

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Mary Laraine "Larry" Young Hines

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: August 3, 2015

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is August 3, 2015. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Larry Hines in Raleigh, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Larry, could you state your name the way that you'd like it to read on your collection?

LH: Mary "Larry"—L-A-R-R-Y—[Laraine] Young Hines—H-I-N-E-S.

TS: Okay. Well, Larry, why don't you stay out by telling me a little bit about where you're from, when you born?

LH: I was born on Easter morning, April 21, 1946, in Lexington, North Carolina, where both my parents were also born and raised.

TS: They were both from there?

LH: Yes.

TS: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

LH: I have one older brother.

TS: One older brother?

LH: His name is Baxter Craven Young.

TS: Baxter? Now, for your folks, did they both work outside the home?

LH: My father started and created two companies, the Buck Young Oil Company, which was a fuel oil and home heating distributorship, and then he also founded Maybelle Transport Company, which is a trucking company in Lexington. My mother ran the oil company during World War II when my father was away, and then after my father's death in 1960

my mother became the president of both the companies and ran them for many, many years.

TS: Oh, is that right?

LH: Yes.

TS: She definitely was working—

LH: Oh, yes.

TS: —outside the home.

LH: Oh, yes.

TS: Now, in Lexington, North Carolina, at that time, what kind of environment was it? Was it close to the city or out in rural country? Where were you at?

LH: I lived about two blocks off Main Street. I grew up at 200 West Second Avenue.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Like my parents, I graduated from the Lexington City Schools, and Lexington Senior High School [LH corrected later] in 1964. At that point [racial] segregation was in full force. I was the last class to graduate from Lexington High School that was all white; they began integration the following year.

TS: The following year?

LH: Yes.

TS: Well, what was it like to grow up at that time? You're growing up in the fifties and sixties, you're post-war, and—

LH: Pre-TV.

TS: Pre-TV. [chuckles]

LH: Grew up initially with no television. I think we did have one of the first ones when I was about six or seven years old. But it was an idyllic childhood. I had both sets of my grandparents there, I had cousins everywhere, but I was, I guess were my closest friends, and still are. I had a horse, which was a great thing, because back then women didn't really have sports or many outlets, so I was—I mean, I thought I had the perfect childhood. We walked to church; the First Methodist Church in Lexington. Life was good.

TS: Yeah. You had a horse? What'd you do with your horse?

LH: Well, I started riding when I was five years old.

TS: Okay.

LH: And my dream was to have a horse, and when I was eleven, that was my Christmas present; I got my first horse. Which I kept that horse, and then I got a different one, and ended up teaching horseback riding when I was a college student, summers. And of course, when I went to college we sold the horse. But I mean—

TS: Yeah, did you—

LH: —we had all—we always had cats, dogs, gerbil, hamsters, birds, bunny rabbits, chickens; we had all kinds of wildlife in and out of our house.

TS: Any cats as sweet as this one over here?

LH: A lot of cats, a lot of kittens, a lot of dogs. [chuckles]

TS: There you go. Well, did you walk to school?

LH: I did, I walked to school. I went to Robbins Elementary School, it was built in 1870—it was named for a Confederate captain, Captain Robbins—and it's the same elementary school that my mother walked to, and my grandmother; we all went to Robbins School.

TS: Now, did you appreciate that kind of heritage as a young girl or were you just going to school?

LH: I assumed everybody had that, but my way of getting to school was walking, roller-skating, riding my bike.

TS: Oh, you roller-skated?

LH: Oh, yes, with the kind that you had to tighten up with a key.

TS: Oh, is that right? [chuckles]

LH: I even had—my mother made sure that my music lessons weren't neglected, so I used to go take piano lessons at seven o'clock in the morning, close to the school, and I'd walk one day a week from her—from my piano teacher's house.

TS: Well, what kind of things were you doing for fun around then?

LH: Oh, one thing about school that's interesting too. My mother and I had the same sixth grade teacher, in the same class.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're kidding? Really?

LH: Miss Hattie Lee Burgess.

TS: She's a little older when she got to you, I imagine.

LH: Well, she was a great teacher. Things we did for fun: I read, hung out with my friends. I don't know. We stayed at each other's houses all the time. We'd have slumber parties, and just the things that girls did.

TS: What did you like to read? What kind of books did you like to read?

LH: When I was going to elementary school we weren't allowed to use the library until fourth grade because it was upstairs. The first three grades were downstairs and the fourth, fifth, and sixth were upstairs. But because I was such a voracious reader, and I guess I was a little beyond my time, my second grade teacher got special permission for me to go upstairs and use the library even as a second grader, and I think I probably read every biography there was. I've always been drawn towards non-fiction, and of course I read Nancy Drews [Nancy Drew Mystery Stories], and The Happy Hollisters [series]; all—I mean, I just read constantly. But I think the book that probably had as big an impact on me as any was reading *Gone with the Wind*.

TS: Oh, really? Why? Why would you say that?

LH: Well, having Southern heritage I was even more curious about the Deep South, and I knew my mother and father had both enjoyed that book, and I made a point of reading it cover to cover, and the Bible, the same year; I read them both cover to cover.

TS: *Gone With the Wind* and the Bible.

LH: That's right.

TS: What did you bring from that? When you read it, what did you think about it?

LH: Well, I had a real curiosity about the whole Southern heritage. My—I didn't know it at the time, but I've—as I've gotten older I gotten more interested in family lineage, and my family ancestors came to North Carolina in 1732 with Valentine Leonard, who came from Katzenbach, Germany. And then my other patriot relative that I've traced back is Peter Craven, who came to North Carolina from England by way of Pennsylvania, and he was the—one of the first people who introduced the art of pottery making. Of course, back then it was for utilitarian use, it wasn't for decorative use, it was because they used the pottery for—to eat on.

[A patriot is defined by the organization The Daughters of the American Revolution as

someone who aided in achieving United States independence. Being a descendent of a "patriot" is a Daughters of the American Revolution membership eligibility requirement.]

Civil rights were bubbling around a lot when I was in junior high school; the sixties. I hit junior high school about 1958, so from there until I finished high school the civil rights movement was very much something that I was aware of.

TS: What'd you think about it?

LH: Well, my parents had always been very open-minded, very progressive, and very courageous, and I really feel like that since both my parents attended Duke University in the thirties—now my father only went for two years because there was no money, but my mother's a graduate of Duke—my family ties to Duke actually go back to 1841, because my great-great grandfather, Braxton Craven, was the founder and the first president of Trinity College, which became Duke after it moved to Durham in 1892 and was—because of a gift [in 1924—LH added later], was named for the Duke family, but it was originally Trinity College, which is still the undergraduate college at Duke; is named Trinity College of Arts and Sciences.

I think because my parents had had this global exposure to people of other faiths and other backgrounds and other races, they always felt that the south and our community should be more open. So my parents were very progressive. We had an integrated company, and our Christmas party at the country club which was actually a municipal club in Lexington, was always integrated. I don't think anybody else dared to do that other than my parents. And then our summer picnic for our companies was at Tanglewood, which at that—Tanglewood Park out in Clemmons, North Carolina—which was a "Whites Only" park, but when my dad rented it for our company party everybody went. He didn't ask whether it was alright to bring our black employees or not, he just did it.

My father grew up very, very poor in Lexington, and he never ever wanted me to forget the fact that there were people in this world who had a lot less than we did. He would—At Christmas, the Kiwanis Club always sponsored a party for the children at the Junior Order Home orphanage [United Americans Mechanics North Carolina State Council, now American Children's Home], and he always took my brother and me there to show us what other kids got for Christmas, which was usually maybe a pair of gloves and box of checkers and a box of candy, and he said, "I want you to remember next Christmas—next week when you're opening all your presents, this is what a lot of other kids are getting, which is next to nothing."

TS: Yeah. Did it make an impression on you?

LH: Oh, yes, it did.

TS: Did it?

LH: Of course it did. I mean, my parents have always instilled in me that we need to—to those to whom much is given, much is expected, and that we need to—all of us need to

take care of the last, the least, the lost, and the lonely, so I've tried to devote my life to trying to make them proud and to follow their examples.

TS: We talked a little bit about the Civil Rights movement. Do you remember much about the Cold War, with the "duck and cover" [safety drill]; did you have anything like that going on?

["Duck and cover" is a method of personal protection against the effects of a nuclear explosion]

LH: Oh, we had that, yeah. Those were our—That impressed me a lot more than a fire drill.

TS: Did it? [chuckles]

LH: Yes, it did, and of course, the whole space thing, we were—

TS: Oh, the space race?

LH: Yeah. And of course, the Cuban Missile Crisis, that's when I was in high school. So it always—somewhere in my mind, but the international things did not make the impression on me that the local issues did. In fact, I won a short story contest, I think in the eighth grade—and I went back and read it one time—and maybe it was the ninth grade—anyway, it was somewhere along that area when I was sixteen, sixteen, fourteen, fifteen—and my topic was—I wrote the short story through the eyes of a little African American girl riding on a bus on the first day of her integrated experience into a school—into an elementary school.

I have no idea how I have the audacity to think that I could put my thoughts into that person, but I knew that it was happening. Not so much in Lexington. It was coming to Lexington, but I had watched it on TV, and I knew that it was something that was right, and my parents had pushed hard, my mother particularly, for integrating the schools, the municipal pools, and this was not exactly well received by a lot of her friends.

TS: No?

LH: They thought it was a frightening thing that a woman of her social stature and education would be a leader in this movement, but she was, and we had a lot of the leaders in Lexington—the leaders of these black organizations—that were pushing, [along] with my mother, to get integration going in Lexington.

TS: Now, what year did your father die?

LH: My father died in 1960.

TS: Nineteen sixty. And so, then your mom was pushing for these things as a single—

LH: Right.

TS: —widow—

LH: Right. Right.

TS: —at that time. So that must have been really tough for her to go it alone, I would think.

LH: Well, we treated our employees as well as we could, and I'm bothered that people paint all of the south with the same brush, because I know how my family felt about integration and about all equal rights for all people. I do remember very well though—I do remember growing up as a child, in Woolworth's, the "Black Only," "White Only" [water] fountain, and they were side by side and they were right next to the fish tank. And I remember leaning over and getting that cold water on the right hand side fountain and just wondering, was there really a difference from the left.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Right.

LH: And I also remember as a child, my babysitters were almost always black, young women who were usually the children of our employees, and when we went to the movies—the Carolina Theater in Lexington—we sat upstairs, and I thought it was kind of fun. I mean, that was just—I just went upstairs because Zula had to go upstairs, and so Zula and I together went upstairs.

TS: Oh, because you went to the movies with her?

LH: To the movies, yeah, sure. She couldn't sit downstairs with the white people but I could sit upstairs with the black people. And there also were—All the barbecue restaurants in Lexington had back entrances that said "Black Only—Colored Only." I mean, I remember that. I mean, "separate but equal" was not good enough for my parents and they—they weren't afraid to push that.

[Separate but equal was a legal doctrine in United States constitutional law according to which racial segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in 1868, which guaranteed "equal protection" under the law to all citizens, as long as the facilities provided to each race were equal.]

TS: Well, when you were a young girl, and you're growing up, and you're saying you had this pretty great life going, did you have a sense of what opportunities you had in front of you; for choices you could make for your life? At that time.

LH: At that time. Well, my parents, again, made sure that I knew that there was a bigger world out there, besides the close up one. My father always had business meetings with the Sinclair Oil Company [*sic* Corporation], in either Atlanta or Washington [D.C.] or New York, and my parents would incorporate and pull my brother and me along on these trips. So we would ride the train or we flew, and so I knew that there was a New York City and Washington and Atlanta, and I was curious about all those things, and my parents wanted me to understand that the things that didn't exist in Lexington; such as elevators, buses, bell boys, room service, tipping; things that were not—

TS: Do you want to shut that blind?

LH: That's okay. Things that were not commonplace in Lexington, and I appreciated that. They took me to Broadway [theater] when I was eleven years old to see Judy Garland [American singer, actress, and vaudevillian], and see *My Fair Lady*. I mean, they really wanted me to thirst beyond the close-up things in Lexington, and my parents always said to me—my dad in particular used to say, "Honey, if you don't make your life interesting, it won't be. Don't look in the mirror when you're fifty years old and say, 'What happened?' and have there be a resounding silence. You make sure that you make things happen in your life."

TS: You want me to pause for a second?

LH: Yeah.

TS: Alright.

[Recording Paused]

TS: We took a tiny little pause there. So did you take your dad's advice?

LH: Right. They were always saying, "Get out of your comfort zone. Try things that are hard. Don't be satisfied with what's easy in life. Look around and see how you can help." I've sort of used that as my mantra.

TS: Have you?

LH: Yeah.

TS: Well, was there a particular, like, type of career that you thought would be interesting?

LH: Well, my mother had—after she finished Duke she taught English at Lexington High School, and of course, I had been programmed my entire life that I could go to any college as long as it was Duke, and since my father died the summer of the eighth grade it was kind of my mother and me living together. My brother was so much—six years older

so he was already out and about.

TS: Out of the house.

LH: Excuse me?

TS: He was out of the house?

LH: Yeah, he was out of the house. In fact, he had served in the army and was living in California. I mean, I had the strong, strong family authoritative [chuckles] notice that I was going to Duke, because that was the only place that was acceptable. And I visited Duke and I love Duke University. I think it is a wonderful place, and I have a master's from there, but when I was eighteen years old I was looking for something really different and I did want to get out of North Carolina. I wanted to travel and land on my own two feet somewhere that nobody knew me, and just to—

So I started visiting colleges, really, on my own, and I had a friend that I had gone to summer camp with from Tampa, Florida, who was at the University of Georgia and when I went to visit her it was just the perfect match. So much to my guidance counselor, my mother, and my grandmother's horror I decided—even though I got into Duke, I decided that the University of Georgia was a better fit for me at eighteen, so.

TS: I bet [chuckles] you had some good conversations about that, then, huh?

LH: Well, there weren't—for a while there wasn't any conversations because my mother wasn't speaking to me about it. She's called it my "teenage rebellion," and maybe it was, but I had been programmed to be strong and think for myself so that's what I decided to do.

TS: Right.

LH: And I would repeat that, because I learned so much more about myself and life—

TS: You're far away from home.

LH: I did, yeah, and I had a Jewish roommate. All the things that I didn't anticipate, but I got thrown—I mean, we think in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, we really think we're in the south, and we are, but there is a different south that exists in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, especially in the 1960s.

TS: How was it different?

LH: Oh, very, very racially—separatists. A lot of very—People were very angry about the Civil Rights Movement, and I learned that—I learned what my own feelings were, and my own convictions were. I realized I couldn't change that culture, but I also reexamined my own feelings about race and social class and that kind of thing, because I was bumped up against some attitudes I'd never really heard expressed before.

TS: What years were you at University of Georgia?

LH: I went there in September 1964, which was also the same time that Lewis Grizzard [author and humorist] arrived, and also Vince [Vincent Joseph] Dooley, our football coach. We all got there September 1964, and I graduated June the eighth, 1968.

TS: In 1968. So a whole lot happened in those four years, just—

LH: Oh, wow.

TS: —nationally, as well, as, I'm sure locally, there. What do you mostly remember about your time?

LH: Well, Georgia had integrated slightly with [Alberta] Charlayne Hunter-Gault and Hamilton Holmes [The first two African-Americans admitted to the University of Georgia], and very few students—no athletes or anything like that, there were probably less—I don't know the numbers, but there were very few African-American students. I don't ever remember seeing one; I don't remember having a class with one.

TS: No?

LH: No, I do not. But I was there—My senior year was when [Dr.] Martin Luther King [Jr.] was assassinated, and I woke up and was just horrified to hear this news. But there were people, I mean, cheering it, because they thought—I think—getting rid of Martin Luther King meant getting rid of the problem, which was integration for them.

TS: There were people cheering it?

LH: Oh, yes, honking horns and going up and down Sorority and Fraternity Row [Lumpkin Avenue.

TS: Really?

LH: Oh, yes, we're talking about Georgia.

TS: Okay. Well, I haven't heard that from anyone before—

LH: Georgia.

TS: —so I—

LH: Oh, yes. I mean, it was, "If we could just get rid of that guy then we can all go back to the plantation" mentality. That was how simple it seemed to them.

TS: That he was the problem?

LH: Right. Right.

TS: Well, and you also had Robert F. [Francis "Bobby"] Kennedy.

LH: Robert F. Kennedy. Interestingly, the night before my last exam, which was Shakespeare—one of my favorites—I majored in English to please my mother and myself—and I had set the alarm clock—the clock radio—for four o'clock, because my plan was to wake up at four o'clock in the morning and study four straight hours and go take my exam at 8:00 [a.m.], and when the—when the radio kicked on as the alarm it was one o'clock in the morning in California and the reporter was screaming about this assassination of Robert Kennedy, which was absolutely horrifying. And then I woke up and went up and down the halls of my sorority house telling everybody, "Wake up! Wake up!" and we went down—because there was only one TV—down in our communal TV room, and we watched that on TV, which was surreal.

Because my senior year in high school was when [President] John F. [Fitzgerald] Kennedy was assassinated. I remember hearing that news when I was sitting in my high school sociology class.

TS: What'd you think about that at the time?

LH: Oh, it was just unreal. I mean, I couldn't imagine. And then to have—in the span of four and a half years, to have John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert F. Kennedy—I mean, and here I was already knowing when Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated I was headed to Vietnam. It just seemed like violence was on—it was everywhere. It was in Vietnam, it was at home, it was just not safe. I mean, it was a very interesting time to be alive, honestly.

TS: Well, you did have a lot going on there. You were talking earlier, before we turned the tape on, about how you had, maybe, mixed feelings, would be a good way to put it, about the war itself at that time.

LH: I noticed in high school—my senior year in 1963, '64—that people were being drafted against their will to go into this war, which, of course, escalated so much by the sixty—'65, that people who didn't want to serve in the military were being told they had to, and they also had to go halfway around the world to a country, to a war situation, that nobody really understood.

