotherapy. There I met Colonel Libby Ryan. Colonel Libby Ryan's from Hickory. Colonel Libby Ryan was a queen. She took me under her wing. Colonel Iris Vincent—

TS: Wait. Colonel Libby—

JR: Ryan.

TS: She was a queen?

JR: She was wonderful.

TS: Queen? Oh, queen.

JR: She was royalty in the air force.

TS: Oh, I see what you mean.

JR: She was wonderful. She was a full bird colonel [military slang for the rank of colonel, O-6] from Hickory.

TS: Okay.

JR: We were both North Carolina girls; we understood each other. Colonel Iris Vincent who'd been with me at Germany was there. She was from Raleigh. So the North Carolina contingency was intact. [both chuckle] Does that make sense to you?

TS: Well, now, right about this time, '85 through '88 at Andrews, so you're getting going on ten years, and somewhere along the line you must have married Mike.

JR: Eighty-seven.

TS: At the end of your Andrews tour. Okay. What are you thinking about a career and things like that? Are you thinking about it at all?

JR: Yeah, I did, because I was at the halfway mark, and people would ask me that sometimes and I'd go, "Well, it's good." I said, "As long as I'm doing the job and they're happy and I'm happy, I'm going to stay."

Of course, my father was back here going, "Janice, there are benefits to this, long term. You're halfway there; keep going."

So I left Andrews after a very educational tour. I got my master's there at Central Michigan [University], at night.

TS: Okay.

JR: Had a little house in Waldorf [Maryland?]. Just happy as a clam. Mike and I got married. We saw each other on the weekends, of course.

TS: Where was he stationed at?

JR: Dover. Flying C-5s [Lockheed C-5 Galaxy]. Then we had a chance to get orders; I had a chance to get orders for Dover. Now, it was one of those situations which you learn in the military that it may not be the optimal environment and I really, kind of, took a step in the wrong direction by going to Dover, because Dover had some unhappy people in it and I was not unhappy; I was a very happy person. But you learn how to deal with people who are unhappy. You minimize them, okay? And after a while, they will leave you alone. So I didn't bother them, and they learned not to bother me. We got along well.

TS: Were you assigned to the ICU again or someplace different?

JR: No, I worked in the emergency room.

TS: Okay.

JR: I worked in obstetrics and I worked—That's when I was deployed to the Persian Gulf.

TS: Out of Dover?

JR: Truthfully, it was a relief, okay? It was the funniest thing, Therese.

TS: Why was it a relief?

JR: Because they were unhappy.

TS: Oh.

JR: [laughing]

TS: It was one of those "it's good to get away" sort of things, even if it's a war zone. Okay.

JR: It was better in the war zone. Well, here's what happened. And this is—truthfully, probably this—probably does need to be documented. They were looking for people to—

TS: Who's they?

JR: Senior management at the hospital and Air Mobility Command.

TS: Okay.

JR: Air Mobility Command. And you're familiar with what I'm talking about. They were looking for people to form the first air transportable hospital to deploy to the Persian Gulf. AMC [Air Mobility Command] didn't have one and they were looking to form one. The word got out, "Does anybody really want to go to the Persian Gulf?"
I said, "I'll go."

TS: You volunteered?

JR: Oh, yeah. It was kind of—everybody took a step back, was going, "Oh, I don't want to do that. Oh, I've got a AFIT [Air Force Institute of Technology] assignment I'm applying for."

TS: A what assignment?

JR: AFIT.

TS: I'm not sure what that is.

JR: Air Force Institute of Technology, to get their master's degree paid for courtesy of the Air Force.

TS: Oh. They wanted to get their career things.

JR: Yeah, career, career.

TS: Okay.

JR: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

TS: I understand.

JR: They had a AFIT assignment they were hoping to work, okay? Or they had a different interest in something else. "Deployment."
"Oh, no, no, no, I can't be doing that."

TS: You raised your hand.

JR: Absolutely.

TS: Okay.

JR: Mike put me on a bus and we flew from Dover.

TS: A bus as in a—

JR: Blue bus; the blue busses. Remember those air force blue busses?

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: Remember those big, long busses?

TS: Yes.

JR: Yeah. We went through all the deployment checklists and all the deployment lines and I actually left by air and went to Germany en route to Saudi Arabia.

TS: Did Mike go too?

JR: No.

TS: Okay.

JR: No, no. he went on to Ramstein [Air Base, Germany]. We were actually dual-deployed.

TS: Okay.

JR: He went to Ramstein and—would you hit the button on that?

TS: Sure.

[Recording paused]

TS: Ok, go ahead, Janice.

JR: We flew from Dover to King Khalid Medical Center which was near Riyadh, and from Riyadh flew into Oman by [Lockheed] C-130 [Hercules], and it was hot, and it was scary, because none of us really knew whether we were going to come back or not. We—You

don't know. You really have no forecasting; there's no way to see the future because you have no idea what you're stepping into.

We actually relieved Seymour Johnson [Air Base] and their 4th Technical Fighter Wing Air Transportable Hospital. They were in a hangar and we actually relieved them to go further up into the theater.

TS: Okay.

JR: Because they were tactical and we were the air transportable AMC piece. We actually established a hospital in the—in the airplane hangar and we built it with plywood and rolls of paper. I'll give you a picture of that. I don't have an electronic picture. I'll give it to you.

TS: Oh, okay. That would be great.

JR: I have very fond memories of the six months where we practiced, and we drilled, and we built, and we planned for a war that never really came.

TS: But you didn't know that.

JR: No, we had no clue.

TS: Right.

JR: And Saddam Hussein, being in the tenuous position he was in, where he was basically outnumbered and outflanked—the story is pretty much its own story now [unclear] it went well. A hundred days and that was it. I think during that time it was a great opportunity to learn. Mike was flying C-5s at the time, and what I wanted to inject was a chance for him to tell you what he did because you'll appreciate what he was doing, if you don't mind putting it on hold because he was going to come tell you.

TS: Oh, okay. But before he comes in we can still talk.

JR: Yes, yes.

TS: Tell me about the conditions that you lived in.

JR: Oh, yeah. [chuckles]

TS: Where were you at?

JR: We were in Thumrait, Oman [Royal Air Force of Oman Thumrait Air Base]. We lived in tents. I was a company grade officer at the time so we didn't have the field grade officer quarters. They actually had nicer quarters. I was happy for them. We lived in tents, we had wonderful air-conditioning. Oh, my heavens.

TS: I was going to ask if you had air-conditioning.

JR: We had air-conditioning; it was wonderful. We lived—We slept on cots with plywood under the [unclear].

TS: Who was in the tent with you?

JR: I had other doctors, other nurses.

TS: Male and female?

JR: Yeah—No, all female.

TS: Mixed?

JR: All female, all female.

TS: All female.

JR: Yeah, all female. We didn't really mix. We had the boy tents and the girl tents, okay? We had corresponding shower facilities, but you had to walk about fifty to a hundred yards to get to a shower. It was all plywood; we all lived in plywood. We all ate at the same place. We were—We never really had to eat the MREs [Meal, Ready-to-Eat]. We actually had a kitchen and it was wonderful to have a kitchen. They did wonderful things with the most basic of essentials, and you loved them because the food was everything they could possibly make it for you.

TS: What kind of food did you get?

JR: Oh, just—They would have roast beef and different kinds of chicken and as many fresh vegetables as they could humanly get. A lot of it was out of can, but you're glad to see a can. You're glad to see green beans.

TS: It's not a MRE. [chuckles]

JR: Yeah. Thank you. Because MREs will just pull you down; they're so calorie laden. And no matter—You walked everywhere so it didn't really matter. It was always a hundred and ten degrees. With the MREs, for people who are forced to eat Meals, Ready to Eat, you really do learn that they are—There's not much to work with, okay?

TS: Yeah.

JR: So you learn to appreciate the niceties of life.

