

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

INTERVIEWEE: Deborah Elizabeth Branson

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 8 July 2016

[Begin Interview]

TS: Well, today is July 8, 2016. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Deborah Elizabeth Branson in Raeford, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Deborah, how would you like your name to read on your collection?

DB: Just Deborah Elizabeth Branson is fine.

TS: Okay. Well, Deborah, why don't you start off a little bit about telling me when and where you were born?

DB: When or where?

TS: Both.

DB: Oh, October 7, 1951 in a hospital in Oklahoma City because Norman, Oklahoma didn't have one yet.

TS: And that's the town where you grew up in.

DB: Yeah.

TS: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

DB: Two brothers; one older, one younger. I'm the middle kid.

TS: You're the middle kid.

DB: Yeah. The lucky one.

TS: Yeah. That's what you consider lucky? Being in the middle.

DB: It was okay. They didn't kill me. They tried. [both chuckle] That's what brother—siblings are for.

TS: What did your folks do?

DB: My father was a college professor. He was the head of the School of Geology at the University of Oklahoma.

TS: Oh, a geologist!

DB: Yes.

TS: Impressive.

DB: So was my grandfather.

TS: Really?

DB: Yeah, I'm third generation Dr. Branson.

TS: That's excellent.

DB: It was kind of a goal.

TS: But you're not doing geology?

DB: Well, I am teaching earth science right now.

TS: Are you? Excellent.

DB: Last night I gave a final, and I do that because we're nine month employees, and so if you want to get paid for the summer—

TS: You got to work.

DB: Yeah, you do another one besides—It's fun, I think. I like rocks and dinosaurs and things.

TS: Yeah, that's a great place out there to—

DB: So I'm weird. [chuckles]

TS: I don't think it's weird. I love geology. I think it's great.

DB: You'd love my car; it's full of rocks right now.

TS: Your what's full of rocks?

DB: I'm teaching on Fort Bragg [U.S. Army military installation in North Carolina] at night, so I have to take my lab to the class. So my car is full of all the rocks I used for the lab final last night.

TS: Oh, my gosh. How great. Alright, we're checking out your car on the way out. [both chuckle] What about your mom?

DB: She was also in geology. That's why my parents met.

TS: Really?

DB: He was working for Shell Oil Company and she was working for the U.S. Geological Survey in New Mexico, and then she became a stay-at-home-mom to take care of us.

TS: Yeah, I'm sure. As you're growing up, are you in a rural area, in a city? When we picture Oklahoma, what does it look like to you?

DB: Then, it was semi-rural, because first my father was able to walk to the campus, and then they decided that my first word, I guess, was "horse," so they bought some land out—at that time, out a dirt road, and everyone—all his friends kept saying, "Well, why are you going to go move way out there, Carl?" [chuckles] Well, it's no longer at all rural, obviously.

TS: Not even where you grew up?

DB: Oh, not at all. Not at all. It's middle of the city.

TS: Really?

DB: Oh, yeah. Norman has grown huge.

TS: But at that time, it was—

DB: Yeah, we had cattle down the street, and I kept my horse across the street, then I kept him at home from the time I was nine till—

TS: Have you always had horses?

DB: I started riding when I was three, and I figured out a way to have them everywhere we went, including in the Philippines.

TS: Did you really?

DB: Yeah, I rode ones there. They had ones on base.

TS: That's really impressive, I have to say.

DB: I drug them all over the country, from flight training back to California, and from California up to Newport [Rhode Island].

TS: Tell me what life was like growing up at that time for you. You're a child of the fifties and sixties, right?

DB: Yeah, the time when moms were home and you didn't lock your doors and you had cookies and milk.

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

DB: Anything outdoors.

TS: Yeah, riding your horse.

DB: Riding my horse, playing with animals—keeping animals—had rabbits, had chickens, had monkeys. I raised laboratory rats and mice to sell to the university to pay for my horses.

TS: Did you really? Oh, my goodness. Okay. I didn't even know that was something you could do.

DB: Oh, yeah. There's all kinds of stuff you can do. [both chuckle] I wanted the horses and my parents were like, "Okay."

TS: You got to have some sort of funding for that, right? Did you go to the movies, dances, things like that?

DB: Movies were cheap in those days. That's when you'd go for a quarter; you'd go Saturday morning and watch all day. But after I got to be about fifteen, sixteen, I was at horse shows every weekend because I worked at a barn training horses and teaching lessons.

TS: How about school? What was that like for you?

DB: I went to a private school, a lab school run by the university, which was a good way to go, at least till ninth grade, so we had opportunities a lot of kids don't have.

TS: What kind of opportunities do you think you had?

DB: Very small classes. You had to pass an IQ [intelligence quotient] test to go to the school.

TS: Oh, you did?