Then when I got to college it was even more intense, and I was around a lot of men because I was the Sigma Nu [fraternity] sweetheart at the University of Georgia, so I was around lots of men, and all the ones I knew, not just Sigma Nus, but KAs [Kappa Alphas], Phi Delts [Phi Delta Thetas], everyone I knew were all trying to figure out how to get out of this thing called "the draft." They were trying to get medical excuses, or they were going to graduate school, or they were getting married, they were having children; whatever the exemption was, people were willing to do it. And then it was getting tighter and tighter and tighter, so there were less and less exemptions.

[A fraternity sweetheart is a female who is elected by the members of a fraternity for her dedication and contributions to the success of the chapter over the previous year.]

And I just didn't understand it. I mean, what—I've always been a news-aholic and I've always read every newspaper and watched news on TV, but I could not put my arms around why this thing in Vietnam was a good thing. But I really thought if I could ever get over there I would understand this, and I would support this wholeheartedly, because I had so been influenced by President Kennedy's mantra that we "ask not what our country can do for us, ask what we can do for our country."

I thought about the Peace Corps, but the Peace Corps was a two year commitment and you didn't really—as I understood it from my preliminary investigations—you didn't have much say about where you went, and I was very interested in getting as close as I could to the Southeast Asia situation. Didn't know how to do it with an English major.

TS: Didn't, but you were thinking about it?

LH: I was thinking about it. I could not go into the military because my eyesight back then was very, very poor and I knew I couldn't pass a physical, even if I did—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Would you have wanted—

LH: —even if I did I didn't have a nursing degree or anything that would have enabled me to get actually closer to Vietnam.

TS: To Vietnam. What about the counter-culture, was going on at that time too? Was that happening at the University of Georgia?

LH: The University of Georgia was very insulated. I mean, back then we still didn't have—the women didn't have the right to live in apartments, we were all under lock and key in either a dormitory or a sorority house. Women did not have the right to wear pants or shorts, we had to wear dresses. We were—It was probably one of the last strongholds of keeping womanhood pure, and I don't remember ever hearing anything about drugs, marijuana, or any other things. I mean, people thought it was really a wild weekend if you—if some guys would get some grain alcohol. [both chuckle] It was—It was still very much a buttoned-down collar, dresses, and proper manners college. At least the sor—my world was that way.

TS: Yeah?

LH: It was very insulated in—with white people that—we were all on the same sort of page.

TS: Right. What kind of things did you do for fun?

LH: Well, being a fraternity sweetheart I had to be the hostess at all the parties. We never—

almost never left campus. Athens was a very—People stayed on—People stayed in Athens because it's a great town; it still is. We went to rivers and swimming, and we went to parties, and we—occasionally we'd go into Atlanta, but basically we loved our campus so much. It's very "Rah-Rah", and it still is. The people that go there really love that school, and they're really proud to be there.

In the summers I went to summer school [in Athens]; two or three summers. I just wanted to be there longer and more. And my other summers I worked in Wisconsin; I was a horseback riding teacher up at Camp Nagawicka and Camp St. Johns, right outside of Milwaukee [in Delafield]. And that, again, was an opportunity for me to go into a different culture. I loved it up there. It was really, really fun. But it was always good to get back to Athens.

TS: How was the culture different?

LH: Well, everybody made fun of the way I talked, for one thing. And the stable master that I worked for refused to let me say, "Yes, sir," and "Yes—No, sir."

He said, "I'm not your daddy." Oh, no, he said, "I'm not your father." He wouldn't say "daddy."

And he used to, for fun, send me in to town, and I didn't know he was making fun of me. But he would send me into the hardware store—he told me later he would call ahead and say that I was on my way—and he would give me a list of things that he wanted me to buy, and one of them was spelled O-I-L.

TS: Oil.

LH: And I would go into the hardware store and ask for oil and they thought that was hilarious. And the other thing on the list was W-I-R-E, which I would ask for wire. [chuckles] And they thought that was hilarious. And some of the counselors out at this camp who were from the Midwest, would ask me things about integration.

TS: Would they?

LH: Yeah, they were curious about it. Because they'd see George Wallace on the schoolhouse door, they'd see the water hoses and the German Shepherds, and I'm like, "I don't know anything about that. That was not going on in my world."

They would say things like, "Well, I hear black people—colored people can't go out at night." That wasn't the way it was in Lexington, not at all.

So the percep—I realized the perception of the south was based on the worst possible views of it—

[George Wallace was a governor of Alabama who was famous for his strong pro-segregation stance in the 1960s.]

TS: The sensationalization and the media—

LH: Yes. Yeah, the sense—

TS: —and the—like you say—the worst.

LH: Right. But I've always been curious. When my mother was widowed she decided when the—the year I was fifteen, so that was—what?—1961—she and I went to—she took me to France, England, and Spain for three weeks, and it was so fun to me because I had taken high school Spanish for a year and a half and just—It just was magical to me to just be in a different culture like that.

So when I graduated from high school—it's interesting—we all had quotations put under our names that the faculty or the yearbook staff, or somebody, had decided were appropriate, and for women, almost all the quotations had something to do with physical attributes, like "She walks in beauty like the night," or "Golden curls."

TS: Sure.

LH: Or "Known by all." Mine, I couldn't wait to see what they said for me. Mine said, "Mary Laraine Young: I am a citizen of the world." So I think it was already apparent to people that I was bound for bigger and better things.

TS: Yeah. So you weren't sure what you were going to do with your English degree at that time?

LH: Women really weren't encouraged to do different things. Women were encouraged to be teachers, nurses, work in banks, airline stewardesses; that kind of thing. I did not get a teaching degree, interestingly, because I didn't want to take education courses, I'd rather take other ones, and I didn't want to leave Athens, Georgia to do practice teaching for six weeks anywhere else.

So I knew I was graduating with just a straight English Literature degree; didn't know—have the slightest idea what I was going to do with it.

TS: No?

LH: But I figured that my people skills would take me somewhere and that I would find a job. I just knew I would.

TS: What happened on that day that you were telling me about, when you were walking—there's a group of businesses coming in and trying to solicit [unclear]?

LH: In that day, before the internet, companies would come on college campuses and do interviews—job interviews—and they would post the names of the companies and what kind of majors they were looking for. Most of the companies who came were looking for business majors, chemistry majors, accounting majors; I was none of the above.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Not many people were interested in Liberal Arts majors, but I did notice that the

Wachovia Bank was coming, and I thought, "Well, that will—" they were talking to English majors and I thought, "Well, I can do that," so I signed up for that interview. And at that point banks were restricted to certain states and by—if I had been hired by Wachovia I knew that that would mean I was going to be returning to North Carolina, which was fine with me; I was ready to come back home.

And while I was sitting in the placement office with, maybe, twenty or thirty other people waiting for various interviews—I was between classes and I had about a twenty minute lull before my Wachovia interview—and a Red Cross recruiter—a woman named Hazel Breeland—walked through in her Red Cross uniform, and she glanced around the room and walked straight over to my chair and said, "Are you talking to anybody right now?"

And I was so shocked. I said, "No, ma'am. I have about fifteen minutes."
She said, "Well, come on back and talk to me."

TS: You were the only one in the room or were there others?

LH: Oh, there were several people in the room, women and men, and she came straight to me. And I didn't know why, but I felt like I had been picked to go talk to her, so. When I got back in her office she has a trifold with a lot of pictures and brochures, and that was my first introduction to the Red Cross program called Supplemental Recreation Activities Overseas—SRAO—which the Red Cross had been operating in Korea for quite a while, and they had opened the program up in Vietnam [in 1965]. They had just started recruiting Liberal Arts majors for that job, and when she told me about it I was just so focused on that, I couldn't think about Wachovia anymore, but I was thrilled that I might have an option to actually go to Vietnam and see for myself what this war was about. She did, however, tell me not to get my hopes up, which was kind of an ironic thing since all the men I knew were trying to do everything they could not to get to Vietnam and she was telling me that it would be hard for me to be selected for Vietnam. This is because the Red Cross recruited regionally, and the Southeast had a lot more applications than any other region.

TS: So more competition to go?

LH: Yes, and the requirements were—on paper you had to be between twenty-two and twenty-seven, you had to have a college degree in hand, and they did background checks; I had my fingerprints run through the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]; went down to the police department in Athens and ran my fingers across the inepad and had those checked out. They went back and looked at my second grade teacher, knocked on her door and asked her what kind of an eight year old I had been.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Because they were looking for not only wholesome, well-rounded, truthful young women, but they were also looking for an odd combination, which was you had to be feminine and personable and approachable, but you also had—you had to be tough as nails. But you had to be able to understand that you were underneath the rules and regulations of the Red Cross too. Just because you were in a war zone did not mean you got to do what you

wanted to do, or go wherever you wanted to. You had to be willing to accept their rules, which was curfews, no birth control pills—which were brand new anyway and I wasn't taking them—but no frosted hair. I mean, that was considered to be kind of racy, to have frosted hair. The skirt length was very controlled. Everything we did. I mean, no—if you were accepted you had to understand that if you had on that Red Cross uniform you could not drink a beer, you couldn't make comments to the press, you couldn't tell a dirty joke. You had to really be a pristine representative of womanhood, and good values, and patriotism.

And so, we were not really on our own, and that was a good thing, because curfews needed to be in place. We didn't need to be running around bases all night, we had to go to work early in the morning and we needed to put forth the proper image, and I was willing to do that.

But once she told me about that job, I mean, I was just on fire; that that's really what I wanted to do.

TS: That's what you wanted to do.

LH: That's the only thing I wanted to do. I didn't tell my mother, I didn't tell many of my friends, I just, sort of, quietly went around, interviewed with her, and then I got invited to Atlanta for another round of interviews. That was in probably early March of 1968, and I got my acceptance letter about three weeks later. So—And actually, the night that I got my first shots I was lucky because Athens has a—at that point was the home of the naval—U.S. Navy Supply School, so they had shots available out there, like, for yellow fever and typhoid, and all these shots that I had to start getting. And the night that I got my first set of shots was the night that Martin Luther King was assassinated.

[On 4 April 1968, American clergyman and civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated by James Earl Ray, a fugitive from Missouri State Penitentiary.]

TS: Oh, is that right?

LH: So I was running a fever and feeling sort of doopey anyway from these shots that I had had that day, and then when I woke up and heard what had happened I was just horrified.

TS: Yeah.

LH: Really horrified.

TS: When did you finally tell your mom?

LH: Well, my mother was coming through Athens on her way to Florida, and so she said, "I'm—Let's have dinner together." So we went out and she said, "I've got something to tell you."

And I said, "Well, I've got something to tell you too." [chuckles]

And she said, Well, you go first."

And I said—So I told her about this Vietnam opportunity, and I don't really know what her true response was. She didn't act horrified and she didn't act excited either, she just, sort of, took it all in, and—because I said to her, "They say I'm going to be safe but nobody—" because they warned us. They said they had not had anyone get killed up to till point. They did later; they had three girls who were killed doing this job.

But my mother had finally told me what she had to tell me, which was that they had discovered she had a tumor on her parotid gland and she needed to have surgery, and that they didn't—she didn't know what the outcome of that was going to be, so it was sort of sobering to hear that. But as it turned out her surgery went fine, no complications, and my trip to Vietnam, also turned out fine.

TS: Was it March that you actually found out that you were going to Vietnam, or were you just—

LH: It was late March.

TS: Late March, okay.

LH: Yes.

TS: And the only other option you really had was to go to Korea, at that time?

LH: They—When the Red Cross interviewed you they decided from your personality and your interview process if you were more suitable for the program in Vietnam or for Korea, and they also asked you which one you would like to have. I was offered both countries, but I was not interested in Korea. I mean, I wanted to go participate in history and be part of the Vietnam experience, so I chose—selected Vietnam. And the girls who—The Red Cross at that point sent over seven classes a year, of approximately twenty girls, so each time—to Vietnam—so each time twenty girls went in-country new, there were twenty girls rotating out, so they constantly kept, approximately, a hundred girls in Vietnam in the SRAO program.

TS: And so, you got a year contract?

LH: A year contract, and it ran a little longer than that, because while I was in-country I took two R&Rs [rest & recuperation], and I delayed en route on the way home in Japan, so it stretched it out another month.

TS: Okay. Now, what about your friends? What did they think about your decision?

LH: Oh, wow. Well, I had three roommates in my senior year, and all of them were either engaged to be married or in serious relationships, and they did not have the slightest idea what in the world I was thinking of. I mean, they were worried about china patterns and bridesmaids' dresses and wedding invitations, and I was worried about getting combat ready to go into the war zone. So my girlfriends and my sorority sisters all were supportive, but mystified about why I would want to do such a thing. My male friends were doubly mystified because, as I said, they were trying everything they could not to

go. And I noticed it was a lot of these same young men who had been very close friends of mine started really kind of avoiding me and never wanting to talk about this decision. I found out twenty years later from one of my old beaus, he said he was absolutely ashamed of himself. Now, he was a true 4-F [unfit for military service]. I mean, only one kidney and ["two burst eardrums—LH clarified later], but he was a true 4-F. But he said he felt like he was a coward compared to me. That was an interesting conversation to have in 1988, not 1968.

TS: Do you think that's how some of the other men felt at that time?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

LH: Oh, I think a lot of them did. It made them very uneasy.

TS: That's why they, kind of, distanced themselves from you?

LH: Yeah, I think they were very embarrassed about my—

TS: That's okay.

LH: Of course, I was not going to be carrying a rifle when I was—didn't know where I was going to be, but I didn't fear for my life, but at twenty-two, who does?

TS: True.

LH: At twenty-two you never think you're going to get killed or grow old or any of these things that actually do happen to you, but—

TS: In your mind, did you think about what that experience was going to be like before you got there, before you got to your training? I mean, the way that it was described to you.

LH: I thought it was going to be an eye opener for me. That I would get over there and understand the war and get way—really behind it, because I thought there's got to be a justification for all these deaths. This was the time when the troop buildup was approaching the highest and so were the deaths.

TS: Tet [Offensive] had already happened?

[The Tet Offensive was one of the largest military campaigns of the Vietnam War, launched on 30 January 1968, by forces of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese People's Army of Vietnam against the forces of the South Vietnamese Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the United States Armed Forces, and their allies. It was a campaign of surprise attacks against military and civilian command and control centers throughout South Vietnam.]

LH: The Tet had happened in February when I was—started my interview process, actually, which really even spurred me on more to want to go. It made me more curious than ever about why we were there investing these lives and money. I saw it as a huge adventure. Although I had been to Europe and Mexico and Canada, I saw it as an opportunity to see a different hemisphere, and really to help people, and to help myself understand it. I wasn't afraid.

The last place I went before I started my training in Washington was, I went up to my old camp in Wisconsin, and it has a militaristic flavor to it, but the camps [were] sponsored by St. John's Military Academy, and I think that maybe had some impact on me in the summers, watching these little kids do parades on Sunday afternoons, and a lot of the administrators there were retired military. But as I was leaving these little kids who had been my riding students were sobbing and crying and saying, "You're going to die. We're never going to see you again. Don't die. Don't die." That was kind of the first time it hit me that people were anticipating I wasn't coming back. It was sobering, honestly.

TS: Because they'd heard about death from Vietnam, in the news, right?

LH: And almost everybody knew somebody who had been killed or maimed or didn't come back at all, yeah.

TS: Well, what was your training like? You went to Washington, D.C.?

LH: I went to Washington, D.C. Now, I found out recently—I didn't know this—but the class before us was not allowed to train in Washington. That was the go-to place for training, because we did it at the Red Cross National Headquarters. But that was also the summer of so much unrest when the cities were all on fire and they had Freedom City, and all this out on the [National] Mall, and there were curfews, and so the class before us actually trained in—I think it was Charlottesville, Virginia, but by the time I started—which was July the eighth, one month exactly since I graduated—I graduated on the day they buried Robert Kennedy; June the eighth, 1968.

So July the eighth we arrived and we were put up in a hotel, and as it turned out, my roommate was Korea bound. So we had about twenty girls—twenty-two maybe—going to Vietnam, and maybe fourteen or so going to Korea, and we trained together the first week. Of course, that was about learning the history of the Red Cross, the importance of the Red Cross worldwide and in America. It was general programs all about the blood programs, the water safety cards, and all that. The second week we divided up and we got specific training for Korea versus Vietnam. We got our uniforms. The Korea girls got heavy wool sweaters and heavy coats and they were learning all about how to deal with snow, and of course, we didn't need any of that. We were getting more—and they had girls come back and talk to us who had recently returned.

TS: I was wondering about that; that some had been to Vietnam that you got to talk to?

LH: Yes.

TS: Do you remember anything that they were telling you?

LH: Well, always, when I reflect on it, I always say it's sort of like childbirth. Other people can tell you all about it, but your experience is going to be your own. There's no way to know until you actually go through it. And nobody mentioned ever being afraid. I mean, they told us about the two different—Our two different missions in Vietnam in this program which, of course, was—we were forbidden to ever refer to ourselves as "Donut Dollies". They thought that was demeaning, it was beneath us, it was silly, and we always were supposed to refer to ourselves as the SRAO girls, which does not exactly roll off the tongue.

TS: [chuckles] Right.

LH: Of course, once you get there we were always called the Donut Dollies by the military.

We had two main functions. One was to run—to staff recreation centers in safer zones, like Da Nang, Cam Ranh [Bay], but what—most of our work was spent flying in helicopters out to the field. So we taught—learned about what you would call "Forward Runs" or "Clubmobile" where we took out puzzles and games, and we made them up ourselves with acetate and it was just homemade fun. Usually it was just modeled on—the games were modeled on a TV show like Jeopardy or Wheel of Fortune, that kind of thing. Or we'd take out paper airplane directions and we'd have paper airplane contests. Or we'd—The games always had a theme that somebody knew something about, like state capitals or football or music or just something that—American history.