TS: The niceties. All right, I'm going to pause for a second.

[Recording paused]

TS: Okay, we have a guest speaker joining us. [chuckles] We've got Mike Ryckeley [MR] here. You both were deployed, but you're a C-5 pilot during the Gulf War.

MR: That is correct. I had a—Actually, when Janice was being deployed I was working at the Dover Air Force Base Command Post. My job was the senior air lift controller and I had the dubious distinction of making sure that the airplane that she was leaving on took off on time.

TS: Okay.

MR: And I didn't know where she was going.

TS: How did you feel about that?

MR: [chuckles] Well, I had a job to do. So did she. And didn't know when she was—Well, obviously I was not happy because I didn't know if or when she would come back.

TS: Right.

MR: So I made sure that the plane was mission-capable, that the load was being loaded on time, and I was actually able to go down to the hangar where she was, with her M16 [rifle].

TS: You had an M16, Janice?

MR: Yeah.

TS: You can talk too while he's talking. It's okay.

JR: This is his show.

TS: Okay.

JR: And I was able to get it and give her a hug and a kiss.

TS: Yeah.

MR: And I had—And she had open-ended orders, no destination.

TS: Oh, so you didn't know at all—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: We didn't know.

TS: —where you guys were going.

MR: No destination, no return time at all. And then while she was gone my squadron came down with the requirement for two people to deploy overseas for at least two months to Incirlik Air Base. No, excuse me.

JR: Ramstein.

MR: No, it was Torrejón [Air Base].

JR: Torrejón. I'm sorry.

MR: Torrejón. I apologize. Torrejón.

TS: Where was that at? Spain?

MR: In Spain.

TS: Spain. Okay.

MR: Torrejón, Spain, as a airlift controller; they call them stage managers. The airplanes would come in—the C5s would come in fully loaded and basically it was like a tag team. We'd have crews and crew reps[?] and the airplane would be coming in and the crew that brought it in would meet the crew going out, and they'd take the airplane all the way down to Saudi Arabia, quick turn, come back through and get another crew, and it was just like a relay team like you would see in a track event.

TS: Just kept that plane moving.

MR: So the requirement came down for two people to go to Torrejón and I just raised my hand. I said, "My wife's already gone, why split up another family? I'll go ahead and take the place for two weeks—I mean, two months."

TS: Two months.

MR: Two months, sorry about that. And so, I went ahead and went over there and I was a stage manager for the air crews.

TS: What part of the build-up was that at that you went in? Ninety? Was it '90?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MR: It was—

JR: Yes.

MR: Was it—Yeah, it was '90, '91.

TS: Like the fall—

JR: January of '91.

MR: January of '91.

TS: Just before the air war started.

MR: Right.

TS: Okay.

MS: So we were just moving stuff in. And then when I came back, actually I was able to see her one time.

TS: Oh, you did?

JR: He flew to Thumrait[?].

TS: Yeah?

MR: I caught a couple hops.

[Space Available Flight, more commonly referred to as Space-A travel or military hops, is a privilege afforded to military service members, their families, and service retirees, The system accommodates these passengers by letting them fill seats on Air Force air transport flights that would otherwise be left empty]

TS: Yeah.

JR: And took a couple days of leave and was able to hop a couple planes. Got to see her. Was it deuce and a half [2.5 ton 6x6 U.S. Army cargo truck] you were driving?

JR: Yes.

TS: [chuckles]. Yeah. You drove out to see him?

MR: Yeah, stayed for a day and then came back and—

TS: Well, this was really the first war that men and women were married that they both went to and deployed.

MR: Yes.

JR: We didn't have kids at the time.

TS: Right, you didn't. Many people did, but still being married and not knowing where she was going at first must have been nerve-wracking.

JR: He was—What Mike has kind of underplayed here is Mike's knowledge of airlift. He always took the less visible jobs, where the work was actually done. Mike always took the work knowledge heavy jobs. When we were deployed and he was actually—He kind of cleared it with his boss, he said, "I'm going to disappear for about a week."
He says, "Fine. We'll see you when you get back."
He hopped a C-130 and he came down to Thumrait to see me and stayed for about a day and a half and then had to catch a C-130 back.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And came back to Dover.

JR: We have pictures. I'll show you the pictures of it. It was wonderful to see him.

TS: It'd be good to see it, yeah.

JR: I never thought I'd see him again.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I never thought I'd see him again. But, see, we lived in a world then where we were working out of a airplane hangar, and every morning that I would hear the engines of that C-5—which has a distinct sound to it—come in in the wee hours of the morning. They'd bring our mail and they'd bring our care packages. They brought me Mike, okay?

MR: The air crews would—

TS: Oh, you came in with the mail? [all chuckle] That's very romantic, Mike.

MR: Yes.

JR: It was. It was. We thought it was wonderful.

MR: You'd get care packages from the states.

JR: Oh, yeah.

MR: And they'd go, "Please take this. Please take this," and it'd, kind of, be an informal mail delivery system.

JR: It was wonderful, Therese. Therese, there was a group of Avon [Products, Inc.] salesmen—women—in the Greensboro area—

TS: Yeah.

JR: —who made us care packages from Greensboro and sent them to us. I wrote them a thank you note. I never met them, I never saw them, but I want it known.

TS: How did they did they address it?

JR: It was from a whole bunch of ladies who sold Avon in the Greensboro area; they made us a care package.

MR: And some of the packages would be to any soldier.

TS: Right. I was wondering about that because I've read about the different ways that people sent things.

JR: And they'd send you the most wonderful things, like, it might be Lance crackers, it might be a bunch of Ritz crackers, it might be socks, it might be personal items. I mean, you were so glad to see it you didn't care. You were just glad—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Was there anything that you missed having?

JR: Most everything. [chuckles] Because this little BX [base exchange] we had was about the size of that tool shed out there.

TS: Yeah.

JR: But I mostly—I missed Mike, and he would write me. He would write me letters and he would tell me how things were in Germany or how things were in Torrejón, and how things were in— You went to Incirlik [Turkey], too, didn't you?

MR: Yeah, that's why I—I did—It was two months at Torrejón and then I think it was five weeks at—

TS: Ramstein?

MR: It was Ramstein. It was Ramstein. And I also did a couple weeks down at Incirlik as well.

JR: See, we were both married with no kids.

TS: Right.

JR: So we had the autonomy that he could go wherever the air force needed him to go, which served him well, because when we came back from serving and we basically re-met back at Dover, within months he had orders to go teach how to fly; teach other C-5 pilots at Altus, okay? So we went to Altus Air Base [Oklahoma] for three and a half years and that's where Christian came along.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: So now we've got Christian, Mike's now a C-5 instructor, I'm working at the hospital. It wasn't a big deal; it was a good hospital; it was a good assignment. Altus was a wonderful place to work. We had probably the best-kept secret in the air force.

TS: I never heard of Altus in Oklahoma. I'd never heard of it.

MS: It's extremely—It's a small base. The community's very tight-knit, and it's in the southwest corner; right basically on the border down there between Oklahoma and Texas.

JR: [unclear] Amarillo.

TS: Oh, I've been to Amarillo.

JR: Oh, you know how far out that is.

MR: But the—It was a good assignment. And actually she got orders when I was overseas with all this operation going on—

TS: Right.

MR: —and then I just sent word back. I talked to Janice, I said, "Just tell my squadron commander that I'm volunteering to go to Altus." Not a lot of instructor pilots want to go there.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: See?

MR: Because it's in the middle of nowhere, really.

TS: Right.

JR: It was considered hardship duty.

TS: I see.

JR: It really was. But Mike said, "I want to teach." Well, they were loving that because, once again, it was hard to recruit to Altus and people would cry and they would complain; "Oh, I've got to go to Oklahoma."

I said, "We're going together. We don't care." And we were delighted. And we met some of the most wonderful people there who were very helpful to us in the years to come.