DB: Yeah. We did have a special ed [education] group, but they were great because they had wonderful teachers and small classes as well. So it was quite a—

TS: Did you get to do special projects?

DB: Yeah, we got to go down to [University of Oklahoma] Biological Station on Lake Texoma, between Texas and Oklahoma, for a week, with full professors taking us out, doing things, painting, birds—

TS: Oh, neat. Lots of different activities like that.

DB: Yeah, they were professors taking us like we were their graduate students.

TS: Oh, okay.

DB: So that was pretty cool. [unclear]

TS: Kind of checking you out as well, right?

DB: Yeah.

TS: Did you do any kind of extracurricular activities?

DB: There wasn't much there. When I was in high school, I just was in the art club all the time.

TS: Yeah. So you said through ninth grade you were at this one school, then did you move somewhere else?

DB: I went to public school.

TS: Public school? And was that a big transition for you?

DB: There were a lot of people there. [both chuckle] But it was okay. I'd walk to school in the snow both ways, uphill, and in those days we had to wear skirts. You couldn't wear pants.

TS: I didn't know there were any hills in Oklahoma.

DB: That's the joke.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah.

DB: But all the guys wore long pants and we wore skirts.

TS: You had to wear skirts and freeze.

DB: Just like when we went to Newport and we were going into Officer Candidacy School, we were still required in those days to wear skirts. The guys wore pants. It is very cold in Newport in November and December, and I was the company commander for the women, and while you're standing waiting, some of them go parade rest and then back to attention. I figured out going to parade rest wasn't very comfortable.

TS: Right. That's right. I think I just read last week about how—I think it's the navy that is maybe thinking about eliminating skirts. Had you read anything like that?

DB: That would be a good idea.

TS: Yeah. I think it was the navy. It might have been another service but I'm pretty sure it was the navy.

DB: Well, there's no point.

TS: But there's kind of a backlash to it. There's a lot of women that don't want that to happen.

DB: [chuckles] When I was there you weren't even allowed to.

TS: Right, exactly. That's all you could have.

DB: Not in school, not starting in the navy.

TS: As a young girl, and your dad's a professor, and you're in a pretty highly competitive, it seems like, academic environment, what were your hopes as a young girl? When you grew older, what did you want to do or be?

DB: I was thinking about being a veterinarian. I loved animals. And I joined Civil Air Patrol and did some stuff with them, but they only had one airplane and it never worked, so.

TS: You didn't get much flying done.

DB: No, none. [both chuckle]

TS: None. No, none. Okay.

DB: Didn't work. Did ground school, but it didn't seem—It was okay. It wasn't something I—I haven't always wanted to be a pilot. It just happened.

TS: What year did you finish high school?

DB: Nineteen sixty-nine.

TS: Sixty-nine. Okay. Did you have any feelings then about what was going on in Vietnam?

DB: I was somewhat baffled by it all, and it was one of those sort of things that I determined that if we ever had another major conflict, I was going to try to make sure that I kept myself very well informed in the news about why it happened, because you had to go back twenty years to understand what was going on.

TS: Right. Did you have any kind of opinion about it one way or the other?

DB: I had friends that were protesting. I had friends that were coming back not quite right. I had friends that died. Because we graduated in '69, we were right at the height of things happening.

My older brother drew a draft number of three, but he's 4-F [classification given to those who are not acceptable for military service] for having a hole in his eardrum from having had a firecracker go off.

TS: He didn't have to go?

DB: No. And my younger brother drew three-hundred and something, which we kind of hoped he would go because he was a nightmare. [both chuckle]

TS: So neither of your brothers had to go.

DB: No, neither of them did.

TS: Okay. The sixties are a real interesting period for growing up, and looking back and thinking about the counterculture, and then in this time you're moving into the Women's Movement too. At that time, as a young woman, did any of those things resonate with you?

[The Women's Movement, or second-wave feminist movement, refers to a series of political campaigns during the 1960s and 1970s for reforms on issues such as reproductive rights, domestic violence, equal pay, women's suffrage, and sexual harassment]

DB: I subscribed to *Ms. Magazine* [American feminist publication]. I kept up on things. I'm not particularly the activist type.

TS: Well, not to go out and do something, but for your own internal feelings.

DB: Oh, yeah, because I was really aware of that, and the things we couldn't do; the things we weren't allowed to do. I remember when I was twelve—I wasn't even that old, maybe eight—there was a parade and somebody from some TV show was there, and I dressed as a nurse. And he said, "Oh, do you want to be a nurse?" Well, I didn't. I'd really have rather been the doctor but it wasn't something you could do.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Dressed as, right.

DB: Well, you didn't think you could at that point.

TS: Right. There's no role models that were doctors.

DB: Not in the fifties. There weren't even that many women professors, so it was kind of like, I want to be but I don't know quite—

TS: There's no pathway to it.

DB: Yeah.