And it wasn't about the games. It was about just getting the soldiers minds off the war, and getting them to talk to each other and come together. And we were also told—and this turned out to be good advice—that there—you're going to get basically two reactions from the people you serve in Vietnam. You're going to have—and the ratio of men to women was about ten thousand to one, so you're going to get noticed a lot; wherever you are, whatever you're doing, people are going to see you. I always say we're the only women who had legs, because the other women in Vietnam, few as they were, were wearing fatigues; the nurses, the clerical personnel, they all wore army [or air force—LH clarified later] fatigues. We had blue dresses with our legs and arms showing.

But the—We had to make these games up, which caused the units to talk to each other. We always went out in pairs in the helicopters. We didn't go in the trucks [or jeeps—LH added later] very much because it wasn't safe. We—My first unit I was in had both forward runs and a rec[reation] center in Dong Ba Thin. It had forward runs and a recreation center. The second unit I was in, Cam Ranh Bay, we had two big recreation centers, and we didn't do many forward runs. The air force kept us mostly on the bases. And then the third unit I was in, the Americal division [the United States Army's 23rd Infantry Division] were all forward runs, because it wasn't safe there to have a recreation center.

So the games we would make up, and use in all the different units we went to, and then we'd pass them off—we were passing games around between our different—

TS: Oh, you shared the games?

LH: We'd share the games. So when we—everybody in our area had pretty much seen my

games—they was on the sixties music—then that would sent down to Cu Chi, and then we'd get them all around from there. But our typical day—

TS: Well, before you get there, why don't you talk about getting there; getting to Vietnam. How was that trip?

LH: Well, I had a really unusual trip. We left on July 22. We flew from Andrews Air Force Base [Maryland] to Travis [Air Force Base, California], and there we boarded an orange Braniff [International] plane, with all the wild, crazy, psychedelic stewardess' outfits, and they were only stewardesses back then. We were excited. There were about twenty-two of us headed for Vietnam.

TS: So you all went together?

LH: Yeah, we all went together on the overseas part, and maybe two hundred GIs. That's when I started realizing how much attention we really were going to gather, because it was ten to one ratio, and it was going to be ten thousand to one. But all the men—Oh, I didn't finish what I was saying about how the people [unclear] will put you on a pedestal; they think you're the most wonderful thing ever when you arrive in Vietnam, or you may get the cold shoulder, because some people, no matter what, think women have no business in a war zone anywhere, especially flying out [in the field—LH clarified later]. Other women, other men are really haunted by the sight of a woman. They think you're distracted from the war, but it's also distracting them from the war, and it reminds them so much—usually the married men, who really, really, really missed their wives, or girlfriends, mothers, sisters. We're that reminder that your loved one is half a world away, and some men never could reconcile that.

TS: So maybe a little resentment?

LH: Right. I mean, they just—it was painful—resentment and/or painful to see us there, and it's funny to break through to those men now, and they apologize and say, "I didn't understand why you were there," or "I didn't want you there," or "It [LH corrected later] made me sad to see you," but that percentage was really small.

TS: Was it?

LH: Really small.

TS: It was more the—

LH: Most of them were like, "Will you just sign my uniform with a magic marker? Will you just let me take a picture with you? Can you just—Can you just talk to me for just a minute?" They were just so thrilled, and some of them were so shy, because the average age over there was nineteen. We were all college graduates. We were more like big sisters I think, than girlfriends.

TS: Did you have some of them ask if they could smell you?

LH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

TS: I think I've heard that a few times.

LH: Yes. In fact, one of the most touching things that ever happened to me, I think, was at a reunion. I was in Houston [Texas]. I think it was 1986. And reunions were just getting started then. So we were invited to go to a welcome home parade and welcome home events in Houston, and I had been in a parade and was walking across a field and this—I saw someone coming towards me. And a lot of these men just wear ragtag uniforms—just ponytails and tattoos and the whole thing—but this guy was very nicely dressed in khaki pants, and weejuns [shoes]. He had on a red golf shirt and he had on mirrored sunglasses, and he came right up to me, and I had on a t-shirt that said "American Red Cross Donut Dolly, Vietnam. 1968/69." And he said, "Ma'am, ma'am, ma'am." He stopped me and he said, "Ma'am, were you ever in Chu Ci?"

And I went, "No, I didn't go down south. I—"

And he said, "Were you there in 1970 and '71?"

I said, "No, I was there in 1968 and '69."

He looked at me and said, "Well, when you came out to see us—" [chuckles].

TS: It didn't matter to him.

LH: It didn't matter that it wasn't really me.

TS: You represented the—

LH: It was the collective me. "Well, when you came out to see us, ma'am, let me just tell you what it was like." And he started crying, just sobbing, just tears flowing down his face and all over his shirt. He said, "I'm so sorry ma'am, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry."

And I said, "What?"

He said, "I never thanked you for coming. I never thanked you for coming."

And I held him. I mean, I put my hands around him and I said—my arms around him and I said, "It's okay. You're telling me now, and I'm glad. You waited eighteen years to tell me and I'm glad to hear it."

He said, "Ma'am, just let me tell you what it was like." He said, "When you girls came out to the field to see us," he said, "we didn't ever know when you were coming." And he said, "Those helicopters would land," he said, "you'd jump out of those helicopters wearing those baby blue dresses." And he said, "Ma'am, every man in my company just stood there. We just couldn't believe it. You were like angels coming out of—flying—dropping out of the sky." And he said, "Ma'am, we'd been out there for weeks. We were dirty, and we stunk, and we had a lot of our best people killed, and we were just like animals out there, ma'am. We were just killing so we wouldn't be killed." He said, "It was terrible. And then you landed," and he said, "We've got to put on shirts and tucked them in, and we had to watch out language, and we sort of got as close to you as we could." He said, "You just smelled so good." And he said, "And you were laughing." And he said, "You just made us—you just gave us hope, ma'am."

And then I started crying, and I said, "You know what? That's what we were

trying to do, and I appreciate so much you're telling me this."

And he said, "You stayed for about thirty or forty-five minutes," and he said, "it was just great. And we didn't know if we'd ever see you again but," he said, "when that helicopter flew away and you were waving good-bye," he said, "every man in my company looked up there and pointed and said, 'That's what I'm going home to.'" And he said, "Ma'am, a lot of those men didn't make it, but you made them think they were going to make it, and you made them think that they mattered."

I mean, that's the kind of impact—

TS: Yes.

LH: There's no other job in the world I'm ever going to get that kind of satisfaction from. I do think—and I'm glad I did—I do think I recognized the significance of it, at the time. The only regret I have about any of it is I didn't keep a journal. I wrote home in letters what I thought my mother could handle, and she saved them all and I have all my letters. But they don't really tell what was going on.

TS: But maybe that would have been too hard to—

LH: I wish I had it now.

TS: Yeah.

LH: I really wish I had it now, because there were things that happened that are seared in my memory forever. There are names and places that I've forgotten that I wish I could remember.

TS: Well, what'd you think about when you first got there, when you landed? Do have any visceral memory about—

LH: Oh, I didn't tell you about how crazy it was when we took off.

TS: Oh.

LH: We took off at night from Travis Air Force Base.

TS: Okay.

LH: Okay. So we're sitting there, and I'm sitting with another girl, who I actually ended up being stationed with.

TS: Oh, yeah?

LH: We took off, and we'd been in the air, I guess, about forty-five minutes, and I'd flown a lot, and I'd flown internationally before, but the plane was shaking like crazy, and they were trying to do beverage service and it was—they couldn't even pour the Cokes [Coca-Cola soft drink] it was so shaky and turbulent. So they stopped the drink service, and the

first time we hear anything from the captain is about an hour into the flight, and we hear this Texas drawl over the PA [public announcement system] say, "Folks, this is the Captain speaking. We're going to dump all our fuel and head back to the mainland." [chuckles] Which, we were like, "What?!" So they did, they dumped all the fuel, and we did a 180°—Is that right?

TS: Yes.

LH: Yeah, 180°; went back to the California, landed. Of course, the guys were all cheering.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Because their time started the minute they left Travis. Our time, as Red Cross, didn't start at least until we signed into a book [in Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon—LH added later]. So they went back to Travis, we landed. There was a big hole in the wing where the cowling had not been secured, and so the whole time we were flying this piece was ripping the wing.

So we didn't get our luggage. They put us all on buses, took us to Sacramento, and then took the manifest, which was, I guess, alphabetical order, and took one, two, three, four, and gave us a hotel key. And so, they had men and women all mixed up together.

TS: Right.

LH: [chuckles] We didn't have any clothes—no night clothes. But we straightened out the gender thing, so the women all ended up [together—LH added later] in our own hotel rooms. We stayed there for twenty-four hours. I didn't even tell my mother, because I thought, "This is just too crazy. She's not really all behind my going over there anyway." So we stayed in Sacramento for an extra day and then we took off again.

We—I guess back then planes didn't have enough fuel to make it the whole way, because we went from Travis Air Force Base to Hawaii. And I'll never forget, the guys came back from the layover in Hawaii and gave us leis [a garland or wreath], so we were wearing leis the whole way. I have a picture somewhere of me wearing my lei. And then we went—Let's see—Travis to Hawaii, Hawaii, I think, to Wake Island—I think—then to Guam and then the Philippines. So we made about four or five stops across the Pacific [Ocean] and refueled every time. And then when we got to the Philippines it was about an hour, hour and a half, out, and they told us that when we got to Tan Son Nhut to land that we were going to go immediately into the terminal. Do not stop, do not take pictures, do not dilly-dally, just go. And this was in the day—they didn't have these covered jetways to get into the airport; you had to go downstairs [down a stairway—LH added later] and walk.

Well, before that though, as we got close to Tan Son Nhut we were really high in the air. And then they did almost a straight down descent and we landed. It was really dramatic. I've never had a landing like that. And the captain said, "Pick up your belongings, get off the plane, go straight into the—" he told us. And at the bottom of the stairwell there were armed, with M-16s, soldiers waiting for us. I will never forget—I've read the before—I will never forget when I walked out that door, the heat and the smell. Many people reflect on that. I don't know what it is, but—

TS: They sure do.

LH: —as we were taxiing over to the airport I remember seeing these blown up remnants of [Lockheed] C-130s [airplanes], and runways that had been bombed and mortared and rocketed, and I thought, "Wow, this isn't a movie. This is the real thing." And of course, they got us right into Tan Son Nhut. The civilians of us—the Red Cross—went straight to a book we had to sign, which I had never used military time. They had taught us all this in training, about ranks and military time and—so I put—I remember picking up the pen and putting 0600 [6:00 a.m.] 24 July 1968, and signing my name and putting American Red Cross. Which the reason I remembered it so well is, when my son—our son was born exactly six years later, I remember I'm calling it out in the delivery room, "0600, 24 July!"

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Thomas Blair Hines, Jr. arrived in the world. So it's just funny how that happened. But we went straight from there. They rounded us all up, took us to the Red Cross headquarters, where we had a little orientation, then took us to what they call the Massachusetts BOQ [bachelor officer quarters], which is where the officers processed in and out of Saigon. It was my first experience with unisex bathrooms.

TS: Okay.

LH: And showers.

TS: How was that?

LH: Interesting. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah?

LH: The—Our windows—It was an old concrete—I don't know where these buildings had come from. The French, I guess. But the windows all were taped up with duct tape, so if the window shattered the glass wouldn't fall on us. The shower consisted of a handheld shower—you just shut the door and the whole bathroom was the shower. I got—They—We had orientation classes for a couple days, and then at night we would go out to eat, always in military facilities, or the Rex Hotel [Saigon] or the Caravelle [Hotel] or something like that. We were warned not to drink ice or water. I remember the last night we were in town we went to this place to eat, and then they said, "Come on upstairs. There's a party upstairs on the rooftop." So we—the girls all went up there, and again, we got a lot of notice. Interestingly, we were sitting there, I ordered a drink, and I thought, "What is the drink of the tropics? Aha! Gin and tonic." Because the quinine will protect me from malaria. So I ordered a gin and tonic; never had one. I didn't particularly like it, and I held it long—the whole night; I had this whole drink—the same drink the whole night. And the first thing I remember happening when we got up there was a very attractive, tall, handsome, in uniform African-American lieutenant came up and asked me

to dance, and I was out on that dance floor in a flash. I had never danced with a black person before but there I was, I was doing my thing and it was great.

Well, we got back to the BOQ, and about two o'clock in the morning I got hit with the worst gastrointestinal explosion on both ends than I've ever had in my life. Oh, it was so terrible. And we were supposed to leave early the next morning for our units—our units out in the field in Vietnam—and I couldn't get off the bed, I was so sick. And I'll never forget this roommate of mine who was another Red Cross girl, she said, "What's the matter? Can't you hold your liquor?"

Well, the problem was I had held the same drink all night long and the ice had melted into the drink, so I was so sick, so I did not get to leave with my unit. Everybody else left and I was stuck behind at this BOQ for two or three—I ended up in the third field hospital, getting treated, and so I got a late arrival at my unit.

TS: How long did that take you to recover from?

LH: Oh, man. It was terrible. I was so dehydrated and I couldn't drink the water.

TS: Right.

LH: The Red Cross was sending ginger ale and things to me, but it just took two days to get over, it really did. And some IVs [intravenous therapy].

TS: And some IVs?

[Intravenous therapy (IV) is the infusion of liquid substances directly into a vein.]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

LH: That was my introduction to Vietnam. Having—

TS: Did you ever have a gin and tonic again?

LH: That's still my drink.

TS: Oh, is it? [both chuckling] I would think that it would set you back.

LH: I just drink them faster. Don't let the ice melt.

TS: That's the key, okay.

LH: Especially if you're in the tropics.

TS: That's the lesson learned, alright. That's interesting. Where were you sent to then for your first—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

LH: I went to Don Ba Thin, which was the headquarters for the 18th Engineering Brigade, and that was a six person unit, and we had two trailers—three in each—and that's where I learned the ropes. I mean, that's where I—we didn't do—we went to Ban Me Thuot and a couple other places, but basically what we did there was run the center, and we also did a lot of work—we'd take cookies and games and puzzles and stuff out to the flight lines, the offices. They had a little—little hospital there. We'd do a little bit of hospital visitation.

One of the things I remember doing, because I could play the piano, is they asked us to serve at the memorial services. I think that's when it really got real for me, was going into these little chapels and seeing the boots and the helmets and the M-16s, representing people. That's the first encounter I had with lives and death. I didn't know who they were, but that was pretty sobering to see. Not just to read about it in the paper back in the States, but to see it right there.

And then we also were close range. We used to go out and visit—there was a Special Forces "B" team and—In fact, the movie *The Green Berets* came out while I was over there, and over there movie screens consisted of boards painted white. And so, the girls got invited to come over and watch *The Green Berets*, and of course, it's just such a terrible movie with so many things about it that are wrong, that the Green Berets started filling up beer cans with sand and slamming them into the boards.

TS: Throwing it at the—

LH: And also, I'll never forget, they had—somehow they had come across two orphaned—they said—tiger cubs, and they were probably about twenty or thirty pounds at that point, but they had the run of the camp. And they would jump up on the bar of the Special Forces, and sit in our laps; we could pet these tiger cubs. And I understand—this is true—that they ended up donating one of them to the zoo in Saigon, but the other one, whose name was Clyde, ended up being shipped back and lived out his life at the Atlanta zoo.

TS: Is that right?

LH: They gave it to Atlanta because of Fort Benning being [near there in Georgia—LH clarified later], and so I used to go see that tiger, Clyde, at the zoo in Atlanta.

TS: You knew him when he was just a little cub.

LH: Yeah, I knew him when he was just a baby. But—And they had pet monkeys. I mean, everybody—every unit always had puppies—they'd find puppies out in the field—and cats, and all kinds of weird stuff.

TS: Did they have any of the young Vietnamese orphans? Any of them?

LH: There was an orphanage right outside the air base. It was in-between, sort of, Dong Ba Thin and Cam Ranh Bay. There was a orphan—a Catholic orphanage, and we would go out there and take out toothbrushes and—did more of that actually from Cam Ranh because it was a navy-run MEDCAP [medical civil action program], but it was the same orphanage, because we would do Christmas parties for those little kids, and sometimes the mama sans would bring them to work with them. We always had a mama san in every unit who worked for us and cleaned our trailers or Quonset huts, and ironed our clothes—washed and ironed our clothes for us, because that was just the way it was.

TS: Did you just paid them a fee to do that every month?

LH: Yeah, something; probably like five dollars a week or something. And they always said don't overpay, you don't want to upset the economy.

But I tell you what was funny was, we got to know our mama sans pretty well. However, we were warned at all times never to talk about troop movements, or where we were going the next day, or any of that, because you never knew, ever, who was VC [Vietcong] and who wasn't. And so, we couldn't ever put out our schedules, where we were going or anything that we knew. We had to be very careful. When we—We had a secret security clearance, so we were around maps and information like that all the time.

But the Vietnamese, and I [LH corrected later] really did enjoy getting to know these young—some of them were older and some of them were younger women—but they would bring us gifts. Like, they would bring us bags of crabs, which—I mean, live crabs—which I really didn't know what to do with. They would bring us this banana oil that they liked to cook with, and they would like—they liked to cook for us. On the other hand, they loved—and weren't supposed to take them off [base]—but we would get them Ritz crackers. I don't know why they loved Ritz crackers, but we would always get Ritz crackers, and I think they were stuffing them in their clothes and taking them off base.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: And they could not stand cheese; the whole—the whole smell of cheese. We would have—We'd say, "Eat it, mama san, eat some." And they would just scream; they couldn't stand cheese.

TS: They liked the cracker but not the cheese on it.

LH: Not the cheese. And I've read since then that Asian people have some kind of lactose intolerance, so they really—cheese is disturbing to their systems.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Not only the smell, but just they can't eat cheese. But that—Our contact with the Vietnamese people was so remote. I mean, we just—the people that worked on base, or if we'd go to an orphanage, or that kind of thing, but we never really got to know Vietnamese people.

TS: You weren't integrated in the culture because you were—

LH: Never learned the language, I mean, other than—I can say Ba Mui Ba, which is their beer; "33." Which was interesting, too, because they said always drink your Ba Mui Ba in the can, don't put it in a glass, because it has so much formaldehyde in it. And I saw this. When it was in a glass, if a fly or mosquito went over it the formaldehyde was so strong they would just drop dead right there into your glass.