TS: How was the housing there?

MR: How was what?

TS: The housing.

MR: We were fortunate enough to be able to stay off base. We found a nice ranch rental and did that, and being in the middle of it we just made it a—every weekend we'd fill up the gas tank and we would go to Wichita Falls, Dallas-Fort Worth. We went antiquing; good antiques out there, you just had to find them. And made the best of it. So we had a good time.

JR: That was a wonderful time. Christian was born there. I told Mike when we came back from the Persian Gulf War, "I said, 'I'm ready to be a parent and settle down.'" And we—And Christian was born in June of 1994 out there and we just thought we'd died. Had this little red-haired baby with a curl on the back of his head, and every place we went this child went with us. Both of these children, everywhere we'd go they'd go with us; we don't get babysitters.

And Mike did well there. I did well. We loved Oklahoma, but after about three and a half years that's enough of Oklahoma.

TS: Was it? [chuckles]

JR: Don't you agree?

MR: Yeah.

JR: So Mike went to Scott [Air Force Base].

TS: Okay.

JR: And fortunately for us the same people who were in Oklahoma were at Scott.

TS: Okay.

JR: So now Mike has the distinction of everybody knows that he's done the real work jobs, okay? He was the one who literally watched the stuff, just like you watched the stuff. He didn't have the high vis [visual] pretty boy jobs, but he went to TACC.

MR: Tanker Airlift Control Center.

JR: At Scott.

TS: Okay.

JR: Which is where the barrel masters live, and the barrel master is responsible for certain portions of the world.

MR: I was on the eastern side of the world coordinating and delegating filling airlift missions, from presidential-down support, in essence.

JR: Tell them how many hours you used to work.

MR: Well, we had so many conflicts and the president was flying so much.

TS: Was this between '95 and '98?

JR: Yes.

TS: Okay.

MR: Thereabouts. One particular month that was really heavy-handed was three hundred and twenty hours for that month. The president at the time, when he decided to go to South America, ended up with all available C-5 aircraft tasked for his support—I think it was—I don't know what the number was—except for training, and we had double air refueling out of Washington, DC, down to South America and I was in charge. I basically was coordinating—

TS: All those planes.

JR: He did. He did.

MR: Make sure it happened.

TS: Yeah.

JR: So every time the president flew somewhere he was the one [unclear].

MR: Well, we got to tasking down[?] and we had to make sure it was still—obviously.

JR: But this was the behind the scenes work that nobody in the civilian world really understands; that every time the president flies there's a fleet of mobility assets that precede him and come along behind him. It probably sucks—[to MR] would you say?—20% of the resources.

MR: I can't put a number on it, to tell you the truth.

JR: It's huge.

TS: Yeah.

MR: I've hauled his Secret Service—When I was flying a C-5 I was hauling his Secret Service vehicles; the com [communication?] vehicles that they have, etcetera.

TS: Right. Getting everything set up.

MR: Yeah.

JR: Very responsible. And then we learned how to spell the word 3rd MEF [III MEF]—MEF—the Marine Expeditionary Force. True?

MR: Yeah. Let's not go into too much detail on that because—

JR: I won't. He became close friends with the 3rd MEF, okay?

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

JR: It was a very low profile, very dark, black—almost black kind of work because it made the world turn. It kept people alive; it kept the mission going; and he was very much an undersung hero, okay?

MR: What was very satisfying is when I was flying the C-5 during Shield/Storm—

TS: Right.

MR: —Operation Desert Shield/Storm—is I was able to, at Dhahran [Saudi Arabia], land a fully—land a C-5 with a Patriot missile battery, which took up most of the cargo [unclear] of the airplane, and they drove it straight off into the desert.

TS: Right off the back.

MR: Ready—Yeah.

TS: Ready to roll.

MR: Ready to roll. They rolled it out and went in there and said, "We're ready."

JR: "We'll see you later." And that's not all of it, Therese. I'm proud of him because there were things—

TS: That's easy to see, Janice.

JR: It is. I'm real proud of him.

TS: Mike's over here with his head half down, like, "Quit talking about me."

JR: He won't tell you about it if you ask him a question. I tell you that's not all he did, this ain't the half of it.

TS: Well, when we're done we can turn the tape off and you can tell me all about it. How's that?

JR: Cool. Make sure you get this part, okay? He didn't tell you about how he landed the C-5 on a dirt runway to get it done in Saudi Arabia. So I want that annotated for the sake of history that Mike Ryckley landed a C-5, delivered the goods, and got it done and left.

MR: It wasn't a dirt runway.

JR: What was it?

MR: It was ten miles south of the bad guys.

JR: Yeah.

MR: And before we took off out of Germany the full colonel looked at me, I says, "We tried three times to get this radar in to this airbase."

JR: Yeah, I know that.

MR: He says, "It's got to get there. Do you understand?"
I said, "Yes, sir."

JR: And?

MR: We came up—Well, the rain and the lightning and the wind conditions, etcetera, were quite challenging and I can't say how we landed the airplane, on tape.

TS: [chuckles] But you got it down.

JR: Yes, he did.

TS: Okay.

MR: But we got the radar in there, and then about two days later the air—the air campaign kicked off.

TS: So that's one of the reasons they needed it.

MR: And that's why it had to get there.

TS: Yeah. Gotcha. No matter what the weather was.

MR: No matter what. He says, "It has to get there now," so.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And you need to remember that this was during the administration when George Bush was President, okay, so there was a different mindset—

TS: H.W.

JR: Ma'am?

TS: H. W., right?

JR: H.W.

TS: Yes.

JR: Forty-one. When number forty-one was president there was a different climate then because you did what you needed to do to get the job done, okay? And it was rewarding because you knew whatever you did was going to tag-team with somebody else and it was going to the front lines, okay?

I had the opportunity to send word to a friend of mine who was with me in Thumrait during that time, and I said, "Frank, do you remember the C-130 crews that we taught, that if we didn't have—" There would be no nurses or doctors on those airplanes. It would just C-130 air crew, right? This one.

TS: Yes.

JR: I said, "Do you remember how we gave them these classes, that while the pilots fly—" there'd be two pilots at the front—there'll be at least one loadmaster and one flight engineer maybe in the back, and if they start picking up people we told them how to maintain airways, how to hold pressure, how to run the IVs, and how to keep people alive

and breathing with circulation so they could put down in Thumrait. He does remember. Okay?

TS: Yes.

JR: And the lady who's the dean of the school of nursing at Duke, I copied her on that email. I said, "Let me introduce you to Frank Titch." He's chief of the CRNA [Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists] program at Duke." I said, "I want to make sure that you know who Frank Titch is. That's Major Frank Titch you're talking to."

TS: I'm going to pause so Mike can go because he looks nervous. [chuckles]

[Recording paused]

TS: Okay, Janice. Well, we're back. We had a little side trip finding out some fun things from Mike there. But one of the things he was talking about is when you were deployed. Thumrait?

JR: Thumrait.

TS: Thumrait in Oman.

JR: Yes.

TS: He sent you some things overseas while you were there. You want to talk about the kind of care packages and things that you got?

JR: Yes. They were fabulous. People—Mike and neighbors and people that I didn't even know sent the most marvelous care packages. It was wonderful to get things; like, just basic body care, personal care items. It was wonderful to get underclothes and to receive a bag of candy or a sack of peanuts, or it might be a book. It might be several books. It might be just hard candy that people would choose to send to us. It was the kind of thing that you lived for, and every day whenever the C-5 or the C-130 or whatever brought in the huge sacks of mail, when they brought these care packages, they would have roll call over where the mailboxes were and everybody would go and stand and they would wait for their mail. And you hoped that you would get mail. And when you got mail you thought Christmas had happened all over again; it was wonderful to get a—even a letter from home. To get a letter and a package, well, you just felt like you'd cashed in the lottery that day.

TS: That's right.