TS: Right. Were you thinking there should be a pathway or, "I'm just going to do some things and see what happens?"

DB: Oh, I always figured I was going to do something. I wasn't going to let it be nothing because I wasn't going to do that. And I was very aware—Women, at that point, I remember it was fifty-nine cents for every dollar a man made. Now it's about seventy-three.

TS: In the seventies, somewhere. I'm not sure what it is.

DB: But it was fifty-nine then. I remember that vividly. And women just—I'm sure my mother's job was not as good as my father's. And the fifties was an affluent time for the country and women weren't even expected to work. Of course, it was after World War II, and so a lot of men were returning. My father had a PhD in Geology, so of course the army air corps—which is what he was in—in their infinite wisdom, had him teaching geography. It starts with the same stuff, right? He hated geography, but because of that we have one of the silk maps that they gave the pilots—

TS: Oh, nice. Right, they had to take them so they could find their way.

DB: And ours happens to be from the Philippines.

TS: Oh, is that right?

DB: So it's really pretty neat. I've never gotten it framed because it's big and—

TS: Pretty large?

DB: I've been trying to figure out how to do it.



TS: Pretty special.

DB: Oh, it is. It's a neat thing.

TS: What did you do after high school?

DB: Went to college.

TS: Where'd you go?

DB: University of Oklahoma.

TS: Okay. Did you still want to be a veterinarian, then, or had your thoughts changed?

DB: Yeah, I started pre-vet, and then I did like most people do in college, I couldn't figure out quite what I wanted to do and changed major several times.

TS: Right.

DB: I'd been with horses and I decided I wanted to work professionally with them so I found a program. Of course, we didn't have internet back in those days, but I found one you could do by directed study, and went to work in a place in Virginia, looking for a job with a big-time stable, and ended up working for a guy on the Olympic team in New York.

TS: Really?

DB: So I was there with him for two years, went with him to Europe.

TS: Who was that?

DB: John Bennett[?].

TS: Neat.

DB: As a matter of fact, we're going up in two weeks—or in a couple of weeks to go visit his ex-wife. He's been dead for a few years. I never heard from him again after I worked for him, but his ex-wife came to visit us everywhere, including the Philippines.

TS: Really?

DB: And she's eighty-two or three now so we're trying to go see her in Massachusetts.

TS: Very nice. That's a nice connection to have kept all this time.

DB: Oh, yeah. My daughter calls her "grandma."

I was over there for a couple of years working for him, and we had the best—he was one of the best we had in the country at the time. And it was fun going to Europe, but I discovered that when you are the employee, if it's raining, you're outside with the horses. If the horse is sick, you stay up with it. If you want to go somewhere but the vets coming, you're there with the vet. And if the horse is unruly or obnoxious, you're riding it. So I decided, "I think I will finish my degree." And then I decided with the bachelor's I got, I had to get a master's because it wasn't a very useful one—liberal studies with a concentration in sciences—so I did a one-year master's program and—

TS: What'd you get your master's in?

DB: That one was Environmental Science through the College of Civil Engineering.

TS: Okay.

DB: Essentially, what would now be environmental engineering.

TS: Really? Okay.

DB: It didn't exist as a field then.

TS: Were there a lot of women in that field at all?

DB: No, no.

TS: Were you one of the few women?

DB: I think there were two women in the whole engineering building. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, I think that would be really different. How was the reaction of the professors?

DB: They were good.

TS: They were all good?

DB: There was absolutely no problem, and I would have expected there to be but it was no problem at all. Maybe because I was a professor's daughter on the campus already; maybe because one of the professors in the program was my boyfriend's father.

TS: [chuckles]

DB: I don't know. But I never felt any problem out of any of them so it was great, and particularly with a very tiny four floors of engineering.

TS: Very small world, right?

DB: Yeah. And now, women in engineering, not that uncommon by a long shot. But it never occurred to me I couldn't do that so I did.

TS: Right, sure. You graduated in what year?

DB: That was in '75.

TS: Seventy-five?

DB: Seventy-six. I was half-way through, and people were getting their degrees and they were going to work in—One was going to Tempe, Arizona to work in the wastewater treatment plant, and another was going somewhere else, and I thought, "I want to do that. I want to move around still."

TS: Okay.

DB: So I walked by the recruiter's offices.

TS: Just by chance or on purpose?

DB: I was in the student union. They were in the building. I walked by the air force, I said, "Are women allowed to fly?"  
He said, "No." But that's not true. [chuckles]

TS: Well, in '76, they weren't.

DB: Seventy-four was when the first flight—seventy-two, the first group started. Seventy-four, I think.

TS: Wasn't that the army though, not the—

DB: Navy. Navy was first.

TS: Navy and then army.

DB: And the marines were last.

TS: Yeah, yeah.