[Note: The theory that Ba Mui Ba beer contained formaldehyde has been disproven.]

TS: [chuckling]

LH: You had a lesser chance of getting one in a can.

TS: A can. That's interesting.

LH: And I drank it. What was I thinking? I don't know. Twenty two [years old].

TS: [chuckles] Well, you had started a while ago to talk about a typical day. Do you want to do that now?

LH: Oh, okay. Alright, a typical day, if you worked in the center, you would go—we were open from 10:00 [a.m.] to 10:00 [p.m.], and we worked, like, five or six hour shifts—six hours shifts—and then it'd be always two; we always had two. Everybody was welcome. I mean, if you were Vietnamese soldiers or Australian soldiers or Brit—anybody who wanted to come in, our—we did not allow weapons in the unit of course, and we did not allow any kind of drugs, or any kind thing that was contraband.

TS: What did it look like? What did the unit like?

LH: It was, of course, no air conditioning, but we had, usually, a converted building, and we would have bookshelves and we'd have stationery, and sometimes we'd have ping pong tables. Cards, always cards. I'd never even heard of Pinochle but everybody always wanted to play Pinochle. I never knew how but I was—

TS: Did you ever play Euchre?

LH: Well, probably, but I never heard of that either.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: Those are not Southern things.

TS: No.

LH: I could play Crazy Eights or Go Fish, but I would sit there—it wasn't about playing cards,

it was—

TS: You all aren't stuck inside in the winter time playing cards, that's it.

LH: Well, it was news to me. And I didn't play bridge either, so basically, what the guys wanted to do was just sit there and talk to us.

TS: Right.

LH: Which is what we ended up doing. But we had—Always we had to make big huge vats—which the military supplied—of Kool-Aid and coffee. We always had hot coffee and cold Kool-Aid and cookies. No donuts; beside [despite] the Donut Dolly moniker we never had donuts. But people could write a letter home. We had tape so people could record messages and send home. We had newspapers. They could wear their uniforms, they could wear civilian clothes. It was just a place to socialize and be off time. I'd say 95%, maybe more than that, were enlisted. The officers had officers' clubs to go to; the enlisted gravitated towards us. And we always had a program at night. One of the favorite programs, it would be—maybe we'd do one of our games, or we'd have crossword puzzles contests or, again, paper airplanes. People from the States would send us things that we could be inventive with; crafts or candy, and things like that; we'd always have stuff like that.

Our chap—I'll always be grateful to them—my host chapter in Cam Ranh Air Force Base was Hennepin County [Minnesota]. Wait a minute. Maybe it was—No, I think it was actually Minneapolis. It was Hennepin County, Minnesota, which was St. Paul, Minnesota. And they were so good about sending us things; paperback books, just all—we always had things to choose from to put out for the guys that was new. Keychains. Just any little thing that they could think of to send us.

But one of the favorite programs, it—that the—we had at night in both centers—I had centers at Cam Ranh Bay and Dong Ba Thin—both of them—I still have a picture of it—I have a—on the wall, it says, "What did you do in the war, Mommy?" And they loved it when we put on our civilian clothes.

TS: Yeah?

LH: And we would walk out in regular clothes. They hadn't seen women in anything except fatigues and our blue uniforms, and they just thought it was so great and we wore them.

Now, shopping, that was another thing that was very interesting. Shopping was nonexistent, obviously, for women, so we lived and died by the Sears, [Roebuck and Co.] and [J.C.] Penney's catalogs. We just loved it when we would get a new Penney's catalog and we could order our clothes. And of course, when we left we left everything behind. Didn't want to see those clothes again to begin with, and the people coming in could wear them, and then I guess they gave them to the Vietnamese when they were through with them.

But that was a typical day in a center. And then while two people were working, six—like, there were six at Dong Ba Thin. So two would be in the center, two would be out doing runs to the security police or the dog handlers or the radio research or the flight lines, and then the other two people would either be having a day off or be working on

paperwork. Or dealing with issues with Saigon or people moving in and out, that kind of thing.

A forward run. A forward run is different, and the most typical forward run I had, because we put one every day, was in Chu Lai.

TS: Okay. In Chu Lai?

LH: In Chu Lai, because the forward runs we did at Dong Ba Thin or at Cam Ranh were not nearly as frequent, and one of our runs in—when we went off base in Cam Ranh, Tuy Hoa [Air] Base did not have a unit then, so we would go down and spend the night and program down at Tuy Hoa. It was sort of an experiment to see if the Tuy Hoa air force unit wanted to support a Red Cross chapter—I mean, a Red Cross unit there. They did; they finally ended up opening one. But we would go down there and show what it would be like, because the only places we ever went were where the military approved of, and the only places we ever lived was where the military invited us in, because they provided our transportation and our housing.

TS: Okay.

LH: We had to pay for our food, and we had to pay for everything at the PX [post exchange], but they had to be able—and security; they provided our security.

So a typical forward run would be like the ones that I would do in Chu Lai. There were, again, six of us in that unit. Americal division had three separate divisions: the 11th Brigade, the 196th Brigade, and the 198th. So every day two of us would go to one of those brigades. We would go all over that brigade that day, and by this point I had been promoted to program director, so it was my job not only to make sure that two girls got transportation to those units, but also that the programs that they took were fresh and new, had not been seen before; that they were supplied with plenty of stationery and pens and all the stuff that we used to give away; candy and stuff. And that—If we had a new girl, that she was traveling with somebody who was experienced. I mean, the program director had a pretty big job. I would spend the night before lining up these helicopters to pick us up, to take us out, because you couldn't just have people going out without a way back. You had to make sure that the helicopter company remembered that you were out there and you had to come back at night.

So we would get up about 4:30, five o'clock in the morning. See why we needed a curfew?

TS: Yeah.

LH: We'd get up at—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: What was your curfew?

LH: Twelve.

TS: Okay.

LH: And if we—if we had trailers, like I did at Dong Ba Thin and Americal, we could have anybody over that we chose. I mean, if you were dating a lieutenant, fine. If you were dating a sergeant, fine. Anybody could come to our trailers. But in Cam Ranh, where we lived in Quonset huts with other officers, there was no way to invite anybody in there. We had to—We really, pretty much, dated officers there because there was nowhere to go if you had a date with an enlisted person.

Back to Chu Lai. We would get up about 4:30 [a.m.] or 5:00 [a.m.], have everything ready by the front door, walk out the front door, walk maybe a half a mile down to catch our helicopters, which all picked us up at the same place. The place that we found the helicopters waiting for us was called Graves Registration. That's because the helicopters that we were riding in had been spending the night before we got on going out all over the AOs—which is the Areas of Operation—they'd been all over the different AOs picking up wounded and dead.

So when we got down to Graves Registration and these helicopters are landing with their last load of body bags, we would stay a respectful distance away while they pulled off the body bags and just stacked them up, and then they would hose out the floors of the helicopters. We didn't ride in seats, we rode on the floors of the helicopters. It's really surreal. It was then and especially is now—watching that, realizing those were people, and we—they were always tagged with a name, which, of course, to protect ourselves and them we never ever got close enough to see the tags. But the personnel would hose out the blood and the mud, and the urine and the feces, and whatever else was in the floors of the helicopters and wipe them down, and then they'd load it up with resupplies. It was usually C-Rations and mail and can—cases of beer and Cokes; that kind of thing. And then we'd either sit on the floor or on the cans of the resupply, and then we'd go on our merry way. And then they would start processing the body bags into the Graves Registration office.

We would land usually on a fire base or a landing zone, somewhere—we would go wherever the troops were and the military thought it was safe enough to go, and we would land about the time that the night patrol was coming in, so we would get the assignment of serving breakfast, and these people had been out all night long and were filthy, dirty, and it—again, we always caused a minor sensation, and we had somewhat of a schedule. Like, we would go to certain places every Tuesday that we could get there, or every Thursday, so they sort of, kind of, knew that we were coming, but if the military said we couldn't come we, of course, didn't.

I remember one time a guy came up to me and was really indignant, he said, "Alright, we didn't have Tuesday last week."

I said, "What do you mean, you didn't have Tuesday?"

He said, "Because you girls didn't come."

And I said, "Look, we would have been here but they wouldn't let us." So we had a fairly predictable schedule, depending on troop movements.

But we would serve meals, usually three meals a day—breakfast, lunch, and dinner—and the guys would come through and we'd just ladle it out. And then we would do our little program on this hill, and we'd stay on each hill or whoever we were. It could

be a bridge; it could be a school; wherever the troops were. And after forty-five minutes to an hour they'd pack us up and then move to the next place. So typically we'd go to five or six different locations in a day, and then about 6:00 [p.m.] or so they'd find a helicopter that could take us back in. So that was the way we spent our days, and they were usually, like, twelve hour days, so from 5:30 in the morning.

TS: Pretty long day. Pretty grueling too.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

LH: Yeah, and sometimes it was later than that. And then we'd all come back to our trailers, and we—sometimes we ate out in the field, sometimes we ate back at the house, but then it was time to start over again. And so, we did that five days a week. Our weekends, in a unit like that, were up to us. Of course, I had paperwork, because I always had to report how many visits we made, how many troops we saw, how many miles we traveled, how many meals we served; I was always doing paperwork and setting up the next week's activities.

And then also, the part of our job that wasn't described to us in Washington, and it was purely optional, was to do hospital visitations. So we did the hospital visitations wherever I was, in every unit I was in. Well, the air force hospital in Cam Ranh [The 12th USAF Hospital at Cam Ranh Bay Air Base] is the largest one in the world [one of the largest—LH corrected later]; it's [it had—LH corrected later] a small clinic of trauma patients; not many beds. But the one in Chu Lai was very large, the 312th Evac, which interestingly was staffed by my hometown; Lexington and Winston-Salem personnel. There only two hospital units that got called up the entire Vietnam War, and the 312th was one of them, and all these people that had told me, "Ha, ha, ha, you're going to Vietnam, we're not," they actually got called up, so I saw some classmates over there.

TS: That must have been interesting.

LH: Very interesting. Three—Oh, I didn't say this earlier about my classmates—Three of my classmates—my male classmates—were killed in Vietnam, which is a pretty big number because I probably only—there were two hundred and twelve in my class, and I would guess, maybe, eighty-five or ninety were male, so to have three killed over there is a pretty high number.

But we would go to the hospitals to see what we could do to help there, and the 312th Evac, the people there, there were basically in two categories; they either had minor wounds, or they had malaria, or something that was going to be easily fixed and they would get sent back to field, and they were pretty—they were guys who did not have a very good outlook, because they didn't want to go back to the field; I didn't blame them. So they were a little bit hard to visit with because they were pretty glum. Then the other contingent of people at 312th Evac were the dying, because they weren't—most of those people were not going to be medevaced [medical evacuation by helicopter] to Japan or back to the States; they were left there to die.

TS: Did they know that?

LH: Probably. Some of them were semi-conscious, unconscious. But that was when I really saw the horror of war. I mean, it's not a movie, it's not a TV show, it's not Sylvester Stallone or Clint Eastwood [American "action movie" actors] charging over a hill. It's not that. It's horrible. It's absolutely horrible. And I learned pretty early on, because we'd go over early in the mornings—8:00 or so in morning, stay as long as we could, all day usually—that you don't start off with ward one, two, or three because those are the really, seriously, dying. But we'd go into the wards quietly and ask the nurses, "Where should we go today?"

And they would say, "Make sure you go to Bed Seven, Eight, Fourteen, Sixteen," which the implication was they don't have very long, or they need somebody right now. And we would try to see everybody. Occasionally there'd be somebody going through pinning on Purple Hearts on pillow cases and—but a lot—I just never realized the horrors of amputations and—I mean, I'm an English major, I had never in my life seen people so badly burned and so badly hurt. There are no mirrors in wards like that; ever. The people that had their legs amputated, they would have these things that would come down from the ceiling like peach baskets and just their stumps would be in there and they'd—it was terrible. Or you'd go to a bedside and there'd be a person whose intestines were in a clear bag, sitting right there on top of—I just—I don't know how I did that. I don't know how I did that, except you just do it. There's no training for it, there's no conditioning for it, you just walk up there and you'd say, "Hey, I'm Larry and I'm from North Carolina. How's it going today?" Or, "How are—I'm glad—I'm glad I got a chance to talk to you today."

A lot of them would say things like, "I can't go back like this. My wife doesn't want me. My girlfriend—How do I look?" Because they don't know. They're burned, their ears—I mean, half their face is gone. I mean, I don't know.

TS: What would you say to them?

LH: One thing I know I didn't say, and I'm so glad I didn't say, I didn't say, "Don't worry about it, it's going to be fine." I never minimized it. I would try to echo back what they were saying. When they would say, "My wife isn't going to want me back like this," I would I say something along the lines of, "You know, It's going to be tough." All the while knowing he wasn't ever going to see his wife again. I was the last person—one of the last people he was ever going to see in his life, ever. Not only the last—It was huge—It was a huge responsibility. The nurses would have done it but they were so busy doing medical procedures, they didn't have time to go have the conversations that we had. Or frequently I'd write letters home they would dictate to me.

TS: Yeah.

LH: Or they would ask me to read letters to them, or they would ask—the Bibles were always ever present—they would ask me to read something from the Psalms—from anything, I'd always pick the Psalms or just some—just trying to be a comfort, and knowing this was their last experience with anyone on Earth. It still is hard for me to reflect on, as you can probably tell.

TS: Did you have a soldier or seaman or something that you visited that really stood out in any particular way?

LH: You know, honestly, they were all so young. And this is something I've read before, too, and it's so true: you don't learn anybody's names. You make a point—even if you go out on a fire base and you're really close to somebody, all you know him is "Butch" or "Freddie," you don't know his last name. You don't want to know his last name. You know he's "Butch," and you know that he's from Jesup, Georgia, but that's all you know.

TS: I had another Donut Dolly tell me—and I remember for the first time I had heard that—that she only knew the men by their nicknames—"Tex"—or just the way you described, and that when she went to the Vietnam Memorial it was really troubling to her that she didn't know where their names were on the wall, because she didn't really—

LH: That's self-protection.

TS: Yeah.

LH: You can't know, because in the beginning—and see, the Americal division, which I said earlier, they're the ones who had committed the Mỹ Lai Massacre—atrocities—the year before. I made the mistake of going out to—one time and—I might have missed somebody, and I thought, "Where is Tex? I always—He always carried our prop bag for us." Or, "Where is Tex? He always made sure that the—"Going to the bathroom was a real interesting thing on our fire base.

[The Mỹ Lai Massacre was the Vietnam War mass killing of between 347 and 504 unarmed civilians in South Vietnam on 16 March 1968. It was committed by U.S. Army soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade, 23rd Infantry Division (Americal). Victims included men, women, children, and infants]

TS: Why?

LH: I'll get to that in a minute.

TS: Okay.

LH: But anyway, Tex would always be the one that made sure that he met us at the helicopter, and I made the mistake one time—I'm saying, "Where is Tex?" And I found out that Tex had been killed. Now, see, if you don't ask where Tex is, he might be on R&R, he might have gone home—something really good might have happened to Tex—so you just quit asking when somebody's not there.

TS: You just never ask.

LH: You just don't ask.

TS: Even though you wondered still.

LH: And back in one of the bathrooms [?]. One of the first times I went out on fire base—a forward support base, FSB—one of the first times I ever went out, everybody said, "Make sure you wave in a real friendly—and say, 'Hey!' so everybody notices that you're landing," and I realized that all these men weren't waving back. I mean, they were just standing there. And I thought, "Why in the world?" Well, then I realized, after I landed, what they were doing was they were—excuse me—standing at a piss tube. [both chuckle] Which I never knew what a piss tube was, but it's exactly what it sounds like. It's a tube that come out of the ground that only men can use.

So going to bathroom—

TS: Okay.

LH: —there was always one or two latrines on these fire bases.

TS: Made for men?

LH: Just for men. And they usually had tops on them with screens, I guess to keep the flies out, because they were just latrines with metal cans underneath them. And there were a couple of places that they were so thoughtful—and we thought this was very nice—they had installed little shades—little roll down shades—and on one particular fire base they had painted them pink and put a big red cross—a big red cross on the pink shades, so the guys knew on the days that we were coming to roll the shades down. [chuckles]

TS: That was sweet.

LH: I know. That's—It's some of the best humor ever.

TS: Yeah.

LH: Comes out of wartime, it really does. But anyway, that was what the hospital wards were like. We did not go much to the Vietnamese wards, because, first of all, it was a language barrier. I mean, it was hard to go talk to them because you couldn't. A lot—And it was also hard to go to the Vietnamese wards because a lot of times you'd see whole families all on one bed, because that's what they wanted to do, which is be as close as they could. You'd see a lot of really napalm burned, shot, hurt people, which was disturbing, especially the children.

And then the other people in the Vietnamese ward were the prisoners: the POWs [prisoners of war], the VC, and the NVA [North Vietnamese Army]. You knew who they were because they were always chained to the bed—I mean, handcuffed to the beds. So we didn't go to the Vietnamese wards very often. But the reason I'm bringing up the Vietnamese ward is because that's where Sharon Ann Lane worked, and of the eight women on the Wall she is the only woman who was actually killed in combat, and that—I heard that because when that rocket landed on that ward on June the eighth 1969—my one year anniversary of graduating from college—Sharon had volunteered to be in that

Vietnamese ward. And she was killed instantly, protecting her patients in that ward from that rocket. We went over there and saw it; it was terrible.

[On the morning of 8 June 1969, the 312th Evacuation Hospital at Chu Lai was hit with rockets fired by the Viet Cong. First Lieutenant Sharon Ann Lane was struck and died instantly of fragmentation wounds to the chest. She was the only American nurse killed in Vietnam as a direct result of hostile fire]

But back to the Wall. I had the same feeling. I don't know their names either, but my response to that is, since the Wall's in chronological order, it's so easy for me to touch all those people, because I stand there—and it's a very tall panel, because it's—a lot of people were dying—I stand there and I just rub my hands over all those names. I know that some of them were those patients, or those people I knew on fire bases who didn't get to come home.