JR: It was marvelous, and we looked forward to it. I want people to know how very, very much people who are deployed appreciate those things. It stuck with us for a long time,

and even when Mike and I came home and we retired we took it very seriously during the Iraq War that our Sunday School class did that for people and I think we probably sent—Mike, did we send fifty to a hundred packages to Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan? I knew it was between fifty and a hundred.

TS: Yeah.

MR: About fifty all total.

JR: Yeah. It was a lot of them. To Afghanistan and Iraq.

TS: Very nice.

MR: We located people who were at point[?]

JR: Yeah. By name and not by name.

TS: Oh, you did? Okay.

JR: Oh, yes.

TS: You actually addressed it to their name?

MR: Some of them, but the other half we were able to connect with Fort Bragg on deploying unit, and it took a little legwork to find the right point of contact. The best thing to do is go through the chaplain.

JR: Yes. They're valuable.

MR: The chaplain. They have their finger on things, and I think that the last time a package was sent over it went through the chaplain.

JR: We did.

MR: And say, "Here."

JR: That worked the best. And do you know, our Sunday School class received a flag that had been flown over one of the—one of the four deployed units.

TS: The FOBS [forward operating base] or something?

JR: It was a FOB. And it was a U.S. flag that had been flown and we had it mounted and framed and it has a little brass plaque.

TS: Oh, how nice. Very nice.

MR: And they had not only the flag but also had—

TS: The unit.

MR: This flag was flown over—

TS: FOB whatever it was.

JR: Yes.

TS: That's really neat.

MR: Forward operating base.

JR: And there was a letter attached, and the letter said to tell members of the Sunday School class how much they appreciated getting their packages. And I think that was a very cohesive thing for our Sunday School class because there were people who wanted to do something but they didn't know what to do.

TS: Right.

JR: And when we made those packages we'd send out for maybe twelve pizzas and after church we'd have these box packing parties. And Mike orchestrated it where they would get all these different little items that he knew that the soldiers and the airmen and the marines would use and they just had a packing party. It was a pure process of mind[?], it was.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MR: [unclear] pizza at the church and all that.

JR: It was wonderful.

TS: Just put it all together like a little assembly line.

JR: It was, it was.

MR: A little assembly line, and Janice has her military contacts and I have mine, and so we knew how to reach out the right places to go to, to find who to contact to get the packages over there.

TS: Well, that's really great.

JR: It was fun.

TS: Well, since you're still here you can tell about your food saver. Go ahead and tell us. When you were sending little care packages to Janice, what did you do?

MR: Okay. Well, of course you don't want to send a big, bulky box over there, but as far as towels and washcloths, etcetera, I used a FoodSaver and stuffed the bags with the towels and the washcloths and then sucked the air out and made it more compact. Now, another thing which was helpful is if you ship any liquids—soap, liquid soap, shampoo, whatever, hand lotion, etcetera—you don't want that stuff to break out in the box and contaminate everything else you have, so I went ahead and used the FoodSaver to make it air-tight, liquid-proof, so to speak, so it wouldn't leak. So that's what we did, we used a FoodSaver.

TS: That was a great idea.

MR: Sealed everything up.

TS: Yeah.

MR: And we—sometimes the box comes halfway mangled on the other side so you don't know what you're going to end up with when you open it up, as far as liquids.

TS: Right. That's right.

MR: It worked out good. We still have it.

TS: I see that.

MR: Since 1991.

TS: [chuckles] It was a great buy.

MR: Yes. It works good.

TS: That's good.

JR: [unclear]

TS: Oh, okay. You're showing me a big poster, a big picture frame.

JR: This is what it looked like, okay?

TS: Okay. Describe what it is that you're showing me for the transcriber.

JR: Oh, ok. All right. Can you hold it for me so I can see it?

TS: Okay.

JR: All right. This was literally Mike coming to see us. You can see the plywood building. These were the people I worked with. This was Colonel Sach[?] from Little Rock, Arkansas. There's me.

TS: Which one's you?

JR: Right here.

TS: Okay.

JR: And two of my co-workers. There's Rita and I've forgotten her name; lovely girl.

TS: Okay.

JR: This is my friend Frank who's now the chief of anesthesia at Duke, CRNA.

TS: Is he the one who made this for you?

JR: No, I did.

TS: You made this one.

JR: In Oklahoma. There's Mike again.

TS: Okay.

JR: See the tents and the plywood? This was nearby. The war was—

TS: It's a picture of a camel.

JR: Yes. And a little boy. A little Saudi foreign national riding a camel.

TS: Nice.

JR: And this was actually the palms on the plantation where the sultan of Oman lived.

TS: Okay.

JR: It was a date palm.

MR: Tell her about the nomads.

JR: Yeah, these were the nomads.

TS: The nomads with the camel.

MR: You went over there and you kind of broke bread with them. You had—

JR: It was actually at his house. We sat on the floor.

TS: Did you do that for an official event?

JR: No. It was get out and learn the Empty Quarter [unclear], so.

[The "Empty Quarter is the largest contiguous sand desert in the world, encompassing most of the southern third of the Arabian Peninsula]

TS: Oh, okay. Was this before anything went down?

JR: This was after.

TS: After, okay.

JR: This was actually the Rub' al Khali.

TS: Okay.

JR: As you know, as smart as you are, the Rub' al Khali is the Empty Quarter for the desert of Saudi Arabia.

TS: Okay.

JR: And the Rub' al Khali is pretty high and pretty dry. I'd never seen anything like it in my life. We were invited to these—the people who were in the Royal Air Force assigned with us at Thumrait, they knew where these places were and they took us to visit these Bedouins [a nomadic Arab of the desert].

TS: Okay.

JR: And they lived in these little concrete cinderblock houses. And they invited us to come in and to drink tea.

TS: Okay.

JR: In these little pottery cups. Oh, Therese, I don't know if those pottery cups had seen water in a long time. [both chuckle]

TS: You don't think it was that clean.

JR: I don't know; I don't know that it was but we didn't—none of us got sick.

TS: Oh, okay. That's good.

JR: And they were very, very hospitable to us. And it is absolutely true that the Bedouin culture, they will give you the shirt off of their back, but after three days it's time to go. [both laugh] So this is just little pieces of memorabilia that I want to keep.

TS: Yeah. It's a beautiful frame with all that stuff. That's really pretty.

JR: It's a little loose.

TS: It's very nice.

JR: I want to keep it, kind of, in a perspective.

TS: It's great. The yellow ribbons and the little—

JR: Yes, ma'am. People sent us those in the care packages.

TS: Oh, okay.

JR: See those little flags and the yellow ribbons and the little wreathes? Those were part of the care packages people would send to us—those little memorabilia and souvenir things—and I chose to keep it. And that was probably the best way I could keep it together.

TS: It's a great way to put it. And I see that you have an air force commendation medal in here.

JR: Yes, ma'am, it was[?].

TS: And is that for the time—

JR: Yes, ma'am.

TS: that you were in—

JR: Yes, ma'am, it was.

TS: —Oman? Okay.

JR: So that just kind of adds a little visual context to it.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: It's great to see it.

JR: So—

TS: Pieces like that.

MR: You saw Job's tomb.

JR: Oh, yeah. That was fabulous.

TS: What did you see?

JR: Job's tomb, in the Bible.

TS: Oh. Okay.

JR: The Brits who lived there [unclear] British Empire, British [unclear], they had a lot of local knowledge and they were very helpful to us. They were always teasing us about being Americans. They said, "We know how you Americans are." They said, "First chance you get you'll break away to make your own country." Teases, just being teases.

TS: Sure.

JR: And they pointed us to the fact that not far from where our camp was at Thumrait, that there was a road, a intersection of the road about—maybe ten miles, and they said, "If you look on the map, the references to Massah and Maribeh, and that's M-A-R-I-B-E-H and Massah, M-A-S-S-A-H, I think it is. Massah and Maribeh are documented in the Old Testament in Exodus, chapter seventeen, where it says that Moses led the Israelites through the desert for so many days.