DB: I had a delightful time. I was standing in line at the dentist's in the navy annex when I was at the Pentagon, there was a marine general standing next to me, and he made some comment about my wings, and I said, "Yeah, someday you'll have women."  
And he said, "We just started our first one." He was so proud. It was really cool. He was proud of it that they had their first woman marine pilot, which was very exciting to me, but that was many years later. [both chuckle]

TS: Yeah, it was; it was in the 90s, I think, wasn't it?

DB: Yeah. My father had been in the army air corps, my mother's first husband had been in the navy, so I thought, "Well, the navy seems like a good thing. I think I'll go try that." So I just walked in to the navy recruiter, who also said women weren't allowed to fly.

TS: You said, "They weren't?"

DB: Yeah, weren't; he didn't know. It was a chief and he didn't know.

TS: Did he say, "Check it out," though?

DB: No, he didn't. Not a thing.

TS: Oh, that's right, because then you went in and did something different.

DB: Yeah. And I was getting a degree through the College of Civil Engineering and I couldn't even get in the civil engineer corps, which I should have been able to. But I was a woman.

TS: Right. They might have still been called WAVES [Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service—U.S. Navy] but that was really broken up about that time.

DB: Yeah. I don't think that—Nobody—It wasn't officially anymore.

TS: Right. Why did you decide on the navy, then, if both of them said—

DB: I don't know. It just seemed like a good idea. No real good reason.

TS: No reason.

DB: Absolutely none. I thought it'd be interesting to go out to sea, but then I found out, "Not so fast."

TS: Women don't go to sea; not yet?

DB: No.

TS: Yeah. How did your family feel about your decision, and your friends?

DB: One of my friends—The guy who had been my boyfriend was in law school and he wanted to be a people's rights lawyer. He said, "We can get married."  
And I said, "No. You'd give someone the shirt off your back and I don't want it to be my shirt, so that's fine," and the world needs people to do that sort of thing. He's now a corporate lawyer. [chuckles]

TS: He's what?

DB: He now is a corporate lawyer.

TS: Oh, really?

DB: He did do people's rights for a long time, but he works in environmental things and he's written over forty cases that are cited that are really good. He lives in Denver now.

TS: Neat.

DB: But it's good. They go do their thing, you go do something else, because you've got to do what you do.

TS: What'd you dad, your mom, and your siblings think?

DB: They thought it was fine. Whatever I wanted to do, okay. [chuckles]

TS: Well, let's talk about you getting in there. Seventy-six, is that right?

DB: Yes, '76.

TS: You start out in officer's school.

DB: Went to Newport, Rhode Island in August.

TS: How was that experience?

DB: It was fine. It was kind of a shell shock because I had no military experience.

TS: Was there anything specifically challenging for you?

DB: It was just different. It's cold up there. [both chuckle]

TS: So the weather was the thing that was the—

DB: Yeah, nothing like going swimming in the—

TS: What month were you there?

DB: From August to December. Nothing like going swimming and coming out where there's no hairdryers, because there weren't women in large quantities. There were two companies of women at that time. And before that they'd been—or they integrated with men after that. But before that, the women had been in separate groups entirely. They hadn't even been in officer candidate school. They were off with the doctors and stuff

where they couldn't figure out what they were. So we were the first ones kind of being treated like normal navy.

TS: Did you have to do anything that was either physically challenging or emotionally challenging?

DB: Not that I really remember. It was kind of different doing just—like I said, just not being familiar with the routine. It took me the longest time to remember the difference between an E-3 [seaman] and petty officer third class [E-4] because it doesn't make any sense. Why do you have an E-3 and—it was like—

TS: We all feel that way about the navy. [both chuckle] No, I'm just kidding.

DB: Of course, now it makes really good sense and I don't know why it didn't. And celestial navigation is not my favorite class, nor is it anyone else's.

TS: No, probably not.

DB: Which I don't know—I think they just said something about going back to teaching it again; that people learn how to use the stars.

TS: Back to the basics, right?

DB: Yeah. But it's not the easiest way to do navigation.

TS: Is there anything else about that officer's training that you wanted to mention?

DB: Well, it was—You really learn a lot. You learn a lot about what you can do. I was physically really fit, so climb up walls and doing things wasn't really that big a deal. Though, it was interesting, there were two women there that were both six foot four [inches tall], and incredibly awkward, and one that was five foot ten—four foot ten in our group. [chuckles]

TS: A wide range of sizes, right?

DB: Try to get that to march where it looks right. It's just not good.

TS: Oh, that's true too, isn't it? Go ahead.

DB: No, I was just thinking it was kind of funny. But the weird thing then, the men all had real uniforms. They gave us hand-me-down uniforms.

TS: Really?

DB: Yeah. They gave us uniforms that were leftover that had—sweaters with holes in the sleeves, pea coats were whatever size they could come up with. We had skirts that didn't

necessarily fit. They were wool skirts. And the shoes were awful. They were miserable and they were very uncomfortable, and I got the worst shin splints—and I've never been able to get rid of them—from marching on concrete in poorly made shoes.