Now, I do look up specifically my classmates; other people, like my husband's cousin who was shot down over Laos, never returned; I do look up those; specific names. But it's a collective thing for me, just like it was a collective thing then; going bedside to bedside to bedside I tried not to look at their names.

TS: Yes. Did you date anyone?

LH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, a lot of "ones."

TS: [chuckles] Well, it was ten thousand to one, I think [unclear].

LH: Yeah, and a lot of "ones."

TS: What was that like?

LH: Wow. Well, as I said, we were all twenty-two to twenty-seven [years old] so our major—I don't know how you can even say it—our major choice of date material was the officers, which we tried really hard not to come across as being elitist or only interested in officers, because that's what the men would say: "Oh, you're just over here for the officers." That's really not true. We were really much more over there just for the enlisted people. To be—we interacted a whole lot more with them. But when it came to having a connection with somebody, we were much more likely to date other college educated people who were more in our age group.

And, let's see, I seemed to gravitate towards pilots. They seemed to have the F-4 [fighter-bomber aircraft] pilots at Cam Ranh Bay and Caribou [cargo aircraft] pilots at Cam Ranh Bay, and then—they were—because they had day rooms and they had places to gather, to have parties and social events. It was harder to meet [other] people. Honestly, we didn't have much time to date; we really didn't. We were so busy, and so tired, and you never got to have a bad day; you never got to be grumpy.

TS: You always had to be up?

LH: Yeah, you never had to got—and everybody, I mean, PMS [pre-menstrual syndrome] was not allowed. I mean, we had to be happy and fun, great—

TS: Did you date in groups, then?

LH: Well, it's funny, it's kind of like when you're in college and certain girls date certain fraternities. I mean, certain girls would date certain squadrons.

TS: Okay.

LH: When you got new to a unit somebody would say, "Well, come on, go with me. We know these guys over at Such-and-so," and you'd start—I mean, yeah—

TS: You just get familiar with a particular group.

LH: Yeah, but you always had the potential of knowing that guy that you're kissing good night was going to get in a plane the next day—or go out into the field the next day and you may never see him again. There was a lot of pressure to live in the now, and you do have to wonder—watch out for—and the Red Cross warned us about this—that the people who miss women the most and are going to reach out to you first are often the married men, and a lot of them would try to hide that, and successfully hid that from some—

TS: How are you going to know that, if they don't have their ring or [unclear].

LH: Right. And they've got their buddies covering for them as well. Others were very upfront about it.

TS: Yeah.

LH: And would just say, "I really, really enjoy being around you." [chuckles] So—I mean, again, that's another reason you needed to be college educated and twenty-two to twenty-eight; you need to have a clear head about what was okay and what wasn't.

TS: Were there things like sexual harassment or any of those things going on too; I mean, that you were aware of at the time?

LH: I never felt the least bit—No, I didn't. I mean, I felt sexism, which I think is different. It wasn't harassment, it was just like—a lot of times from these crusty, old World War II sergeant majors was like, "What are you girls doing here? We can't get anything done when you girls are out—here today." It was just, sort of gruff, and there was a lot of, "Red Cross did this to my uncle in World War II," and a lot of that kind of stuff; kind of resentment against the Red Cross, not against us. But we had been taught, again, how to deal with those kind of comments in our training.

TS: They had covered things like that?

LH: Yes, they had.

TS: Were you ever afraid, then, of being in that kind of environment with men who were living this life that was so terrible? Did you ever feel nervous around them or—

LH: No. Now, what we were instructed to do is we were supposed to be good listeners. They could tell us anything—anything—that they had done, or wanted to do, or planned to do, but it—I tell you, the only thing that would cross the line that we had to report was if men threatened to harm themselves or other fellow soldiers. If we ever heard that happening, coming out of somebody's mouth, we had to report that. I never heard that.

TS: No?

LH: No. And I doubt that anybody else did. And people ask me about the drugs. When I was over there in '68 and '69, the whole drug thing had not really—in my opinion, had not really hit. Because I would hear people say to me, "Anybody out in the field who takes drugs is a fool because you've got to be, not only on your toes, but you're protecting everybody else. So I never heard any problem with drugs out in the field. I might have smelled marijuana once or twice, like, near a center, maybe coming through the screens, but I was not aware of drugs being a problem. I mean, when I got back to this country drugs had sort of taken off, but not when I was over there.

Now, I do need to say what it was like to—one reason—Another reason we were tired and we needed a curfew is because we spent a lot of nights in the bunker. We spent a lot of nights—now, people, when I got back, would say, "I guess you were in a safe place because you were a woman, or you were Red Cross, so you were safe."

No, nobody was safe, especially in Americal in Chu Lai. We lived about three hundred yards, I'd say at the most, from the commanding general, and supposedly when they were trying to hoist rockets in and mortars in they were trying to kill the commanding general, so if it fell short it would land right on our trailers. Which they were un-air-conditioned, little tin cans. I'd get in bed at night and the thermometer on the back—was from a funeral home, interestingly—would say 120° [F] and beyond. It was—it just no way.

TS: It was tapped out, right?

LH: Oh, it was gone. And it—this is what a normal night was like, we all knew this. There were three of us in each trailer, I was in charge of my trailer and the unit director was in charge of the other trailer. Every night we would specifically be—very carefully to shake out our shoes and put them beside the bed, check the bed for scorpions, and your shoes, and then we would lay out our steel pot, our flak jacket, and our rain coat, because in the middle of the night—which was a lot of nights—when we started getting shelled in the middle of the night, if the trailer was shaking so badly that—and there was not much time between the ordnance, we were supposed to take our little thin cots—these were just these army cots with just springs and a little thin mattress—the drill was you take the mattress and you roll it over on the floor and you just wait for the shelling to stop. If, in

my opinion, I had—we had time to go to the bunker, which meant there was time between the rockets or the mortars—or sometimes we had sappers [a Viet Cong or NVA commando, usually armed with explosives] get into the base camp and run around and kill a lot of people—then we would jump up, put on our steel pot [military slang, meaning helmet], our flak jacket and our rain coat and shoes, and run out to our backyard bunker, which we shared with some majors and lieutenants colonels who lived behind us. So that's where I was. Usually we'd stay in the bunker, maybe, forty-five minutes to an hour; it wouldn't go on that long.

But the night of June the eighth—the night of June 7 and 8—was the night that we were in the bunker for nearly three or four hours. In fact, we stayed out there until the sun came up, which was very unusual, because I went out and took a picture of the sun coming up. But we heard that rocket hit that 312th hospital ward out the back and kill Sharon Lane. And, again, when I look back on it that was just a normal way to go to bed; just to lay out—anticipating getting killed every night before you went to sleep. I don't know. It's odd how your mind and your body can make—the surreal becomes real and natural.

TS: It just becomes the new normal.

LH: Right, it is the new normal, and you just accept it, and—

TS: Well, when you learned about Sharon Lane—You said you had been friends with her?

LH: I had known her because of going to that ward, but she was only in country about five weeks; she was not there very long. I have made a point—I earlier had said that her mother, of course, and her parent—her father—she had two brothers and her father and mother—were just heartbroken, of course, when this happened, and somebody told me at a reunion one time in Washington—one of the nurses said that they hadn't had any closure because they didn't have any pictures of the hospital where she worked. Well, I had a lot of pictures of the hospital where she worked. In fact, when we would go to supper at the Officers' Club, it was right across—directly across the water from the O Club, and we would sit there and watch those medevac helicopters land. I mean, I'm sitting there having a steak sandwich and they're just pulling litters off these helicopters. I mean, there again, surreal. How does it—How do you—How does that become normal?

But this is about, maybe, ten years, twenty years, maybe, after Sharon had died I started—I sent some letters up to her mother—her father died by then—and we became pen pals, and she said to me through her letters, that since Sharon, like me, was an only daughter, but didn't get to come home, that she would—with my permission, she would like to, sort of, envision what Sharon's life would have been like if she had, like me, lived home—lived to come home and get married and have children.

I heard that Sharon was going to get a posthumous award up in Virginia Beach, and so I made an effort from Raleigh to drive up there. And I saw her mother, and I went up behind her mother and I leaned up—I put my arms around her, leaned down and whispered in her ear that I was there, and we both started crying. She's a very special person to me. Kay's in her nineties now and she's not going to be here that much longer. But she did invite me up about ten years ago and I went. Every year on June the eighth they have a special ceremony in Canton, Ohio, which is where Sharon is from, and I went

to that. But the night before that I went over to their house, and Kay invited me into Sharon's room, which looks just like Sharon walked out last night; it's exactly the way it was when she left it. Her commendations, and her clothes are still hanging in the closet. There are plaques on the wall. Kay and I sat there and had supper together. She took me out to the cemetery to visit Sharon's grave. So I have a very special connection with her. I wish I had known her more, but on the other hand I'm glad I didn't, because it's sad enough.

TS: Loss would have been even greater.

LH: Yeah. It's terrible. Just terrible. But I say this every time I go out and speak anywhere, war is the absolute worst possible thing that ever happens to anybody. There's never been a good one, there's never been—I mean, it's the worst thing that happens to a country and to an individual. You're never the same. I had a Marine tell me this one night. He looked at me in a bar at a reunion, of course—enlisted guy—and he said, "Did you really go to Vietnam and you really stayed over there for a year?"

And I said, "Yeah, I really did."

And he said, "Well, you'll never be like other people."

And I said, "What do you mean?"

And he said, "You'll never be like other people. You can go in a room with a thousand people and your views of life and living are not like anybody else's in the room," and that's so true.

Out on the fire bases that I went to a lot, on LZ center, I think, there was a big plaque over a bunker that said "You've never lived until you've almost died. For those who fight for it life has a flavor the protected will never know."

[LZ Center was a firebase in Tien Son for the Americal division]

TS: What do you think that people that haven't been to Vietnam don't understand or maybe don't appreciate about those who have?

LH: Well, I mean, that quote, as I've gotten older, and I fought breast cancer—I mean, that quote about "You've never lived until you've almost died," it could be for a lot of reasons; for life who fight for it. A lot of people fight through mental illness, a lot of people fight through cancer and other kinds of physical illness, or they fight through situations.

But I think the more you fight for life the more it does have a different flavor. I know when I got breast cancer people would say, "Oh, well, I guess you really appreciate your friends now," or, "I bet you really want—enjoy your grandchildren more."

"No, I already did. I did not need breast cancer to have a wakeup call."

Or people would say, "Well, I bet that breast cancer—I bet you got that because you had Agent Orange [chemical defoliant] exposure in Vietnam. That Agent Orange is where you got that breast cancer from."

[Agent Orange is an herbicide and defoliant chemical used by the U.S. military during the

Vietnam war as part of its herbicidal warfare program Operation Ranch Hand. The Vietnamese people and the U.S. veterans of the Vietnam war who were exposed to Agent Orange suffer serious health issues as a result of the exposure.]

I just thought, "You know, I'm pretty sure that 99.99% of women who have breast cancer never set foot in Vietnam."

I just don't go through life saying "What if?" or, "I wish I hadn't." I mean, I'm always looking forward, and because the—and worrying about today, because today's is the only day we have. It's trite but it's true. And you so learn that in a war.

Now, when I came back, oh boy, it was hard. I mean, it was a lot harder than I thought. I thought, "I want to go back and just be myself, and I'll just bounce right back," but I got back, I knew what had happened when I got to San Francisco and I—actually I stayed out in San Fran—I stayed out in California for a week before I came to North Carolina; I sort of needed a breaking in kind of time with the jet lag and all that. But I also went to visit some friends—guys—who I'd known in the navy school in Athens, and they were living in San Diego, and one of the first things they wanted to do was take me to a movie that had just come out; they thought I needed to see it. Okay. So we go and I'm sitting there. I don't understand what this movie is about; I still don't. And the whole time we were in this movie people were passing joints [marijuana] up and down the aisle and the seats, and I'm like, "What?"

And they said, "Oh, everybody does this."

And I'm like, "Really? I didn't know that." And the movie was *2001: A Space Odyssey*. What in the world? I still don't know what it was about. I mean, people—girls were wearing short, short, short skirts; I'd never seen that before. I tell you something else I'd never seen before. It's kind of little things nobody tells you about. I'd never in my life seen a Coke or any kind of a bottle that you could take the top off and put it back on. It was always off or on; it was a cap when we left.

TS: Right.

LH: I tell you something else I'd never seen before. That was the year they started putting the key into the steering column instead of straight ahead in the ignition. Little things like that nobody told me about. Big things I missed, and Tom missed it as well because he was in the middle of the ocean. I didn't get to see the Moon Walk. That happened while I was in Vietnam, and we didn't have live TV. We did have radios, so I think I had the radio on, I walked outside and looked up at the moon and couldn't believe it. It's just—that cannot possibly be happening. When you're impressed like that you're in such a vacuum it's like nothing that happened really happened; like people can't really die or be born or get married or divorced because I wasn't there to participate in it.

[On 20 July 1969 American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first people to walk on the moon during the lunar landing of the Apollo 11 mission]

TS: Right.

LH: And when you get back you sort of get an overload—it's almost like a POW, you get back and you get an overload of things that happened, and nobody either bothered to tell you or you couldn't really absorb it.

TS: You had to kind of decompress too.

LH: Oh, and I was sitting in San Francisco—Oh, well, the last thing that happened—I don't know why things happened in California that were shocking—I went to Disneyland; I'd never seen that before.

But the really shocking thing was, the day that I was supposed to come home we woke up to the news of the Manson murders. Now, that was something. All those people just getting slaughtered like that? I mean, I thought I left Vietnam to get away from blood and craziness and killing, and here it was. I was right there when Roman Polanski was coming into the airport. I mean, I thought, "What has happened to this country? What in the world has happened to this country?"

[On the night of 9 August 1969, Charles Manson instructed members of his "family" to go to an acquaintance's house and kill everyone there. One of the victims was movie actress Sharon Tate, film director Roman Polanski's pregnant wife.]

But I'm sitting in San Francisco, getting ready to fly home, and I—there was two women sitting behind me, and one of them walked over to me and sat down in a big huff and she said, "Well, you won't believe what just happened to me."

And I thought, "I wonder what happened."

She said, "That cigarette machine was out of Marlboros [brand]. I couldn't believe it, I had to buy Winstons [brand]."

I mean, there was a rage that came up in me that I didn't even know existed. I wanted to turn around and just strangle that woman and say, "Do you understand what's really going on right now at this very minute while you're worried about a Marlboros versus Winstons? There are people dying for you, lady."

And I realized, I thought, "I've got to really watch that, because nobody has the sensitivity."

TS: Do you think that was, like, a PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]—

LH: Oh, I'm sure it was. I mean, it didn't have a name.

TS: Right.

LH: But—And I came home and I could not get over the jet lag. I mean, all I did was sleep all day and I sent packages and wrote letters to people that were still over there in the field. I mean, I felt guilty about leaving them; I felt guilty about being here. I took all the money I earned—my whole salary for the whole year was three thousand six hundred dollars—

for—it's like ten dollars a day—and I bought a car; spent it all on a car.

TS: What kind of car did you get?

LH: I got a [Pontiac] GTO. I had one before I left too; I had a convertible.

TS: What year was it?

LH: A 1969.

TS: Okay. Brand new.

LH: Oh, yeah! Spent all my money.

TS: What color?

LH: Green—OD [olive drab] Green. But, see, I had a yellow convertible all through college—a GTO—and I—that was my trademark in college, so I thought, "I'm going buy me another GTO and hit the road," so I did. And the Red Cross asked me if I would help, which I did. Hurricane Camille [Category 5 hurricane that struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast on 17 August 1969] had just come through and had just flattened Mississippi. So I drove down, and I had a roommate living in New Orleans then and I spent—I did a lot of Hurricane Camille relief, and then I went over to New Orleans, and the relief part was good because I was with Red Cross people and I was helping and people [who] were desperate and I was, like—feeling like I was a healer again and—But I got to spend a week in New Orleans with my roommate, and she told me—she waited, but she told me later, she said, "You were weird. You were really weird."

I said, "What do you think—"

She said, "You weren't yourself. You weren't laughing. You weren't ask—"

And I said, "I didn't mean to be weird." But I did not connect with society or fr—I mean, I went back to a football game at Georgia and I could not wait to get out of there; [going to a] fraternity party, which I thought was the dumbest thing I'd ever been doing in my life. I mean, they hadn't changed, I had, and it was hard. I knew really early on I could not—never connect again with a man who hadn't had a military, Vietnam, experience, which was hard because people were not talking about the fact that they'd been to Vietnam or not.

TS: Right.

LH: I was, but not really.

TS: No? You didn't really talk about it?

LH: No, because I had—nobody—my mother didn't even ask me. Nobody would ask me. I would go out and people at home would ask me to give programs at Sunday school or at Kiwanis Club, but I'd go out and it was like a travelogue, and I'd show pictures, "Well, here's the beach; here's where I lived."

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But they didn't really want to know what happened. Just, they wanted to see the—

LH: Yeah, it was very superficial.

TS: Like it was a vacation or something.

LH: And I was very superficial to new people I met.

TS: Yeah.

LH: I had a very bad experience, honestly, in [The University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill. My first—I went to—I finally decided, "What am I going to do? I don't know." So I went to Chap—I went back, I thought—This hit me in church, the Methodist church, [I] thought I could still keep helping people—"Who are the people that no one else wants to deal with? And I thought, "Handicapped children. I can be a Special Education teacher." So I applied, got into graduate school, started working again with the lost, the least, the last; these children who had been apparent at birth—very young children, who—a lot of them had been affected but the 1964 measles epidemic.

But anyway, in one of my classes—Foundations of American Education—I had met the editor of *The Daily Tarheel* [UNC Chapel Hill student newspaper], and he was younger of course—I was twenty-three by then and he was probably twenty, twenty-one—but we were friends and he was very curious about the Vietnam thing and he was picking my brain, and he was a very, very smart guy. I was telling him some of my reflections, and he was telling me about what was going on in this country, and this was the same semester of Kent State, and they shut down the university and 95% of the people who left the university went to the beach. I didn't really care about Kent State, honestly. It's funny, because I showed up for my exam and my professor said, "Miss Young, what are you doing here? Don't you understand the university is closed?"