TS: Right.

JR: And at some point in time they had a little conflict and he took the staff and he struck a rock and it gave water. They said, "Well, Janice, guess what? Ten miles up the road the road says 'Massah-Maribeh' and there is a rock and it gives water."

And I was enamored with it. I thought, "How fascinating." But I never really got a chance to see it because I tried to stay at the camp and let everybody else go, trying to be the good officer and kind of keep the place running. "Y'all go see it. Make me some good pictures; I want to see it." I never really got a chance to visualize it.

What I did see was on a separate road trip when I was on the—with friends from the Royal Air Force, not only do they invite us into their homes, they would take us by car down to the beach, and one day we were going down through this wadi, which is a riverbed in the mountains, and you could see the Bedouins; the encampments. As we were going down the road through the wadi, I looked and there was a road sign that was written in Arabic. I couldn't read Arabic. But it said "Job's Tomb"—

TS: Okay.

JR: —in English. I said—And the man who was driving the car was a major in the RAF, he says, "You want to see it?"

I said, "Yes, I'd love to see it." He pulled in just in time for us to witness all these Muslim people were having a prayer; it was prayer time; I would not bother them. But there it was with Job—J-O-B—out of the Old Testament. His burial ground. My, oh, my, this is picking up.

And I think the third most interesting thing out of that visit was we went down to Salalah, which was the beach town I just mentioned to you. There was an old castle ruin overlooking the water. Historically, it was attributed to the Queen of Sheba, okay?

TS: Okay.

JR: That was her home there in Salalah—S-A-L-A-L-A-H—Salalah, okay? And Salalah's kind of like a third world Ocean Isle [referring to Ocean Isle, North Carolina], you could say.

TS: Okay.

JR: Maybe a Chery Grove, maybe a Holden Beach [North Carolina coastal locations]. It's not Myrtle [Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.], but it's beautiful on the Arabian Sea. So for us it was a treat after the war was—when they were done finished shooting, it was a treat for us to have a chance to go see those kinds of things. So historically, between seeing Job's tomb, between witnessing Massah and Maribeh, and then having a chance to see the city where the Queen of Sheba had lived, I thought I had hit the lottery.

TS: I bet.

JR: I did; I really did. Historically and biblically I thought, "It doesn't get any better than this."

TS: Right.

JR: So where would you like to take this conversation?

TS: Well, we got to Scott Air Force Base, and what was your job at Scott?

JR: I was a flight nurse once again for the C-9s and I worked at the Global Patient Movement Requirement Center, which was a joint activity, but it was joint in its infancy. They had a little patient movement operation there where we were moving army, air force, navy and marines wherever they needed to be, and our job was to build the computer systems and to make the patient movement piece happen on all these different airplanes all over the world. Now, out of that became—this is one of those non-traditional nurse opportunities. The air force does that for you. It'll get you out of that traditional role into a world where

you're actually using systems and software and satellites, which is why I recommend it for everybody.

The software build was called TRAC2ES [TRANSCOM Regulating and Command & Control Evacuation System] and we actually replaced this thing called—It wasn't GDSS, it was another—it was a piece of software called EDS. EDS. And [unclear] stop for a second?

TS: It's okay what it stands for.

JR: The gentleman who was running for president about twenty years ago.

TS: Perot?

JR: Ross Perot. It belonged to Ross Perot. Ross Perot's company built this EDS system, and it was a legacy system so we had to go in and design something that would go joint—that would not be DOS [disk operating system] or DOS-based—

TS: Right.

JR: —into a web-based system where anybody, anywhere could access the internet, access the software and move patients from Point A to B to C to D; to get on the phone, the far side of Saudi Arabia to Andrews.

TS: Okay.

JR: Etcetera, etcetera. The challenge behind that was they had a nurse to come do it and they had a lot of people working together once—it was a teamwork thing. And we had to go in and pick out a contractor, who turned out to be Booz Allen out of McLean, Virginia, who did a wonderful job, and I encourage people to look on the internet and look up TRAC2ES. It's spelled T-R-A-C-2-E-S, okay? And that's a marvel; that's a testimony to the people who do work on behalf of active duty reserve and guard members, when it comes to looking out for their clinical care and their patient movement. That piece is like the trophy, literally, for patient movement and we worked on that piece of software. It had kind of flipped and flopped and done a lot of nothing for several years and we got called in to kind of be the SWAT team to clean it up.

TS: Sure.

JR: I was very honored to be called in.

TS: To be able to do that.

JR: Absolutely. To be called in to do it. Thus, when Mike and I left Scott and went to Langley [Air Force Base, Virginia] he was on the SWAT team to make ACC [Air Combat Command] talk to AMC [Air Mobility Command], okay?

TS: I see.

JR: And what we were really doing, which you'll appreciate, Therese, is in the area of operations, okay? In the theater and the airspace, up till now fighters could not talk to heavy air lift, not even the tankers. And they would loiter; the tankers would loiter in the airspace waiting for the fighters to come up. They might have radio contact but they had no visual contact of where these tankers were, which was abysmal.

And what happened, Mike got called in after doing all his, what I'll call "grunt work" at other places because he knew how to make that happen. They hired Mike to go to AC2ISRC, which stood for Aerospace Command and Control & Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center, under General John Jumper, okay? Once again, he was, like, the lead man for the air force and he said, "Fix it." So Mike made it very easy for the fighters to begin to talk to the combat—to the mobility systems.

TS: Right.

JR: They modeled it after American Airlines and Delta Airlines. American has a command and control system down in Dallas-Fort Worth that is the envy of the world. Not to be confused with Delta, okay? Delta's sitting there in Atlanta. They have computer systems that the average geek would drool over because they can tell you exactly where the plane is, who's on it, where it's going, when to turn it, and how to optimize the economics of running an airline industry, and AMC bought into it, so therefore we came to get ACC to dovetail into it.

TS: I see.

JR: To learn how to properly talk to the tankers. And that's how I learned to spell AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System].

TS: [chuckles]

JR: And I learned because I had friends who that's all they've ever done, was intel and surveillance, and they knew all about E[?] aircraft, okay?

TS: Well, when you were at Scott—Actually, no, when you were at Altus—

JR: Yes.

TS: —you had a baby.

JR: Yes.

TS: Christian, right?

JR: Yes.

TS: How did it become different for you to have a child in the service as opposed to not having a child?

JR: Oh, honey, it was—I found several things to be true. I found there were a lot of people who were parents in the air force. A lot of them were double parents. They were parents, they were active duty husband, wives, and they had a child. And what you would do is you almost overcompensated for it. Whenever you were on duty you're there on time. You do everything you can as much as you can to the best of your ability on time, okay, and your bosses knew it and they recognized it. Therefore, whenever you had a problem with child care, I would venture to say 85, 90% says, "Come in when you're finished. Take care of the baby. When you're finished, come on in to work."

And then I had my parents, okay? And my parents, who were alive at the time, were in good health, and they would call me or I would call them daily and I would explain to them, "Things are well, we're getting along good," etcetera, etcetera. And then there were days when I had to call, "I've got to go, and Mike's got to work." And they would get in the car and leave from right here, to drive to St. Louis.

TS: Oh, really.

JR: Yes. It's sixteen hours from here to St. Louis. And they would get to my house in the middle of the night, knock on the door, and there they would be. "Janice, we're here. I think I'll take a nap."

"I think you should too because it's only three o'clock in the morning."

TS: [chuckles]

JR: So that's how it happened. It was just the generosity of love and spirit from family members and co-workers. They helped make it happen.

TS: Yeah.

JR: You didn't do it by yourself. And child care? Oh, honey, you take care of your childcare providers. [chuckles]

TS: Take care of your own?

JR: You take care of your childcare providers because—

TS: Oh, you make sure—

JR: Yes.