TS: I don't know that they've ever solved the shoe problem. Shoe/boot—

DB: Well, it is a lot better since they do make Bates [brand of combat boot] for women with the better soles, because those little paper-thin leather ones were—

TS: Terrible.

DB: Oh, because you had to march everywhere but—

TS: Now, when you talked to the recruiter and he said, "No flying," did he say what kind of options you might have?

DB: Well, he just kind of channeled me into the typical unrestricted linewomen, 1100s, [Military Occupational Specialty for Unrestricted Line Officer]; that you just kind of did clerical stuff. And I said, "Well, at least I'll get around and do something."

[An unrestricted line officer is a commissioned officer of the line in the U.S. Navy qualified for command at sea of the navy's warfighting combatant units]

TS: Yeah. Where did you go for your first assignment?

DB: San Diego [California]. Spent a lot of time there

TS: Yeah. And so, you were working in this clerical assignment.

DB: Well, actually, it was a Fleet Combat Direction Systems Support Activity. You like that name?

TS: Yeah. That's a good one. I got "fleet." [chuckles]

DB: You know how the military's notorious for giving you a job you don't know anything about?

TS: Yes.

DB: Computers had just started, and computers were still in a huge building, and you used punch cards, and it was tedious.

TS: That's right.

DB: And so, I took no computer classes because they were just starting, so I didn't. So what was my first job? Computer systems analyst. You've got to be kidding?

TS: What'd you have to do?

DB: Debug computer programs. You've got to be kidding me. And the bad part was that we were doing the programs that supported the Naval Tactical Data System aboard a certain type of ship, and then when you go to do the delivery—because you go out there to put it in to see if it worked—women couldn't go.

So I was really bummed, because when I left the command there was one plaque you could get that had a computer with little—all of our plaques are somewhere down there too—with the computer and electrical things around it, and if you'd made a delivery, you also got "beep beep"—you know the Road Runner [cartoon character]—on there.

TS: Right.

DB: I wanted "beep beep" but I couldn't get it because I wasn't allowed to go to sea.

TS: So you never got it.

DB: No, I couldn't get it. It's a terrible bummer.

TS: Well, how long did you stay doing that type of work before you—

DB: Less than a year because I got accepted to flight training.

TS: You said you learned about the flight training while you were in your officer training?

DB: No, I was at [unclear], and I had learned that one of the women that I'd gone through—

TS: School with?

DB: —school with, who didn't do very well—I know she got rolled back one class because she was having some troubles—had applied for flight training. I thought, "If she can do that, I can do that."

So I found the NAVPERS [Navy Personnel] man, and found the citation, and found what it said to—what you had to do and the timeframe, and I put in all the paperwork and got accepted. I talked to all the women who had wings. I called them all. I found them. I said, "What do you think?" And then, of course, that's how I know most of them are senior to me because I called them then and I've stayed friends with them.

TS: Were they encouraging?

DB: Oh, very.



TS: Did they warn you about anything?

DB: Oh, yeah. Lots of things. [chuckles]

TS: What did they warn you about?

DB: You're going to be discriminated against. You're not going to be able to do a lot of things. And as a matter of fact, the day—one of them said, "I'm going to go flying—"Jo Ellen said, "I'm going to go out flying. Why don't you come out flying with me and you can see what it's like?"

So I went there, and then her flight got diverted to go to a ship, and because it was going to drop something off at a ship she got bounced off the flight, which meant I did too. So I went out flying—Somebody else happened to be in there, so he took me out. And so, I went flying with another flight going somewhere else. But that's what it was like; "Oh, going to a ship? You can't go, even if you're going to hover."

TS: It didn't matter, right?

DB: No. Women can't go to sea. So that was quite amazing.

TS: That was really a cultural barrier that took a while to overcome, right?

DB: Yeah, like, twenty years almost. And then I got to thinking, "Should I go or shouldn't I go?" And one of the women that applied and didn't get accepted because she had—Is it dying [referring to tape recorder]?

TS: No, it's doing good. I just check it every once in a while.

DB: Oh, okay. Because she had sinus issues. She said, "I'm going to kill you if you don't go." I was like, "Okay. Okay."

TS: You don't want that!

DB: No.

TS: That's in '77, and you went to flight training at Pensacola, Florida. You said Milton, Florida?

DB: Yeah, I started in '78; went there in '78.

TS: Seventy-eight. Okay, '78. And tell me about that experience.

DB: I knew what it was like to be black.

TS: What do you mean by that?

DB: Discriminated against.

TS: What kind of things happened?