And I said, "Sir, I'm here to take my exam."

[The Kent State shootings occurred at Kent State University in Ohio on 4 May 1970, and involved the shooting of unarmed college students who were protesting the Vietnam War by the Ohio National Guard. Four students were killed and nine others wounded.]

TS: Did you take it?

LH: Yeah.

TS: Yeah?

LH: The only one in the whole class. But anyway, this friend from—the editor of *The Daily Tarheel*, he said, "I want you to meet some of my friends because you're so interesting and I really want them to be able to ask you some questions, if you don't mind."

I said, "That'd be fine."

So he picked me up and took me to this apartment in Carrboro, and it was one of these apartments where you open the door and there's no way out except the one door. I mean, it was—that in itself was kind of—

TS: You felt trapped.

LH: I felt trapped, and I—still to this day I don't like backfires, I don't like fireworks; I don't like anything sudden happening. And we walked into this place, and as soon as the door opened I could see a lot of blue haze. It was very dark, like they had some of these—those lights that just were on the ceiling, kind of thing. And we walked in and I could tell there was drugs, and I was like, "This isn't working for me," so I started walking in there and I guess when I—when he showed up behind me with his ponytail and what not, somebody on the other side of the room said, "Hey, everybody, look. Look who's here. Steve's here, and he brought the war whore."

Well, I mean, it just sucked the breath out of me. First of all, that he had said that at all in front of a bunch of strangers, but I had been betrayed.

TS: Yeah.

LH: I'd been betrayed by Steve, and it just—it was just—that's when I knew I made a mistake to have ever opened up to him. And I marched over to wherever that person was—I never even knew who it was—somebody on that side of the room in that corner of the room—and I walked over there and I just went off, saying, "You have no idea what you're even talking about. You don't know me. You don't know what I've done. Let me tell you something. You think you hate this war? Let me tell you about hating this war. I've lived in this war and I've seen what it does," and I just went on and on and I started crying. I was so angry, I was so hurt. And I just turned on my heel and I walked out and I walked home; it was about two miles. Never saw Steve again, honestly. Never said goodbye, nothing, just walked out and I walked home, just crying. And I thought to myself, "This is hard. The rest of my life is going to be hard. I'm going to have to really own up to this. And I'm going to be made to feel ashamed for what I thought was really honorable service."

So it's real. I mean, it's out there and it's real and it was easier for me to disappear back into society, and my hometown welcomed me—I was a hometown heroine at home—but I realized that I was being hated and painted with the same brush as all the rest of the warriors were. And my point in going was not to support the war; not just ever to support the war, to support warriors. And I did the best I could and we all did. And not everybody made it. Some of—of the six hundred and twenty seven of us who were chosen to do this job for the Red Cross between 1965 and '72, if you ever decided it was too much and too hard you could leave—you could leave on twenty-four hours notice. All you had to do was tell your supervisor that you wanted to go home and within twenty-four hours they would start processing your paperwork and you'd be out of there. And some women did not make it, for various reasons. I would bet though that it was

low. I bet it was maybe 10%, 15—I don't know the figures, but most of us gritted it out and made it. Some of them got married and went home early.

One of the first things I did when I got back in August of '69 was, I had heard that the Red Cross director in Thomasville—[her] daughter—had just gone over to Vietnam in September, and although she and I were the same age—I didn't know her—but she had—at my age had gone to Meredith [College] —also graduated in '68 and taught school for a year, and then she signed up with the Red Cross, probably her mother told her about it, honestly. And so, I went over to see her mother—Mildred Crews—and I said, "Oh, Mrs. Crews, this is going to be the year that changes Hannah's life. You'll never believe how different she's going to be when she gets home, and I can't wait for her to get home, myself, so we can share our memories. Isn't it strange that we grew up nine miles apart?" [I] went on and on and on, had a lovely day with Mrs. Crews, and ten days later Hannah was dead. She was our first Red Cross girl who died.

TS: What happened to her?

LH: She had been in Bien Hoa, again, only a few short weeks, and they were riding somewhere and she was in a Jeep, and it hit a pot—pothole or something and she flipped out and landed on her back [of her head—LH clarified later], and really was probably brain-dead from the very beginning. Her brother at that point was serving with the marines in Okinawa [Japan], so he had to come over there and it was just terrible. So Hannah Crews was our first one who got killed.

And then we had a woman, I think her name was Lucinda Richter; I think that's right. She got some kind of a strange fever and died. And then our last—we had three who died—the last one, I believe it was '71 [correction: August 17, 1970]—this all happened after me—Virginia ["Ginny"] Kirsch. Virginia Kirsch was stationed at Cu Chi, 25th Division, and she—they had single rooms evidently there, and she didn't come out to work one morning at this time and when they opened her room she had been murdered in her bed, and it had to have been a G.I. because it was on a base and—I don't know. It was not solved for years.

TS: Was it ever solved?

LH: It finally was.

TS: Was it?

LH: It finally was. But a guy admitted it, but it was maybe twenty years after and he's—it was in Ohio actually. So even under the best efforts of keeping us safe we lost three. We also had two more who, once they got back went back and were on the [Operation] Babylift in 1975, trying to evacuate all the orphans when the C-5A [aircraft] went down so we had two more who died that way.

[Operation Babylift was the name given to the mass evacuation of children from South Vietnam to the United States and other countries at the end of the Vietnam War, between 3-26 April 1975. Over 10,300 infants and children were evacuated.]

TS: How did you feel like, while you were there, your relationships were with your peers; the other Red Cross workers?

LH: Well, it was very intense, honestly, and we were picked because we were similar in personality and demeanor, and yet it was good for the Red Cross to keep moving us around because it kept us fresh and having to learn new skills and learn new friendships and let go of old ones, male and female. It was—it had—it had its moments.

TS: You're in your twenties and—

LH: It had its moments and—But you know what? You put on a happy face and you go out there just like you do for the marines, you go out there—or the army—you go out there and you make them have a good time that day. And if you come back and aren't best friends, that's okay, because all you have to do is—Honestly, I made some of the best friends I'll ever have in my life, and there's some other people I don't care if I ever see them again or not, and there's some other people I've met at reunions that I didn't serve with but I've gotten to be close friends with. It's like any other group.

I always used to tell my kids this when they'd go to camp, or go anywhere new—a new school or whatever—I'd say, "Any time you get in a new situation, my feeling is this, a third of the people you're going to immediately like right away. And that second third of the people you're going to be, 'I don't know [if] they're okay or not. I don't feel one way or the other about it.' And then there's that third you're going to feel like, 'Oh, boy.' But if two-thirds of the people in your life are either really good or have the potential to be good, that's a good day."

TS: Yeah, not too bad.

LH: Right.

TS: Did you see any other of the women that were in the service, besides the nurses, at all?

LH: We saw the nurses on duty in the hospitals and in Cam Ranh Bay we shared bathrooms with the nurses. We lived in Quonset huts there and we were on one side and there was a Quonset hut in the middle that had the showers, the toilets, and the sinks, and then the nurses were on the other side. We would socialize a little bit with them. I mean, if you were dating a pilot—a certain squadron, obviously there weren't that many women to go around, so we weren't the—there would be nurses there and other army personnel. We never really had much of a connection with them. I never really knew why. It was odd for us to be in our curfewed bedrooms watching our boyfriends go across the way and take another girl out, because they didn't have curfews like we did.

But there have been a lot of panels on this, and a lot of discussions at reunions about this: what was it that kept us from being friends? I think mostly it was perception, honestly, and not understanding each other's job. I feel like that I was probably open to being friends with anybody. But a lot of nurses have told me that they didn't understand why we were there; they didn't understand what we were doing; they thought we were silly; they thought we were frivolous; they thought, like these men I was talking about,

that we were probably interfering with the war effort; that we were just an unnecessary distraction; and that what they were doing was vital and lifesaving and serious. It was kind of a real disconnect between us. But we've made up since then.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: We're all friends now, and they say, "I'm sorry I didn't understand what you were doing," and I say, "I'm sorry I didn't understand why you were not really friendly." So it's all good.

TS: Did you ever run across any of the other women that weren't nurses that worked over there?

LH: I—There were a couple Red Cross personnel who were in SMH, which was Service Military Hospitals. Of course, there were always the entertainers.

TS: Now, you just rolled your eyes when you said that. [chuckles]

LH: Well, the entertainers, what can I say. They would come over there, and I think every one of them, either Vietnamese or Korean, had memorized every note of "These Boots are Made for Walking" [popular song by Nancy Sinatra], and they would come out in these hot pants and these white thigh-high boots, and were shaking their business—their bits and pieces—and I'll just tell you what the guys in the field would tell me. They would say, "You know, these shows that come out with these half-dressed women, dangling their 'everything's' and 'anything's' in our faces, that's just like putting raw meat in front of a starving dog, and we can't do a thing about it."

TS: It's just a tease?

LH: Yeah. "You girls on the other hand come out here week after week after week. You're with us in the rain and the mud. You love us for who we are all the time, you're not just here and gone." And some of the people, honestly, said, "I don't even go to those entertainment shows because it's disturbing. It's not a good thing to have over here." But the military was doing what they thought was—and I'm sure there were plenty of men that did enjoy it and understand why it was there. But a lot of men were really turned off by it.

There would be times that—when we would fly in planes—a lot of times if we'd, like, go to, Tuy Hòa and back we'd fly in a [C-]130 or [C-7A—LH corrected later] [or C-123, and the pilots would say, "Come on and ride up here with us." And the entertainers would always do it. Or the journalists would always do it, in their hot pink jumpsuits and whatnot, and we didn't. We would always sit in the back with the guys on the floor, where there were no seats, just a web belt going across. And I think they knew that. They—We were the real women of Vietnam, not the made up, not the entertainers, not the teases. We were the real deal.

TS: Well, you had showed me some pictures before, that you had met—was it [James Maitland] "Jimmy" Stewart [American actor and military officer]?

LH: Yes.

TS: Do you want to tell me about that experience?

LH: Yeah. Jimmy Stewart and his wife Gloria—

TS: Oh, right, his wife too.

LH: —they were lovely, lovely people. Jimmy Stewart was a retired brigadier general in the air force reserve and he was on one of these PR—

TS: Like a USO.

LH: He was going around different bases, and I don't know what else he did, but the night I saw him was at a squadron. He came by on the 559th, the Billy Dogs. That was a—I mean, the Billy Goats—That was a F4 squadron. He and his wife came there and they had a cake cutting and it was a lovely reception for them, and he was in his fatigues. He did not have his hair piece on so a lot of people didn't know who it was.

TS: Didn't recognize him?

LH: He looks very different.

TS: I was, like, yeah, okay, I can see—

LH: From here—From the eyebrows down he looked like Jimmy Stewart, but no, he was very, very bald. I thought it was great he didn't wear it on this tour. But anyway, he—we were invited to receptions. We were invited to all kinds of things; ribbon cuttings, change of commands, when a president—Eisenhower died, all of the things—memorial services; we were invited to everything; General's Mess [also known as "dining in", a formal military ceremony for officers, which includes a dinner, drinking, and other events to foster camaraderie and esprit de corps]; we were invited every Sunday night to eat at the general's house and watch a movie.

But when Jimmy Stewart and his wife came, she—they, and especially she, was so enthralled with—they had just seen her son that day; he was a marine stationed outside of Da Nang. It was not Jimmy Stewart's son but it was Gloria's son, and they had brought him in from the field to visit with them for about three hours, and, oh, she was so excited telling us about him. And about a month or two after that reception, when they had said goodbye to us, I read that he had been killed, and it just—it hurt me so because I was seeing people getting killed and knowing about people getting killed all the time, but I had talked to his mother. It was a lot closer connection even though I never knew him. But I just sat down and just penned a note to them just saying how very sorry I was, and how I remembered how most of his visit with them had meant, and of course they didn't know it was going to be the last. But I got back a lovely handwritten note, "Thank—" all I put on it was "Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Stewart, Hollywood, California," and they got it. And it's times like that I'll never forget. But I mean, that was the movie star's son, but

most of those fifty-eight thousand people were just everybody's sons.

And they—I just do wonder a lot about the best and brightest of my generation; what could those people have done; what could they have contributed, that was just cut short. I'll tell you an interesting thing, too, that—it goes back to my time in Vietnam, because the draft was still in full force; this whole birthday thing [lottery draft based upon birth dates randomly selected] had not come around. I mean, if you weren't in college or high school you were going to get a draft notice in six weeks. And one of the things I thought was so funny, and it still is to me, is that when you land on a fire base—and a lot of times we'd be taking out new recruits with us who had never been in the field before, so we knew a lot more about going out in the field than they did—these young guys—and they would hop out in their brand spanking new boots and fatigues and their new haircuts and whatnot—and the first thing anybody would say to these new arrivals was not, "Are you—Hey, I'm—," or, "Where are you from? What's your name?" They never said that. Do you know what the first question always was when they jumped out? "Are you U.S. or R.A.?" Do you know what that means?

TS: Regular army or reserve?

LH: If you're U.S. you were drafted and you were there [in the service—LH clarified later] for two years; you were stuck for two years against your will. If you were R.A. you were regular army, which meant that you enlisted, which meant you had a three year commitment. And the first thing anybody wanted to know—because the U.S. and the R.A.s were two separate groups of people because the U.S. guys were the ones who were just mad as hell and weren't going to take it anymore, but they loved finding another guy who was U.S. because they knew that, once again, they'd found somebody who didn't want to be there at all. So—And I don't know, I will have to say I sort of gravitated towards the U.S. guys; they were just—they would just say or do anything, because they weren't trying to get promoted, they weren't trying to get recognized, they just wanted to get out of there.

TS: Just live day by day and get through it.

LH: Of course, now they use Social Security numbers and nobody's drafted, so that's—that's one of those little funny things that you could just pick up on it. It's really how you pick out the imposters, is little things, like I'll say, "Were you U.S. or R.A.?" Now, if you're an imposter and never been in the military you won't have the slightest idea what I'm talking about, but if you are you'll know.

In fact, I spoke down at—a DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] chapter down at Lake Norman in April and the woman who invited me's husband was a Vietnam veteran, and I'm not really sure that he was sure about me. Honestly, I think he was sort of quizzing me when we sat down to dinner, because he looked at me and, of course, I've got all—I've got the dog tags and I've got the pictures, this, that, and the other. But he started quizzing me and throwing some words out there, he said, "You know what LRRPs [pronounced "lurp"] are?"

And I said, "Sure I do." Well, how many women know what LRRP [means]—Do you know what a LRRP is?

TS: I do not.

LH: Okay, well, I do.

TS: What's a LRRP?

LH: Well, I looked at him I said, "You mean "LRRP" the people or "LRRP" the meals?" And he went, "Hmm," and I could see his eyes, like, "She does know. She really was there."

A LRRP is a long-range reconnaissance patrol, which it could be a person because that's who was usually coming in to eat breakfast on a fire base with us, the LRRPs, or it can be the meals they carry with them, which were better than C rations because LRRPs, you could rehydrate them with hot water and C rations were always in cans. And so he gave—he figured out a few little things like that I think, once again, to sort of test my—not only my memory but my authenticity, and I passed.

TS: So there's this sort of lingo that you pick up by being over there, that if you're in that in group then you know what's going on and you can say the place names and—

LH: Well, and his wife told me later—and he came the next day to hear me talk—she told me later—because he and I—there were five of us at the table—he and I probably talked 75% of that dinner in that restaurant. The rest of them just pretty much sat there, and she told me later—she said, "I've been married to him for over forty years and I've never heard him open up, ever, like he did."

TS: Just made the connection.

LH: Yeah.

TS: Maybe a surprising one too.

LH: Yeah. I think it surprised him. I know it surprised her, because she said, "I've never heard him mention any of that to anybody." But he's safe with me; he's safe with me. I understand it, I get it, and I used to get a lot—not so much—but I used to get a lot of phone calls from people, and thankfully, since Tom also served in Vietnam—of course, in a very different capacity. I mean, he was on a ship flying missions.

TS: You're talking about your husband?

LH: Right, my husband. He was on a ship flying missions. He spent fifteen minutes in country [Vietnam] when he had an engine light come on; he landed in—just to get that checked. But I used to have people call me up and tell me about their nightmares, and tell me about their dreams, and tell me about not only that—but what they really did, and I've never had any training in counseling or grief control or any of that, but I can listen pretty good. And again, what you say is, "Yes, that happened; it did."

TS: Validate their feelings—

LH: Yeah.

TS: —and experience.

LH: Don't ever minimize.

TS: Did you ever feel like you were a pioneer, trailblazer?

LH: I knew that I was participating in history, and I knew that it was important. That's why that journal would be so interesting if I had really put it down. Well, I didn't feel like a pioneer because the program had been in place for three years before I got there, but everybody's experience was different, and different years of the war different things happened to people, or didn't happen. And I didn't know how long it was going to go on. I mean, really and truly, after I was accepted for this program was when they were arguing about the shape of the table—for the peace talks—and a lot of people in Paris [France]—a lot of people said, Well, it's going to be over before you get there." Well, obviously it wasn't; it went on for six more years.

And sometimes what I think about is when I got back and I was such a conundrum of feelings and I—the war was still going on until 1975. What was I thinking? I wondered more about that. Like, the day I got married, [in] 1972, that [the] war was still in full force. What was I thinking about? I mean, I just went on with my life, because I guess I had to, and had two children—no, one child. I mean, I do remember this, that our first anniversary, which was February the thirteenth—February the twelfth 1973—Tom and I were in Savannah [Georgia] celebrating our anniversary, and the way we celebrated our anniversary was sitting on the side of the bed watching the first group of POWs [prisoner of war] get released. But I don't know where I put it in my head for six years. I know when I first got home it was way in the front of my head and it's all I thought about, and then gradually I guess I just moved it to the back of my head.