TS: —you treat them very well, is that what you mean?

JR: You treat them very well.

TS: Okay.

JR: Because they would come and take your children at all hours of the day and night and say, "Fine, he can sleep in this bed in this extra room. No problem." So it was a community—it was literally a community—and that's how you did it. But when the twenty year mark—when that happened—I said, "Well, I've got to make some kind of—I have to make a decision here of who comes first." Was it the air force, which I loved, or was it my child, and my child won. That's what happened.

TS: That's really why you decided to retire?

JR: That was exactly why.

TS: Well, talk about what Mike had mentioned but we didn't have the tape on, when he talking about you're getting ready to retire and he's got a year left, and then what happened with orders?

JR: He got an opportunity to go to Honduras to be the duty officer for all the airplanes coming into the theater of Central America, and he was so capable at doing that, that he loved it. He was very happy for a year in Honduras. He got a chance to meet a lot of the foreign nationals who lived in the community, and he lived in what he called a hut and he had banana trees growing all around. I was jealous; I was so jealous.

TS: But how was it for you, I mean, when he was gone for that year. What was it like for you?

JR: Oh, we made it happen. We made it happen here. I worked at Dupont; I was their occupational health nurse. I had a chance to use my VA benefits to go back to college at UNC-Chapel Hill where they had an occupational health nursing master's program.

TS: So you were taking it while Mike was gone?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Oh, I didn't realize that. Okay.

JR: And what happened, Christian and I would go to school together right here at this table; he would do homework on one side, I'd do homework on the other. And there were times when we had bad weather around here and he would go to work with me and he would play in his playpen while I would take care of patients at Dupont.

And Mike would call us every two or three days from Honduras, or we would call him, and it was just—we always looked forward to his next visit because he left in, like—it was, like, January, February timeframe to go to Honduras and he came home a year later, and he had a chance to go to, like—on three different occasions, to come home and it was such a treat for us. We'd pack up the car and I'd tell Christian, "We're going to go pick up Daddy at Raleigh-Durham."

"Oh, boy." He knew where Raleigh-Durham [International Airport] was.

TS: [chuckles]

JR: He knew exactly where the gate was, where the plane was going to come in on American Airlines. And it was such a treat for us to go pick him up in Raleigh-Durham and bring him home for a week or two weeks or whatever the situation was. But Christian and I, we just—we made it happen. And I happened to be pregnant with Clinton Michael during that time, so we kind of had our hands full on fifteen acres, and we wanted to expand the house. I had a very, very good job at Dupont at the time. But things improved, and they improved incrementally from that point on.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I had a lot of cooperation. I had neighbors who helped me cut the grass and, of course, both my parents were passed by that time and it was just Christian and I and the community. And when Mike came home it became lee—exponentially easier, and then, sure enough, Clinton Michael was born two days after his birthday—after Mike's birthday—so Mike had a beautiful retirement ceremony and got a brand new baby in about a month's time.

TS: [chuckles] That's a pretty good present.

JR: It was.

TS: Well, did you notice anything about transitioning out of the air force to the civilian world?

JR: Yeah.

TS: Can you talk about what happened and how you felt?

JR: Yeah. When you're gone for twenty years, a lot happens in twenty years. You—the people grow up. Children who were babies whenever you were here before you left are now adults and they're wonderful people, but they forget you and they don't really know who you are. I had these memories of people who were little toddlers and preschoolers and they'd forgotten me and I remembered exactly who they were. And they looked at me, like, "Lady, who are you and why are you talking to me?"

TS: Right.

JR: And their moms are kind of elbowing them, "That's Janice. Act nice." And it's like—

TS: [chuckles] They had to get to know you.

JR: Yeah. And I think my expectations were probably higher than they should have been. The air force is almost like its own little utopia, I guess you'd call it, where everything is so scripted and it's so much regulated by instructions and procedures and regulations, and everybody knows that there's a process for most everything.

TS: I think one person described that to me as saying, "There's a lot of rules, there's a lot of things you have to follow, but it's clear—"

JR: Very.

TS: "—what those rules are."

JR: Very.

TS: And I think she said how, like, when you got into the civilian world there's a lot of rules but nobody's written them down. [chuckles]

JR: You're exactly right.

TS: That was her words, not mine.

JR: You're exactly right. Nobody wrote them down, even fewer follow them, okay?

TS: [chuckles]

JR: So you kind of have to readjust to that because that's not what you're used to doing. And I think people were a little taken back by the absence of prejudice, okay? There's—you just don't do it in the air force. It was just the mission; it was all about getting the work done. And if anything, there is a re-acclimation where you learn that the real civilian world really doesn't see it that way sometimes. And I think they were a little taken back, they thought I was phony whenever I didn't harbor ill feelings toward people, because I didn't. There are some things that were not—

TS: Can you give me an example of what you mean?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Without saying people's names or anything.

JR: Yeah. I think that there were people who sometimes use language that I didn't use.

TS: Yes.

JR: I think there were attitudes that I didn't have. And I think there were people who were surprised with that.

TS: Was this at work, you mean?

JR: Yes. I'm talking about the work setting. I think there were people that expected me to say things that I never said, and I think they expected me to dislike people based on their appearance, and I didn't. And I had to remind them, I said, "Well, why should I dislike you, you're another human."

"Oh."

I said, "We don't do that in the air force, but this is no longer the air force so I guess we're going to have to work on it in real-time."

TS: So kind of a cultural shock to get back into the civilian.

JR: It was, it was. That's a very good term, is cultural shock. And it's still—I don't know that I'm still over some of that because I still find little pockets of people who go, "Well, we want to fight."

"Well, why?" [chuckles]

TS: Right.

JR: There's no point in fighting. We should fix it, okay?

TS: There you go. You should fix it.

JR: That's a good term, fix it.

TS: Well, let me ask you some questions about gender.

JR: Please.

TS: Because when you went in in 1980—

JR: Yes.

TS: —it was a very different air force for women than when you got out in 2001.

JR: Yes.

TS: But can you talk about what some of those changes were for you? Did you see anything personally?

JR: Oh, I'd love to. I'd love to. When I was—When I left here and went home, the role of being an RN was a very confined role, and my daddy told me, he said, "You're going to be working with a whole lot of men, okay, and you'll enjoy it because you're up for it."

I said, "Okay."

And one of the most profound experiences was when I was at Langley I was tagged by a two star general to come and to be the chief of their inspection team for

these, what they called, spirals. And a spiral was an actual experiment where they were going to integrate networks and satellites, intel, command & control systems, all for air operations—excuse me, for air combat command—but it's all fighter pilot dense, okay? And I don't know if you all know much about fighter pilots, but fighter pilots are a pretty rare breed. They're very, very focused and they're very aggressive because that's the nature of their work. They're aggressive about all kinds of things; what time of day is it, where's my airplane, I've got to shoot at somebody, where's the flagpole, I gotta go. They're very fixated on that. And sometimes that can be probably not the focus that you need when you're trying to solve problems with integrating networks.

So they came and tagged me as the RN who happened to be a flight nurse, who happened to be from the other command, don't you know. And don't you know the other command had a really good grip on their systems software and command & control. The fighter pilots who were very good at their job—their systems and networks were not that good—had a thing called TBMCS, which was Theater Battle Something Control System—I forget what the M stand for—[Theater Battle Management Core Systems] and it was good but it was a legacy system, okay? It was very DOS-oriented. Well, they wanted network and they wanted it on the internet, okay? Which was fine, we can do that. So when they asked me to come to be the chief of the inspection team, that didn't go over so hot, okay? But the thought process—

TS: Why not?

JR: Well, it was a woman in charge of fighter pilots.

TS: All these fighter pilots.

JR: Oh, my gosh.

TS: Did you feel that tension at all?

JR: No, not to me but they—passively; it was a little passive. But they were smart in how they did it, because they gave me a three star general, his name was General [Stephen B.] Croker—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That you reported to.