DB: You just never were a part of anything. You were always kind of shunned off to the side. They didn't want us there and it was very obvious. Some were great; some were absolutely wonderful. Some were not. But we got a woman flight instructor while we were there. We didn't have a shower. The men did. And you weren't allowed to go on base in your flight gear, so you had to have a uniform on, come through the gate, change in your flight stuff, fly around in an unairconditioned aircraft, sweat, and then put your clothes back on to go home again. We had a woman, Jane O'Day[?], came to be an instructor. She flew three flights one day. Then she went up to the commanding officer, put her arm around him and said, "Wouldn't it be nice if the women had a shower?" [chuckles] She was good.

TS: Did that change, then?

DB: I was already in the helicopter things and we didn't—she was over in the fixed wing. They got one; we didn't.

TS: Yeah. When you talk about having resistance and discrimination and those kind of things happening, and you're trying to explain to people who want to understand about what really happened, did you feel like you weren't supported or they didn't trust you?

DB: They didn't want us to succeed.

TS: They didn't want you to succeed?

DB: No, they'd find ways to make it hard for some people in lots of ways. I never really experienced anything really dreadful because I lived with another—First, there was another woman and a guy was living with us, too, but he was a pig so we finally moved him out; we got him out of there.

TS: Oh, he was literally a pig. Okay.

DB: Yeah, we made him move out. We just made his life difficult. Every time he left something in a room, we'd move it to his room. But we had a really good group of friends, and that's what it takes.

TS: It's like that picture you showed me of all the women in front of—You said how many were in your class?

DB: Well, there weren't that many. There were—I think fourteen started and I think twelve got wings, but a number of them got sent off to Corpus Christi [Texas] to the fixed wing, so there weren't that many of us still in [Naval Air Station] Whiting [Field]. I think there were four of us.

TS: So fourteen women versus how many men were in the training?

DB: About nine hundred.

TS: Oh, my goodness. Okay. That's a huge amount.

DB: Yeah. There were actually four of us by the time we got down to helicopters.

TS: Just four of you that went to that training?

DB: And all the rest of the women went to fixed wing. But it was so funny. When it went for helicopter selection, they decided after [Milady] "Bunny" Blaha [23rd female pilot and fourth helicopter pilot in the U.S. Navy] they weren't going to allow any more into helicopters because they couldn't go to sea. She was in the third group. We were in the fourth group to go through.

TS: What happened with her?

DB: They just decided because women couldn't go to sea on a ship that they weren't good in the helicopter squadron. Karen Thornton, who was my roommate in flight training and our next-door neighbor in California, and is the one whose daughter staged the picture—

TS: Oh, right. Okay. In later years when she became a pilot.

DB: Yeah. So Karen had the grades and she decided she wanted to go to helicopters, and the way your name was on the roster was just "Thornton, K.I." so they sent her the orders to go to helicopter squadron. She walked in and they said, "You're not supposed to be here." She said—

TS: "Here's my orders."

DB: So they got in contact with Naval Operations up in [Washington] D.C. and they said, "No reason why not." So they let her go in. And she was right ahead of me, so she got—I kind of had to follow on what she did, and there was a woman, Coastie [a nickname for a member of the Coast Guard], up there ahead of us, too, who, unfortunately, died in her first tour. I don't know why. Colleen Cain. She was the first woman helicopter pilot for the Coast Guard and the first one to die. [Speaking to animal] CJ, you're a toad.

[Lieutenant Colleen Cain, a Coast Guard reservist, became the service's first female helicopter pilot in June 1979. She and two other crew members were killed 7 January 1982 when their helicopter crashed during a heavy storm on Molokai, a Hawaiian island]

TS: That's a cat that we're talking about out there. It's a beautiful cat, a calico.

DB: Oh, she is, but she's a toad.

TS: So the woman in the Coast Guard, did she die in an accident or—

DB: Yeah. She went into a mountain in Hawaii.

TS: Okay.

DB: I don't know the circumstances. I think she was still co-pilot and they probably lost radio contact in bad weather, and that's what—I've lost several friends that way. Three I can come up with quickly that I've been in squadrons with.

So then when it came time to go out to do the carrier calls, when we were in helicopters, Karen, again, was right ahead of me. I happened to be home. She went out and did the carrier landing practice on the shore, and she came home and she was furious. "They're not going to let me go." She was spinning in circles, so we'd just stop her and send her back out the door again.

Again, messages up and phone calls up to Washington [D.C.]. They said, "Oh, I guess she can go." I mean, for heaven's sake, we're going to the [USS] *Lexington*; a big, barely-still-in-condition ship right off the coast there. So she went, no big deal, and she got [carrier calls?]. So when it came time for me to do it, no big deal. I went out and did the carrier calls. But it was just such a big deal before you could go do things.

TS: So it's kind of something that had to kind of go all the way up through the chain of command, for them to agree that, "Okay. We'll let a woman do this."