TS: Did you ever have any counseling or anything?

LH: No, and people will ask me, "Do you have flashbacks? Do you have PTSD?" And I don't think I had flashbacks because I don't think I've ever pushed it down. I mean, when I sit here and talk to you about those wards, and what it smelled like, and what it sounded like, and what it looked like, it's as real to me as if that ward was right across the hall. I mean, it's not like I ever pretended like it didn't happen; I've always been very in touch with it.

TS: When did you first start talking about it, to groups and things like that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

LH: On the superficial level or on a real level?

TS: No, not on the superficial level, where you're just showing the slides.

LH: On a real level.

TS: On a real level.

LH: Probably after going to a reunion.

TS: Okay.

LH: And, really, not many people wanted to hear, but Vietnam, sort of for me, started creeping out of the woodwork for society around the eighties—late eighties—and then I started getting occasional invitations to speak at school groups when they were studying American history or something like that, and then I ended up, for many years, being what they called a "link" in a "Lessons of Vietnam" curriculum out at Millbrook High School [Raleigh, N.C.]. And that involved—These kids—It's a one semester, senior elective. They don't teach it anymore, they used to—but—because the woman who ran it was the driving force behind it and she retired. But they would link us up with a student, and for a whole semester they—they were studying—they knew more about that war than I did. I mean, honestly, when I got on that plane I wasn't even exactly sure—I knew we were going somewhere over there but I'm not sure I could even find it on a map. But those kids had really studied it and really wanted to know, and they studied the whole sixties movement and all the other stuff about it. That's when I started really examining and pulling out of my head things I hadn't consciously talked about or thought about in a while.

TS: Well, you had said when you originally decided to go, part of the reason you wanted to get over there was to see what it was all about, and see if you had a better understanding of what was going on, and then you thought you would really get behind it. Did that happen?

LH: Oh, no. I was just horrified. I was just horrified by the inefficiency, the chaos, the inequality, the futility, the stupidity. See, I would never write any of that home because that would be to dishonor the people who were dying in it. When I came back I never really told anybody. I would stand in Chapel Hill—they had a—they may still do it—every Wednesday at noon—

TS: Here, I can pause it.

LH: They used to, every Sunday—I mean every Wednesday at noon at Chapel Hill in front of the old post office downtown, across from the Presbyterian Church, they always had a silent protest about something; they may still do—I mean, I think it was about animal rights or whatever. But when I was in graduate school, which I started February of '70—that was just in time for the Jeffrey MacDonald murders, by the way, down in Chap—I mean down in Fayetteville—I mean, I'd just come off the Manson murders and then I come to Raleigh—I mean to Chapel Hill—and they have—crazy times.

TS: Is that the one that *The Fugitive* [American TV drama series] was on?

LH: No. No. He's the one who killed his wife and—pregnant wife and two kids in the barracks.

[Jeffrey MacDonald was a United States Army captain who was convicted of murdering his pregnant wife and two daughters on 17 February 1970 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He has always maintained his innocence.]

TS: Oh, okay.

LH: He's an army captain—doctor—who says he didn't do it to this day.

Anyway, I would get out of class and I would—a lot of times on Wednesdays I would walk over and I would see those people. They don't say a word, they just stand there with a placard or something—a banner—about whatever they—and for years it was the Vietnam war, and I would stand there and look at them and I would think, "None of you have been there, I don't think." I know the women hadn't. "You don't know how much I want to walk across the street and stand there with you and tell you how horrible it is. You don't know how much I want to stand there in line with you with one of those signs with people's names on it and pictures." I couldn't do it, because it felt like I was turning my back on it, and dishonoring the people who had died for it. It's a real oxymoron kind of thing.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Like, contradictory feelings about supporting the troops but not being against what the war—

LH: Right. I mean, then there was a group that came out—Veterans Against the War—and I so admired these people for standing up and doing what they did, or burning their Purple Hearts, or throwing away their medals, and—I couldn't do it, though; I just—I couldn't do it, because I felt so connected to the ones who served honorably and died honorably and were still missing, and all that.

TS: Did you have any heroes during that time?

LH: A lot of the people I knew, yeah; a lot of people I knew; the unsung heroes who just went out there every day and just did their jobs and flew those planes, and some of them never came back. I mean—yeah, a lot of them we knew.

TS: Did you have any thoughts about the political leadership?

LH: Well, silly me, I bought into the fact that I thought—if I voted for Richard [Milhaus] Nixon I thought that was going to help end the war. Well, that was silly; last time I did

that.

TS: Well, he said he would.

LH: Oh, I know, and I believed—The first time I ever voted in my life was in Vietnam; absentee.

TS: I was going to ask you earlier if you had voted, because it was '68, it was a pretty—

LH: But, see, you couldn't vote until you were twenty-one.

TS: Oh, okay.

LH: I couldn't vote at eighteen. My first vote ever that I had was sent from Vietnam. I don't know. The people that—Another real "push me pull you" I had was about—with our children. I mean, I come from a long line of people back to the Revolutionary War that have fought and died for this country, and with the kids I'd say, "The military teaches you so much about life and about yourself and—oh God, I want you to—" I don't know—"I don't want you to end up on a wall dead somewhere," and it was kind of like, "It's great, but don't do it. Well, you really ought to do it but—I don't know" I just couldn't ever get my arms around what I wanted these kids to do and—

Of course, their response—all three of them—was, "Mom, I mean, the military is so sixties. Nobody does that anymore."

Our sons both went to Duke [University] and the older one, Blair, went straight to dental school at Chapel Hill as soon as he finished Duke in '96, and so his rotation—they have to do a community service kind of rotation and he did, I think, six weeks down at Camp Lejeune—and I thought, "Well, this will sort of tell the tale about how he feels about the military."

And he was like, "Oh, that is not for me. That is not where I belong. I mean, it's great that you and dad did what you did." Of course, they think everybody's parents served in Vietnam.

TS: Right.

LH: They have no idea of what unique situation it is to have both of us who served.

But he was like, "Boy, that is not for me."

And so, we just kind of went, "Well, okay."

As soon as 9/11 happened, he was a practicing dentist in Raleigh, and he came to the door and he said, "I'm going in." He said, "You and daddy volunteered, my grandfather volunteered, and as far back as I can see everybody in this family has stood up when the country needed them, so—" he said, "I'm going to go into either the navy or the air force."

Which we kept our mouths shut, because we knew if we said, "Of course you're going into the navy," then he wouldn't, so we kept our mouths shut, and he did choose the navy, which means [many of his patients—LH clarified later] are marines. He said, "I'm going to go in just for three years, just to do my part," and he went to talk to a recruiter, who almost fell out of his chair because nobody just comes in at twenty-eight years old—

TS: Right.

LH: —owing nothing.

TS: Right.

LH: Already credentialed as a dentist. And that was nearly fifteen years ago, and he's still in. It takes a tremendous toll, really. I mean, he's—he lost a fiancé during this important period. He now is married with two kids, but, I mean, he's constantly leaving, going to the hospitals, seeing terrible things. I mean, his residency was at Walter Reed [Army Medical Center] and Bethesda [Naval Hospital].

TS: Was he deployed overseas?

LH: Yes, he was deployed. He was deployed when his son was—his first baby was about three months old. She [his wife—LH clarified later] moved in and lived with us while he was gone. But he takes—It takes a tremendous toll on him. I mean, he—And now they have trained him; they put him through residency to be an oral surgeon, because there's so many head, face, and neck wounds; that's where they need a lot of trained people. So we think he's making it a career now. He's—

TS: Got fifteen [years in the military].

LH: Yeah. But, I mean, salary wise, time wise, I mean, his family takes a hit. It's really a labor of love for him. I mean, he really, really believes in what he's doing, and we're very proud of him.

TS: Well, what do you feel about the way that the military has changed with the—right now, like, in Iraq and Afghanistan—the women that are over there in much more combat-related type of positions, and they weren't hardly at all in Vietnam?

LH: Well, some people think that maybe our being a successful component and being accepted into the culture, maybe opened a few eyes about how women can live in a war zone and not be disruptive. I don't know if that's true or not. I mean, the culture's certainly changed all around, and with Title IX and everything else; giving women so much more equality than I ever dreamed of. I mean, my kids will say things like, "Well—" I'll say things like, "Well, when I was coming along girls couldn't go to Chapel Hill; girls couldn't play sports; and girls had to live in dormitories; and girls had to wear dresses to go to college."

They're like, "Mom, why didn't you just change it? Why didn't—"

"Because back then you didn't dare change it. I mean, there was so much change going on with civil rights and everything else, girls didn't speak up."

[Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 is a federal law that states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in,

be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."]

And they say, "Well, mom, what sport did you play?"

"There weren't any sports. I didn't question it. Nobody that I knew was going to law school or medical school or dental school. I mean, we just didn't have the kind of ambitions and the fuel behind us to demand our rights. We didn't think we—We thought we were doing fine." And honestly, I think we were.

It's so hard, again, to explain to people now, you cannot undo—once the genie's out of the bottle you can't—you can't undo—[unclear] Iraq and Afghanistan?

I said, "No, they have the internet, they have FaceTime [video chat program]. They have women who are already there. They don't need Donut Dollies; they don't need a reminder of home."

One of our t-shirts says, "A touch of home with a combat home—A touch of home in the combat zone, a waving hand in a desolate land, a touch—the sense of calm in Vietnam."

I mean, we represented something that really wasn't real; that women could really be there and that your country cares about you, and that you're not forgotten. They don't need that anymore; really, they don't and they do—But I don't understand—I do not—how they do these multiple deployments six and seven times, or how they come home for two weeks and go right back. I don't know. I mean, every generation adjusts to what's put on its plate, but—

TS: Does watching what had been going on in Iraq and Afghanistan bring back any of the memories for you?

LH: Oh, it's very hard for me, and I'll tell you that; I'm a USO volunteer.

TS: Are you?

LH: Yeah. So I volunteer. Most Tuesday's we process through six or seven busloads of marines who are just leaving Camp Lejeune to go out to their duty sta—to their training stations all over this country. And it's the same way if you look back at Civil War photography, or War World I, or World War II, they all have those same eager, unlined faces. They're all so innocent. They're all so young. They're all so optimistic. And then I look at them and I think, "You just don't know what's ahead. You can't know and it's good that you don't."

But when people say, "Well, I guess you get to know all these marines on Tuesdays."

And I say, "Well, you do—" Again, I don't look at the names. I don't look at the names because I don't want to pick up the paper six months from now and see those names, of people that I gave a cup of Kool-Aid to or helped process their suitcases through the airport; I don't want to see them.

And they'll say something, "Oh, I bet they're really fired up about going to war."

I said, "No, they're not fired up about going to war." You look in their faces and they're the same faces you saw in Vietnam. They're the poor, they're the kids who are

looking for a job, a way out. If you ask them where they're from, almost every one of them, they're from little rural towns where there are no jobs, no educational opportunities. They join the service because they—it was an opportunity for them, and they're hoping, like everything, that they're not going to get killed in the process. But when they're shooting up recruitment centers, where are we safe? I mean, I worry about and wonder about my son, because when he travels he never is in uniform, but it's so obvious from his haircut that he's military. And you know now—

TS: You see him, maybe, as a target?

LH: Yeah, because when those buses pull up, six or—they come straight to from Camp Lejeune to RDU [Raleigh Durham International Airport]. Alright, so it used to be that we would walk outside, and we would help them with their luggage, and we would point out where the USO is, and we'd say, "If you want to have a smoke break you go down here,"—of course, I always told them not to, being the momma I am—but it's very casual and just, "Come on in and line up and we'll help you with your boarding passes, blah, bah blah."

A lot of that changed. Last week, it's all business now. They have police escorts. They don't just pull up and get out and walk around. No, no, no, they have a policeman behind them, policemen in the front of them, policemen aligning—surrounding the buses, because if we walked—even we are targets now because we're close to these marines. It's all business now. I mean, it's a scary, scary world, because anybody could be following those buses, and anybody could have assault weapons in their car—and any—I mean, you just don't know anymore. I never thought that Tuesday job was risky; that I might lose my life doing it.

TS: Right. Right.

LH: But somebody now thinks that I'm in a dangerous place.

TS: It's a different world. Do you think your life has been different because you joined the Red Cross?

LH: Oh, I know it has; it's affected everything. And I made some decisions all along, going to University of Georgia, going to Vietnam. I've done things that other people didn't dare to do, and I'm so glad I did, and I know—My poem is "The Road Less Traveled," [correction: "The Road Not Taken," by Robert Frost]. I've always been told get outside your comfort zone, challenge yourself, do things that are hard, and I wouldn't trade it for anything; I really wouldn't.

Now, some of the other women, they—we get questionnaires from different people that say, "Would you do it again?" And you get a resounding, "Yes."

"Would you recommend that your daughter do it?" And a lot of people say, "No." I would probably recommend it.

TS: You would?

LH: I would. And in a similar vein in my daughter, I've always—beginning when she was

eleven we started taking her overseas. As soon as she could pull a suitcase we were overseas with her, and when she finished high school and her friends were all going to Paris [France] and Cancun [Mexico] for their graduation trip, I'd say, "Well, isn't that lovely, you've already been there. We're going somewhere different."

She goes, "Okay, where are we going?"

We went to Haiti, and I wanted her to see. I said, "An enormous percentage of the world—probably a majority—don't have a place to sleep, to eat—enough to eat, a place to go to bathroom, they don't have jobs, they don't have enough—I want you to see how blessed and grateful and privileged you are. Although you have not been overindulged or spoiled, but just you have those five things as a given, every single day of your life." And that was sixteen years ago and she still thanks me for doing that for her.

TS: Yeah.

LH: And going to Mother Theresa's babies hospital and helping babies with AIDS, I mean, again, the last, the least, the lost. Nobody else wants to do that, but—She's got strength and courage now, too, and she spent her junior year—summer—she ended up being a cultural anthropology major—no surprise there—and they took the first ever group to [Federal Democratic Republic of] Nepal, the summer of 2001, and they studied all year long about the culture, the politics, the language, the caste system, everything—the food, everything. And two nights before they were supposed to leave, the royal family was massacred at the dinner table, and the Maoists were going all over Nepal and shooting policemen and putting on uniforms, and it was just total chaos.

And Wake Forest [University]—where she was—called us up and said, "What do you think? We're thinking about canceling this trip. We've got these twelve kids and we just don't know. What do you think?"

What do you think I said? "Let them go. You can't go through life afraid. You got to be willing to get outside your comfort zone and go," and they did. One child [student—LH clarified later] dropped out, out of twelve; one dropped out.

But life is not ever going to be easy.

TS: Well, is there anything that you would want a civilian to know or understand about your time in the Red Cross in Vietnam that they may not appreciate or understand?

LH: Well, I appreciate so much about the Red Cross, and like any other humanitarian organization, they get a lot of potshots. And my answer to that is, frequently, do you think I really would have put my life on the line, and put that uniform on every day, if I didn't believe in this organization? One of the most valuable things I've ever got, and I [have] spent my whole life being a volunteer, there's—so much came out of that training that I'll never forget. The first day that we were there we were running [sitting—LH corrected later] around the table and all of us were asked the question, "Why do people volunteer?"

And we all had some platitude like, "Oh, to make the world a better place. Oh, to help people who need assistance." All these things that you've been taught is the focus of why people volunteer.

And this facilitator said, "That's all very nice but, really, the reason people volunteer, first and foremost, is because it makes them feel good."

And it's so true. My being in Vietnam made me feel good, because if it didn't make me feel good I shouldn't have gone and I wouldn't have stayed. So it made me feel good to be helping people and being part of history.

And another thing they told us that I've never forgotten, and it applies to all humanitarian organizations is, you've got to remember, when you put on the uniform of the Red Cross and you're doing Red Cross work you're dealing with people in crisis. You aren't dealing with people who are happy and everything's great, because nobody needs the Red Cross unless you're in trouble or you're in a bad place.

TS: So they're not their best self.

LH: Right. And they're a lot of times going to unload on you all the frustrations—I mean, whether it's a hurricane or a fire or whatever—somebody's died at home and you're sending a message—you're dealing with people who are really not their best self. You got it. So just remember to show patience, to show compassion, and try to understand that you're doing the best you can and so are they. And that may not be a very nice picture, but it taught me a lot about people and about life, and to spend—I mean, there are all these poems and things going around about "Today is all you have" and it's so true, but when you're in a war zone it's really true.

Although, do you really let yourself believe you're going to die? I guess you have to if you're in hand-to-hand combat. I never thought that rocket—they always said the rockets you don't hear are the one that killed you. I never really envisioned that I was going to end up in a body bag, but I will tell you, I wrote home—and I've got the letter—one of the few things I did say to my mother that was disturbing. But this is a common thread too. People write home and they'll say, "If I die—If I don't come home—" or any of those things— "I want you to know that I died doing what I—what was important and what I wanted to be doing." And I felt—I said that to her and I felt that. I don't know if I really believed that I was going to ever get zipped into a body bag, but certainly, three of our people did. But I did believe that. I thought I'll never be this fulfilled again in a job, and unfortunately it was true.

TS: Right.

LH: It's really bad at twenty-three you've already peaked. [both chuckling] You've already had your best job and your best experience, that anything after that is just a runner-up.

TS: That's right. Well, I want to ask you if you'd do it again? You can answer that if you want but—

LH: Oh, of course.

TS: —what'd I'd rather know is, knowing what you know now, and going back and being your twenty-two year old self, if you could make some changes in your experience, what kind of changes would you make?

LH: Oh, of course I already said keeping the journal.

TS: Yes. Sure.

LH: I definitely would have done that. Oh, not much; not much. There were times I probably needed to show more patience with people who—I don't even know what to say. I don't know whether I'm thinking about the women I worked with or the people like—For instance, we were expected to be thrilled every Sunday night to be invited to go to the General's Mess. I mean, that was a nice invitation. They had steak dinners and they had movies and they had—that isn't really where I wanted to be, but the military—that command, it meant a lot to them.