JR: —who came is a contractor. Exactly. Well, he was the contractor, don't you know.

TS: Okay.

JR: He went to work for one of these federal contractors.

TS: Agencies?

JR: Yes, and they brought him in because he, like, wrote the book with General Jumper.

TS: Okay.

JR: If you get my drift.

TS: So he was no longer active duty.

JR: No.

TS: Okay.

JR: Retired three star. Comes in, says he's going to be the mentor, okay? That was a smart move. Very smart people in the air combat command. Then they brought in some people who were other contractors who were former fighter pilots who were very good at systems development, and they said, "Janice, here's what you do. You sit at the table for all the meetings, okay? You help us keep the meetings straight. Help us kind of keep the focus where it needs to be, and we're going to run it."

I said, "You go right ahead."

So I was very fortunate that I had all these capable people, and that's one of the key tenants of leadership and success. You surround yourself with competent people, okay? Well, honey, I was surrounded because I had General Croker leading the pack, okay? And I had—His name was John—Billy Bob [Wimberly]. Believe it or not, Billy Bob. I do not know why his mom named him Billy Bob. He was a genius; he was a F-15 pilot and he was retired. He was a colonel. He said, "I'll fix it."

I said, "I bet you can." [both chuckle]

TS: Do you think something like that would have happened—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JR: In the civilian world?

TS: —20 years earlier?

JR: Oh, no.

TS: No.

JR: Oh, no. What it was, was recognition of me being a girl and whatever I was bringing to the table. And I appreciated that. And I appreciated it coming up from such a male-oriented environment. That they would have that much regard for me as a female who

happened to be a lieutenant colonel, who happened to be in the air force from the other command.

TS: Right.

JR: I mean, that was a compliment. To put me at that table and go, "What shall we do?"
"Well, we'll try to fix it." And we did.

TS: Well, it was interesting to me that when you started as a flight nurse, which I know they had for quite a while in the air force, well before you came in.

JR: Oh, for years. Since 1965, I think it was.

TS: Sixty-five. But there were no other women on planes in the air force.

JR: No, I don't think there were.

TS: There were not.

JR: I think you're correct. And now we're flying fighters now.

TS: That's right.

JR: And last time I checked the Blue Angels in the navy actually had a female fighter pilot in the Blue Angels. And there's one flying a C-130 Fat Albert. She is the pilot for the Fat Albert. Women have come a long ways in the military and I think that's the beautiful part of it, Therese. They use your gifts. They're not looking at your gender. They use your gifts. And I think that's probably one of the many reasons I enjoyed it, is because you were not in this refine—constrained role as being just a AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code]

TS: Yes.

JR: You might be a 9756 [AFSC designation] but you were an officer first, okay?

TS: Right. I've had this come up a lot, too, and you talked about it before you really even got into your experiences. Was it your neighbor who said that—I'm sorry I don't remember his name.

JR: Murray. Murray Barnes.

TS: Murray Barnes. He said, "Janice, they're going to challenge you."

JR: He was right.

TS: I guess my question to you is, sometimes did they offer you challenges that you were, like, "Oh, dear. What am I getting myself into?"

JR: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

TS: And then you realized that they gave you the support.

JR: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. When we went into TRAC2ES it was like that. TRAC2ES the software development is—the software development program we had at Scott, the one that had kind of floundered for a while, there were days when we had some headaches with that because any time you're dealing with people and they take ownership of something they're very possessive and very protective of it, and there were times when we had to, like, break the mold and start over again. But we had people who were knowledgeable and who were competent and who understood the programming and the contracting world who helped us get through growth pains at more than one location, particularly out of San Antonio than at Brooks where contracting is, like, their middle name. They're good at that. We would make frequent trips to San Antonio to engage with these people to pick out the right people to build.

TS: Were there other women involved in it too?

JR: Absolutely. Absolutely were. From all different aspects of not just the air force but DOD [U.S. Department of Defense]. And I think the layering of those different organizations, you met people and you recognized how capable they were, and you always wanted them at your side to help make decisions on how to best fit what the mission required, okay? And you listened to them and you took their advice and you made it—you kind of molded it to fit what it needed to do.

TS: Right. Well, I'm going to ask you about some of the stuff that is in the news.

JR: Sure.

TS: We talked about how media maybe portrays things. But one of the realities is that a lot of women in the service, no matter what service they're in, they face not only sexual harassment, but sexual assault. Was there anything that you knew about when you were in? And you were in a different field, too, so as a nurse I think there's sometimes a different welcoming that you get that maybe an airmen on the flight line as a mechanic might—there might be resistance to her but nurses are a traditional occupation.

JR: Yes.

TS: But did you still see things like sexual harassment, assault, happening around you?
[unclear]

JR: Okay, let's do it. You asked a question.

TS: Okay. Yeah, I did. Go ahead.

JR: So, Therese, what I learned to do is I kept my integrity, okay? I was nice to people, but if I had to, like, push them off, I pushed them away, okay? I'm going to keep my self-respect and my integrity intact and I found that was a very, very, very good policy because it's not special to any branch of the service. I think anybody who serves as a competent woman in the service can expect it. I don't think it necessarily matters how you look. You're going to see it, okay? And it's almost like it's a test to see how you're going to respond to it. But then whenever you prove that you're competent in what you do it gets better, okay? But it may take a while.

TS: Yeah.

JR: But it will get better.

TS: Did that change over time—over that twenty years—or was it about the same, that tension?

JR: I found the tension less in the air force. I did, I found it less. I found that there were people who, I think by and large, respected me more with a blue uniform on.

TS: Do you think your changing in rank mattered at all?

JR: I know it did.

TS: Yeah.

JR: I know it did. I think the more senior you are the better—the more respect you glean[?]. And—But I would recommend that for people. That's a growth experience.

TS: What would you recommend?

JR: That you go in and you join—that you do something like the air force.

TS: So if a young person came to you today you would say, "Go ahead."

JR: Absolutely I would.

TS: Yeah.

JR: Because I think it gets you—it matures you; I think it helps you grow up; I think it helps you in your decision-making; I think it helps you develop the self-confidence that you're good at making decisions. If you make a mistake, learn from it. You don't learn unless you make mistakes.

TS: Do you think there's anything that women should not be doing in the military? Not just the air force.

JR: The truth? About the only thing I would probably draw back on is being in a battle area where you can be taken hostage, okay? And I say that because in reference I want to mention about Dr. Rhonda Cornum from the army who was taken as a POW [prisoner of war] whom I met about a year and a half ago. Her husband worked with me at Andrews; he was a resident in ICU at Andrews. His name was Corey, Dr. Corey Cornum. He's now an orthopedic surgeon. Rhonda has retired from the army. She retired as a brigadier general and she wrote a book on resilience. And Rhonda Cornum is a hero. She is one of my heroes. She was taken as a POW and they fractured many body extremities; I think both her arms were broken. She was also assaulted.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: She was in the helicopter crash.

JR: Yes, ma'am. Exactly. She was also assaulted.

TS: Right.

JR: And she has not only survived that experience, she has flourished in that experience, because she has become, like, the army's lead expert on teaching resilience training. And she's a credit.

TS: Well, when you say try to keep women out of those areas where they might be captured, but in World War II you had all those nurses.

JR: Yeah. At Bataan [Philippines].

TS: At Bataan.

JR: And other places where they were held as hostages. I don't know that I would ever wish that on anybody, and I think probably knowing that the areas that we have to go to sometimes are truly dangerous, women are intellectually capable. I do not know that they have to prove that by going to those areas.

TS: What about when you were in Damascus to pick up those POWS?

JR: Same thing. Anything could have happened. Anything could have happened. I could have been just as injured.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Would you have said, "Well, I don't want to do that job because—"

JR: Your point is well taken and I did it.

TS: Yeah.