DB: Oh, yeah. Same like when they first went to sea, Karen and Colleen were in a squadron together because they tried to pair women up. They were in a squadron together and they were supposed to go on a deployment. Two weeks before the deployment they pulled them off, and so two guys that hadn't planned on deploying had to go.

TS: Where were they supposed to go? Doesn't matter.

DB: To the Med [Mediterranean], I think. I don't really quite remember. Can't have women on a combat vessel. It was like, "Jeez, people."

TS: It's a constant battle to try to gain a little ground, and lose a little and gain a little.

DB: Oh, yeah. And I had orders to—We were already married. Dave was in San Diego. We'd already bought a house. I had orders to go to San Diego. And then I got a phone call from the fellow who I went flying with that one day, because we became good friends. We're still good friends. He said, "You got to call your detailer. Something's happened."

I said, "Okay."

He said, "There was just a big AOM here and—"

TS: What's that?

DB: All Officers Meeting. And the admiral in charge of all the air wings said, "I'm not going to have any fucking women in my squadrons."

TS: And this was in San Diego?

DB: Yeah. And I don't use profanity; that's what he used, in front of a whole room of men. Now, this is letting all the guys know how they feel about you. I promptly got the [first down?] I got in flight training. Promptly. I went out for a flight and I promptly got an unsatisfactory flight rating, so they said, "You're not going to fly until we settle this." So we got it settled out and another squadron said, "We'll take her." And it was one that was a ports squadron, not a going-to-sea one, because I was supposed to be going to sea. Anyway, we got that settled. I went out. Nothing like knowing you're really welcome. [chuckles]

TS: Right. So the unsatisfactory rating, was it something to undermine you?

DB: No, not at all. I did a terrible job.

TS: Okay. [both chuckle]

DB: It was bad flying.

TS: So you needed to improve your skills and—

DB: Well, no, I needed to get settled on the—It was just one flight.

TS: Oh, okay.

DB: I needed to—

TS: Do whatever thing correctly and—

DB: Be not upset about not having orders, to where we'd just bought a house.

TS: Oh, so you were emotionally upset about it at the time you had to take that.

DB: Yeah.

TS: I got it.

DB: That was like, "You've got to be kidding."

TS: Right.

DB: We'd been married a year at that point, and so they said, "We can send you to Norfolk [Virginia]."  
"No. That's not what we said." Anyway—

TS: So you ended up in San Diego.

DB: Yes, and the squadron was very good; extremely supportive. Well, sort of. [chuckles] The guys were, and that's where I was flying with the ex-Vietnam—former Vietnam pilots.

TS: When you say "the guys" you mean the guys you flew with?

DB: Yeah, there were no women so it was only me. I was the only woman helicopter pilot on the West Coast for several years.

TS: The struggles that you had that were not so great, was it through administrative stuff or what?

DB: Little odds and ends. That one commanding officer decided that he wanted to have an AOM at a Playboy club, in uniform, and I refused to go. And he ordered me to. I thought it was completely inappropriate.

TS: Did you go?

DB: I had to.

TS: Because he ordered you?

DB: Yes. And I thought—I just couldn't believe that.

TS: Did you feel like you had any recourse to try to—

DB: None.

TS: None?

DB: None. There was nothing I could do, but whatever.

TS: Stuff like that. More of command issues than the guys you're working with.

DB: There's a lot of them; every level; you name it. But there are also a lot of wonderful, wonderful people. People are people are people.

TS: Did you feel like you had some mentors as you were going through? Male or female.

DB: Not really.

TS: No?

DB: No. That's really what you do need. It's kind of like how Rosemary had really good support throughout. Colleen comes from a military family, and one of her sons is in helicopter training now, and her father was a military pilot, so they were used to it. I don't know. Karen didn't really have much support and she had some really not so good things happen because of stuff. But mostly, we found people, somebody, and—They can always make it hard but most people didn't.

TS: Right. Like your peers, there were some of them that were really good at—

DB: When I was in HC-1 [Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 1], everybody was extremely supportive, but when I got to HSL-31 [Helicopter Anti-Submarine (Light) Squadron 31]—which is a replacement air group squadron so it's very, very competitive. And so, you're with the best from everywhere, so everybody's competing with everybody, and sometimes people, when they compete, no matter who you are—male, female, black, white, pink, purple, polka dotted—they're going to try to look better so they can rank higher. There was nothing really significant among anything there. I did the jobs I was supposed to do—

TS: Which placement was that at?

DB: That was HSL-31. [Naval Air Station] North Island [California] again.

TS: The North Island, okay.

DB: But it was fine. They didn't do anything. Most everybody was pretty good. I did go to sea one time and I had one of the co-pilots that just—he was doing things that were not safe. And he was the other aircraft commander so this way we could rotate, and I said, "You're not going to fly as aircraft commander until I can trust you." Which meant I had to go on every single flight, which I really didn't want to.

TS: When was this?