What I would rather have been doing would have been over at the hospital, or being—we'd go to "stand—" there's something called "stand downs." We go to those when the people—the troops had been in the field—the companies had been in the field for, like, six weeks at a time. They would always come in for two or three days to get new—dry socks, new uniforms; stand down. They would sleep in real beds instead of the ground. We would get invited to that. Of course, we'd always go early because it got kind of wild later on. But—

TS: And you had your curfew.

LH: Well, that's true. But after some of these eighteen, nineteen year olds had a couple beers in them—and they didn't need to have women around all the time. But I would have so much rather been at a "stand down" than sitting there drinking wine and wearing nice clothes to eat dinner with the—eat dinner with the general. And his staffers who—God love them—a lot of them were majors and lieutenants and lieutenant colonels, they were old enough to be our fathers and they thought it was their duty to walk us home and, of course, to kiss us, and—ewww. I—But that, again, you go with the flow, you don't bite the hand that feeds you, and they were taking care of us, and we just had to draw up some pretty nice, but firm, limits; that we were not there to be their girlfriends.

TS: Right.

LH: Or to be their—whatever they were—just to be I don't know. I learned to take a joke. I mean, I had already learned to take a joke when I was fraternity sweetheart, because if you can roll with the punches there—

But this is an example. One night—And like I said, our nights and our weekends were so precious; I mean, just to wash our hair, and just to write letters home, and just to not have to—not have to smile, not have to be "on"; because we had to be "on" all the time. We got invited one night—and we didn't have that much contact with the marines because they didn't sponsor us—but there was a big Marine air base in Chu Lai, on the other side, way up the road. So our driver—we never drove; we had a driver—our driver took us up there one night and we were invited to watch a movie with the marines. So we got up there, and of course the movies, of course, I said, were just painted white boards, and this is a huge thatched roof thing. I mean, it must have held four or five hundred people, and had just columns, no walls, but it was kind of a gathering place.

We got there and the movie had already started, so we walked in the back, just quietly, trying to sit on these backless benches, and of course, they made a big to-do. They stopped the movie, they turned on the house lights—every light—and they said,

"Gentlemen, we are so fortunate tonight that the ladies of the American Red Cross have joined us. Let's all give her a big Marine welcome," and about fifty of them jumped up and mooned us. [both chuckling] Which—I mean, the command was just horrified. They couldn't even figure out who they were from—

TS: From that angle.

LH: Right. But all we could do was just laugh; it was hysterical. You couldn't be a prude; you couldn't be straight-laced; you had to be able to just go with the flow. And I know when I got back [home—LH added later] somebody said, "Oh, this movie's come out, it's going to really disturb you."

I said, "What?"

And they said, "Oh, you shouldn't go see it."

I said, "What?"

They said, "It's this movie, it's called *M*A*S*H*."

I said, "Why shouldn't I go see it?"

They said, "They laugh and they make fun of war and they make jokes and everything."

I said, "God, that's the only way you can get through it."

I mean, some of the funniest stuff that's ever happened ever in my life was over there. I mean, like—we learned really early—we told the mama sans, "You cannot put our bras and panties on the clothesline because they all just [disappear because they're taken by the guys [LH—added later]]" we never had any. I said, "We can't go to the store and get any more."

TS: Right.

LH: These are precious to us. [chuckling]

I mean, I don't know what I would change; not much. I mean, I toyed with the idea—A few of the people who had been promoted—and I had—they gave them extensions; like, three or six month extensions. I thought about that, but I'm glad now I didn't. I mean, the longer you put it off the harder it is to face it. So I don't know what I would change. I really don't know. There might have been—I don't know—some guys I dated I wish I hadn't wasted time on. [both chuckle] Because there were plenty of others to choose from.

TS: Right.

LH: They were okay but—

TS: You probably didn't have a lot of time to make those kind of decisions either.

LH: Oh, yeah. I mean, you date somebody and you get comfortable with that person, and maybe there was somebody just really gigantically wonderfully—right to your left and you didn't even notice. I'll tell you about a funny though. A lot of the guys that I dated over there, especially in Cam Ranh, were [United States] Air Force Academy graduates, and the [United States] Air Force Academy—which I don't think I perceived—was very

new then. They'd only opened in '65. That might have been the first year they graduated a class. But—And these guys had graduated in '65, '66; it's not old.

But there was this one young man who was very serious, and I wasn't particularly interested in him, but he was so kind to me, and he had a flight suit made for me with my name on it, and he brought me on watch when he went on R&R. He was very serious about it. But he asked me to go—I never kissed him—but he asked me to go to this dinner that they were having. They had steaks flown in, they had orchid corsages flown in from the Philippines, and all this. I wore a silk dress that I had made in Thailand on R&R. But I can show you the picture of it, he was so formal and so serious about everything, that there's a picture of us and we're standing there and he's got his arm around me and he's leaning over like this and I'm looking up at him, and what he is saying to me is, "As soon as we both get home we're going to be married, and we're going to be married at the [United States] Air Force Academy chapel, and I'm sure you're going to love it."

And looking up at him and thinking, "What exactly is going on here? I mean, I have never kissed you. What do you mean we're going to be married?"

But you see, that's that mindset, "I'm at the [United States] Air Force Academy, and everything's going to be—everything's very logical and everything's very orderly." And do you know—I Googled [Google is a popular internet search engine] him because you can do that now—he is—he made [3 star—LH added later] general, he's—he achieved all his goals, but marrying me, I guess that was the only one he didn't.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: But that's the way you had to live, was one day at a time with the big plan out there, because—and he was an F-4 pilot, and a lot of them did not make it back. But I loved the exposure to so many different people, different ages. I mean, I'll never again have that opportunity.

TS: Well, I don't know, you're going to the Amazon soon.

LH: Well, I don't think they'll be flocking to me to get my autograph for that.

TS: I don't know.

LH: They'll be flocking to me to get my dollars.

TS: Well, you said you went to Thailand?

LH: I went to Thailand on R&R, and with the same friend that I trained with who—and we—they helped us—they had R&R offices—and because we were Red Cross we got to have two R&Rs; the men only got to have one. We got to have two, which sort of helped to break up the year. And then I actually had a—not a third R&R—but I had a delay in route, so I had three—I mean, we went to Hong Kong and Thailand on our first one, so we got to go two places, and then my second one I went to Japan, and then my third one where I went to Singapore and back to Japan. So I mean, we had some great trips; we really did.

I'll never forget, I went to—we got in Vietnam in July and my first R&R was in early December. They wanted all of us in country at Christmas, so in early December she and I went—and I'll tell you, President Nixon was there, I've got pictures of it, about banners—"Welcome President Nixon," and I even have a picture of his Lincoln Continental going down the street. I will never forget how excited I was to be in a hotel room—and this is one of those little things—that the hot water and the cold water came out of the same spigot.

TS: [chuckles]

LH: I didn't have to go hot, cold, hot, cold, hot, cold. And everything flushed. I was so excited about that.

TS: I think somebody told me about, they didn't really want to leave their hotel room when they were on R&R. [chuckles]

LH: Oh, it was so wonderful, I didn't either, but I thought, "I'll never be here again," which I may not. I mean, Thailand was great. But that whole thing with the water, I mean, I was—we had crazy stuff happen.

I mean, in Americal, I told you that our backyard, we shared a bunker with these majors and lieutenant colonels, most of whom were married. Well, our trailer, of course, had no air conditioning, so it had these little thin see-through little curtains that just blew in the breeze, and I would sit there a lot at night and read in my bed before I went to bed, or write letters or whatever. And then we suddenly realized that somebody had pulled a fifty-five gallon can—I guess it was a can—underneath my bedroom window. So somebody was standing up on that—

TS: Peeking in?

LH: —peeking. A peeping tom, which is really weird. So then we called the MPs and they put the can away.

TS: It would be back again?

LH: Yeah, there was another one. So I had to learn not to ever get undressed in my room. I had to turn the lights off if I got undressed. And I really didn't like sitting in my bed reading or writing letters either.

TS: Right.

LH: And we had a—we had a ten foot high board fence around our trailers, so somebody was coming with—I don't know. And then when the MPs were out there the second time moving the fifty-five gallon drum, they realized that somebody had gone up underneath our trailer and they'd cut a hole in the bathroom floor, and was trying to look at us in the bathroom. Now, these are our own people, these are not the VC, these are not the NVA [North Vietnamese Army].

TS: Right.

LH: But nobody got mad about it, it was just kind of like boys will be boys, that's just the way it is. I mean, people now would have a lawsuit and they'd be doing DNA testing and everything else. But it's like I said, it's like getting mooned at the movie, you just—

TS: Kind of rolled with the punches.

LH: It just is; it is what it is; and you knew that before you went.

TS: Well, what does patriotism mean to you?

LH: Oh, wow. Well, patriotism to me is recognizing that we really do live in the greatest country in the world. I've been to all seven continents, I've been to seventy-five or more countries; I'm going to be adding two more next week. I am so proud to be an American.

However, I don't mind saying we have a lot of problems, and we have a lot of things that need changing and fixing, and I'm very, very concerned now about the rhetoric and all the divisiveness and the hatred and the vitriol—I am. I mean, I—of course, you can probably imagine, you will not find a fly swatter in this house. We're the most nonviolent people. I mean, my husband had dropped five hundred pound bombs. We don't—I just abhor violence. I can't stand violent movies, violent books, violent TV shows, violent video games, violent toys. I mean, to glorify war and—I don't know—For the life of me I don't know why anybody needs an assault rifle. I just don't. I mean, I think—I just think—but why we can't fix it? I don't know either.

I used to be so proud to go everywhere and say—and have people know that I'm American, and now there are plenty of places we travel they say, "Act like you're not an American because you're a target." And we've been to countries that I'm glad we've been to and I don't know if we'll go again: Egypt, Jordan, Israel; I don't know if we'll go there again; I don't know. It makes me sad because I really would like to go again.

We have tried to live a life that reflects appreciation for what we have; we've worked hard for what we have; we don't care about having things, we want experiences. I mean, we, sort of seen enough cathedrals and museums. We really want to experience nature more. I mean, our trip to Antarctica was unbelievable, and I'm sure this one to the rainforest and all that is going to be the same way. We're so into loving life and loving the beauty of life, and I just—I don't know—I just—I'm very sad by the way life is now; it's very harsh, very harsh, and very mean-spirited. I mean, the politics just make me completely crazy. I don't know. I don't know what's happened to us as a country. I do think the internet and talk radio, talk TV, I think that's contributed to it, but we all have to take responsibility too. And I don't know what to do about it.

I mean, I was raised—and I'm trying to incorporate this—that if you're not part of the solution you're still part of the problem. But I don't know what to do about this problem, I really don't, except to live my life the way that I think, wish most other people did, with being kind and caring and understanding. But, boy, I tell you what, you bump up against stuff now that—I don't know—it's very complex.

TS: What was the most memorable experience for you in your time in Vietnam?

LH: You mean the thing I just can't get out of my mind? Well, I mean, I'm sure it's those hospital visits, which wasn't even part of the job; it was voluntary; we didn't have to do that. That's the thing that will never leave me ever, ever, ever. I mean, we brought a lot of joy. We did. We brought a lot of joy, we brought a lot of hope, we brought a lot of good times, to people who were in a bad place. But there were some people that I realized—That's when it really hit me, how really, really ugly war is, and how unfair it is, and how—just—it's just obscene; it's just grotesque; it's just—I don't know how anybody can glorify it, I mean, especially now. And these wars now are not like they were in World War I, World War II, where there were fronts and there were good guys and the bad guys. I mean, this is—this really is—and I think it really started in Vietnam—it really is like Whack-A-Mole; you hit all four over here and then seven more over there. I don't know. I don't know what the future's going to hold. I do worry about what kind of world we're giving our—my grandchildren. I don't know. I don't know how to be part of the solution, and that's hard for me.

[Whack-a-mole is an arcade game in which players use a mallet to hit toy moles, which appear at random, back into their holes.]

TS: Well, did you feel that you were part of the solution during Vietnam when you did sign up and you went over there and you helped out?

LH: Yes. I know that what I did mattered; I knew it at the time; I didn't know how much. When I first got there I thought, "Man, why do they make you leave after twelve months? I mean, I can do this forever. This is the greatest job in the world." But you can see how I aged.

TS: When you showed me the two pictures of—

LH: Yes.

TS: —one you arrive and then one of you leaving? Yeah.

LH: How I aged and how my heart was just breaking; it was time.

TS: Your eyes definitely showed it.

LH: It was time to go. And that's [those are] the eyes I saw in everybody else that had been there a very long time. Everybody went through that same transition, and when you came back, like my roommate said I was weird; they said, "You were not the person you used to be."

And what I didn't know to say—but it's true—is I should have realized—my answer should have been, "No, and I never will be that person again. I'll never be innocent and unscarred by what I saw and heard and smelled. It's not to be morbid, because I think it's given me—my life has more flavor than anybody else's I know, honestly.

But I'm intentional about it. I'm not—probably was not the easiest mother because I'm not tolerant of people being lazy and bored and whiny. I mean, no.

TS: You got any of your mother in you?

LH: Some would say that; some would say.

TS: Yeah.

LH: I mean, she was tough as nails. I mean, I never saw her cry, I never—That's that World War II stiff upper lip thing [idiom for a stoic attitude].

TS: You said she volunteered for the Red Cross, right?

LH: She did.

TS: In World War II.

LH: Well, and it's an old axiom, but it's so true, that when the going gets tough the tough gets going, and I had to be tough. I mean, my father dying suddenly and unexpectedly and tragically, I grew up in a hurry. I was fourteen years old, I had to. And not everybody has been tested but not everybody wants to be tested. And a lot of people avoid the uncomfortable, the unpleasant, the difficult. They choose an easy path, and I'm sorry for them. I don't think they have the kind of enjoyment that they could be having in their lives. But if they're happy, why do I worry?

But I have a huge—I don't have much interest in reading fiction. I mean, I don't read ladies books, summer reading books. I don't read about—or movies or—I really am so into the here and now and what has happened in the past and what is happening now. A lot of people don't.

TS: I see these beautiful bookshelves all filled with books, mostly.

LH: [unclear]

TS: Behind you there. You can see that that fills your life too.

LH: Well, and most of them are nonfiction; most of them. Some of the ones you see that aren't.

TS: Yeah.

LH: This is my Vietnam section.

TS: Yeah, I saw, you have a nice shelf of Vietnam. But there's really no more formal questions I have. So Larry, is there anything that you want to add that we haven't talked about or I didn't ask about?

LH: I don't know; I probably said it all. I don't know. I do still have a soft side that's in there that's hurting, but it's up to me to deal with it, and I do; and I do. But I do expect other people—There's some thought, and I agree with it, that those of us that do survive—and there's a lot been written about survivor's guilt. I don't know that I have survivor's guilt, in that why did I live and Hannah Crews didn't, I don't have that kind of a feeling, but I do have survivor's guilt in that—maybe it's not guilt, it's more like survivor's—a survivor's plan which is that I need to live my life, not only for myself, but for all the other people that didn't make it back.

TS: I was wondering, when you talked about the nurse who died, that if you don't feel a special responsibility—not a burden—but a responsibility to live a certain way because she didn't get a chance to.

LH: Oh yeah, I do. Her mother reminded me of that first. Even though she was an RN [registered nurse] and I'm not. I saw her closer to her death than her own mother did. I mean, I have a closer geographic connection than her own mother and father did. It sure was a waste.

And I used to go out into the schools on these speaking gigs and—I didn't say this but it's true—one of the reasons—I've heard this several times—but the PA [physician's assistant] programs came out of all these medics coming back and they're saying, "Gosh, these people are trained to do great things—but I read one time that one of the sad but true positives of Vietnam is they don't have to shoot as many goats because they had so many real head wounds that they—and my son will say this—he said, "Mom, we keep people alive now that never would have made it through Vietnam." Which, his follow up question is, "For what, I'm not exactly sure," because he's so disturbed by what he sees. And see, he—there's a suicide every twenty-two hours, and a third of them have never even deployed, but a lot of those people don't die, who attempt suicide. But they end up being his patients because they put guns in their mouths or under their chins, so they—he just said it's just horrible, and he sees these young kids whose lives are just physically and psychologically and professionally ruined because they get dishonorably—I mean, less than honorable discharges.

But anyway, I don't know where I was going with that. You're never the same person when you've seen what it does; whatever war it is. And I do so admire Clara Barton because she said—she wasn't a nurse; I don't know if you knew that or not; she as not a nurse. She was in the DAR. But she said, "If I can't be a nurse at least I can help the soldiers," which I think is perfect. And then she said, "I go through doors that most people choose to ignore," which I think again is me; she's talking for me. And once you've have the experience of lifting somebody up from wherever they are it's very hypnotic; you want to keep doing that. And I don't know that I'm doing that anymore.

But all you leave behind is your own kids, and I just hope that these three are going to do their part. I will say my daughter, I'm very proud of her, she—with her cultural anthropology major, she's a yoga teacher, and she—until she had this third baby—but she'll get back to it—she voluntarily gets up on at four o'clock [a.m.] on [Wednesdays—LH corrected later], drives an hour and a half to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and teaches yoga free to PTSD returning, and amputees, because she understands now. I mean, she—It helps her a lot more understand her brother's role in the military. She didn't get that so much. And then of course, I can't say enough about how

my [first-born—LH clarified later] son does with helping [and healing—LH added later].

TS: Right.

LH: So if these two keep on that'll be helpful. They're doing what—They're living, and I hope showing their children what the example is.

TS: Yeah. Well, it sounds like they probably are. It's been really great to talk with you, Larry.

LH: Yeah. You didn't know it was going to be this long. I didn't either.

TS: That's alright. I'll go ahead and turn it off, unless you have something else you want to add.

LH: I can't think of anything else. I mean, I'm just grateful for the life I've had, I'm grateful for taking the chances I did, I'm grateful for the parents I had who pushed me, and it's been a good ride for sixty-nine years. I don't know how I got to be this old so fast.

TS: [chuckles] You're not old. You're not old. Alright. Well, thank you again. I'll go ahead and stop it.

[End of Interview]