JR: And I didn't give it that much thought. So with that being said, go where you want to, I guess. [both laugh] I'm going to give you the benefit of what I've watched but I know how capable you are so you just go ahead and do it. You're very capable.

TS: How did you feel like you were treated with regard to pay, promotions, and your assignments too?

JR: Oh, very well. I was treated very well. Once again, I was determined to do the best I could in my job. And like everybody else you have good days, bad days, and mediocre days. But I truly believe that the air force and other branches of the service, they are an opportunity for females, okay? If you go in and you prove that you're willing to do the job and you have the capability and the aptitude for the job, you'll get the job. And I've—that's an opportunity. And I think in the traditionalism of civilian life you don't see that. You don't see as much of it. The DOD's looking for it because they need competent people, and a lot of them are women.

TS: Have you used the Veteran's Administration at all?

JR: God bless America. The VA. I can't say enough good about the VA. They have their internal issues, and the VA and I have had a growth experience because I worked with them on some issues, but part of what I have to thank them for is they actively supported me in getting two master's degrees when I came home. I can't say enough good because they funded my education at UNC-Chapel Hill and at Duke.

TS: You used the GI Bill for that?

JR: Absolutely. It was the Montgomery GI Bill; the VEAP [Veterans Educational Assistance Program]; it used to be the VEAP.

TS: Yes.

JR: I think it was number thirty-one; I think it was the version of the Montgomery GI Bill. But I think many people in the VA are just graduates from the Department of Defense, and they still, I think, are doing the best job they can in the setting and the environment they're working in, okay?

TS: Right. The infrastructure that they have to deal with.

JR: Absolutely. Because I've dealt with some tremendous VA representatives.

TS: I forgot to ask you earlier about PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder]. That's another issue that's in the news, especially with the recent wars that we've had.

JR: Right.

TS: Is that anything you've ever had to—

JR: I dealt with it. We've had people who came to me when I was working as civil service at Womack [Army Medical Center] that I knew had had PTSD, and I think that the resilience training is key to minimizing some of that. I think that anybody who discounts PTSD needs to go back and try again and re-read the book because IED [improvised explosive device] explosions and traumatic brain injury are very real.

I had the blessing—the privilege of communicating with the people at BUMED [Bureau of Medicine and Surgery]—Excuse me, AMEDD [Army Medical Department of the U.S. Army], the army's surgeon's office up in Washington, D.C., and [unclear] army surgeon, okay, because that's their medical piece. And they acknowledged to me that traumatic brain injury and IED injuries are prevalent, and I think we're learning how to deal with it. I think the Wounded Warrior Project has been instrumental in addressing this, because it's real.

[The Wounded Warrior Project is a charity and veterans organization that offers a variety of programs and services for wounded veterans of the military actions following 11 September 2001.]

TS: Yes. If any of your children wanted to join would you also—

JR: Well, they're thinking about it right now.

TS: They are? Oh, that's right.

JR: Christian's contemplating. He's going to medical school hopefully at Chapel Hill or Duke this time next year. And he's watched us as parents. He says, "Mom, I want to travel like that."

I said, "Yeah, it's a good job, honey." I said, "If you want to be a doctor or a surgeon, whatever you turn out to be," I said, "Air National Guard's a great place to start." So he's actively talking to Air National Guard.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Looking at things like that.

JR: Yeah.

TS: Well, is there anything in particular you want a civilian to know or understand about what it's like to be in the military that you don't think they appreciate?

JR: I would love to. Every kid, age, say, eighteen to twenty-one, should be offered the opportunity and strongly encouraged just to go for three years and to serve their country. I think given that opportunity to see the defense side of this country will open your eyes to what a huge free country we enjoy. I think it will open my eyes to the freedoms that we enjoy. I think it also makes you appreciate every single word of "The Star-Spangled Banner." You'll see the flag in a different light. It always dismays me when people cut up and want to jump on the flag and cut up and act silly, because I think to myself, "Do you have any idea how many people have died for that flag? And I don't think they do. I think the education—if nothing else, the education of why we are a free nation will change your perspective once you understand how many people have given their lives so that you and I can enjoy what we enjoy today.

TS: Well, I'm sitting here looking at this C-9A McDonnell Douglas that you brought out at the very beginning and I'm wondering how would your life be any different if you hadn't seen that model and you'd never thought about or been told about being a flight nurse? What I'm asking you is, has your life been any different because you chose to go in the military?

JR: My life is a hundred and eighty degrees different because of that decision; it's a hundred and eighty degrees different. It opened my eyes to service above yourself. It opened my eyes to knowing that the world's a bigger place than just what's on my pie plate in front of me, okay? It helped me to realize that you can go out and actually make a difference. If you kind of just put your shoulder against this thing and make up your mind, you're going to do it. And whatever role they give you do the very best job you can because somebody's going to see you and somebody is going to recognize that you're out there doing your work, and then more opportunities will prevail. And you start realizing, "Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. This is an extension of my education here." And you start realizing, "I can actually make a little difference in this piece of the world today." And there's nothing more rewarding than that, and especially for somebody who's looking for a chance to travel and they want to get out and see the world, they want to learn a new language, they want to learn how to do something with systems and computers, and aerospace and satellites, or whatever it is you want to do. If you do nothing but become a gourmet chef, be the best gourmet chef you can be.

There is always, I think, an opportunity for people who are willing to exercise their gifts and talents. And I'll tell you something, the air force is the way to do it. That's my personal opinion.

TS: [chuckles] We have a little bias there.

JR: We do. We do. [chuckles]

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

JR: Okay. When you go to a foreign country and you make it back, and you fly in on the L-1011 into Springfield, Connecticut, and it's two o'clock in the morning and there is a hangar full of people from Springfield waiting for you, and a red carpet that has been rolled out for you at 2:00 in the morning. It's pitch dark and you don't even know who these people are, and you're led like a bunch of sheep up that red carpet into this aircraft hangar where there are all kinds of people hanging over these ropes going, "Will you sign this T-shirt?" And you don't even know what you're doing. You're just glad to be back in the U.S. because it's your home. And they keep leading you up this red carpet to this podium, and there are about twelve or fifteen Vietnam vets sitting there waiting for you. And you look at them and they go, "Welcome home. You made it."

You began to realize that whatever you did pales in the presence of these people who went to Vietnam, who loved this country before I ever came along. Who did it. Only you're the spoiled little child that gets to come along to hear the "Thank yous" and they're the ones who go, "We're living it vicariously through you." That's where patriotism starts. You realize it wasn't just you, it's all about the thousands of people who've gone before you who live vicariously, because they probably never heard a 3Q [a term for "thank you"], and we're fortunate enough that we live in a country now that no longer spits on people when they wear a uniform. They go and help prepare care packages and mail them to people they don't even know. They thank you when you come back. You sit at your house and you see all that pretty green grass and your home and your material belongings and you realize there were people who were praying for you, who are glad that you're back. And then one day you happen to watch the news and somebody opens up a hole in the ground and there's Saddam Hussein looking at them and you realize it worked. We actually settled that place down. Kuwait City is a free place now. Saddam Hussein no longer cuts people's heads off; whatever it was he was doing. Osama Bin Laden. He's not conducting his terror campaigns anymore. And you learned to say, "Thank you," to all these people who helped make it happen. And they are the unsung heroes. And that's what makes me feel patriotic in my heart, because they love this country as much as I do, and it's all about loving country. Does that answer?

TS: Yeah. I think I don't have any more formal questions.

JR: Wow.

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

JR: No, but I never thought it would be like this. I appreciate the chance to interview. This was wonderful. I appreciate the opportunity.

TS: You want to end on that note then?

JR: Yeah. Thank you for letting me interview with you. I had a wonderful time.

TS: Oh, Janice, thank you.

JR: I had a wonderful time. And Mike thanks you.

TS: And Dublin. There we go.

[End of Interview]