DB: That was in, like, '82.

TS: Later.

DB: Yeah. But they did—He went along with it and he did start doing—I heard from the crewman the things he was doing that were not safe. You just can't have people do that, and they did go along with—they didn't disobey or disregard. But it was always an interesting challenge trying to figure out where you fit and how you fit.

TS: So you're kind of navigating this path that's really only got a few footprints on it in front of you, right?

DB: Yeah, well, I was the first woman in charge of—an officer in charge of the deck at sea, so there was nobody. You're supposed to go out there the first time as you're on the deck, instead of the first time you're there as the officer in charge, and you're thinking, "Okay." Not a really good way to start. But they have to start somewhere, and I guess that's what happened. Those worked okay, nothing really—We had a good time. I learned a lot. Nothing like flying all over Indonesia and landing on Bali.

TS: Yeah. Well, I wanted to ask you what it's like to fly a helicopter.

DB: World's best sightseeing.

TS: Tell me what kind of things you have to do to fly it.

DB: Oh, Harry Reasoner [American journalist], there was a post—a cartoon that he posted years ago that was about helicopter flight. Have you ever seen that one?

TS: I don't think so.

DB: Oh, it's great. It says, "Helicopter pilots are different." It says pilots are bright-eyed, cheerful, outgoing. Helicopter pilots are introspective, and a few other things, and it says when you're flying a helicopter, if something goes wrong, the maneuver, the autorotation, just how we can get down—hopefully, safely—is a maneuver designed to keep your hands and feet busy while plummeting to earth at twenty-three hundred per minute. It's much funnier than that, and it's got a picture and all that. It's kind of like that.

[Harry Reasoner wrote: The thing is, helicopters are different from planes. An airplane by its nature wants to fly, and if not interfered with too strongly by unusual events or by a deliberately incompetent pilot, it will fly. A helicopter does not want to fly. It is maintained in the air by a variety of forces and controls working in opposition to each other, and if there is any disturbance in this delicate balance the helicopter stops flying; immediately and disastrously. There is no such thing as a gliding helicopter. This is why being a helicopter pilot is so different from being an airplane pilot, and why in generality, airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts and helicopter pilots are brooding introspective anticipators of trouble. They know if something bad has not happened it is about to]

I like it because it's extremely detailed. Landing on a ship at sea in a jet is scary and all that, but in a helicopter, your rotor blades aren't very far from the superstructure. If the ship takes a rolling moment and you're not chained down, you can go over.

TS: Level.

DB: If you miscalculate coming in, you can end up in the water instead of on the ship. And I'd always tell myself when I'd come out there at night and all you can see is the running



rabbit [sequenced flashing lights]—the lights on the deck—I'd say, "Well, most people live through it." [both chuckle]

TS: "Hopefully this time I will," right?

DB: Yeah. [extraneous comments about animals redacted]

TS: Well, then you went to a fixed wing?

DB: Yeah. Then I flew—I went to NAS [Naval Air Station] North Island as a safety officer, flying a Beech King Air, and I flew a lot. I flew nearly a thousand hours in a year, which is a significant amount of hours in a year. Flew all up and down the California coast, and flew cross-country a couple of times.

TS: What's this aircraft like?

DB: It's twelve passenger. It was pretty cool because it was, like I said, soft seat, avionics that worked. [both chuckle] Didn't have to wear a helmet.

TS: Right.

DB: And air conditioning; things we're not used to.

TS: Those are the major differences between flying a helicopter and a fixed wing?

DB: Well, and also, you're up thirty-thousand feet instead of—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're a lot higher.

DB: —you don't go above ten [thousand feet].

TS: Right.

DB: And the nice thing up above ten thousand is everybody up there has an instrument rating so you know there's not going to be some idiot trying to fly into you, which is one of the problems with helicopters; you've got to keep your head on a swivel because private pilots—Yeah, fifty hours and they're turned loose.

TS: Oh, and they're just up there with you and you don't necessarily—

DB: Uh, yeah.

TS: Got you. Did you ever have any close calls like that?

DB: No.

TS: Just heard about them and had to watch out for them?

DB: No. Well, I—One of my friends lost his ex-wife and son on an airplane flying into San Diego when a civilian aircraft flew up underneath it, and both of them crashed, killing everybody on board.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: That's not good.

TS: No. Certainly not.

DB: So sometimes things like that happen.

TS: Yeah. How was your experience at this unit?

DB: Oh, they were great. Everybody there were—I think they were almost all passed over lieutenant commanders--they didn't make commander—so they really didn't care. They just loved to fly and they were fantastic pilots, so I learned so much from those guys.

TS: Yeah? What kind of things did you learn?

DB: Just about flying, because they were so good. Very, very professional pilots.

TS: Why were you flying so much more here than the other places?

DB: A helicopter flight's only about an hour and a half, two hours of flight. Fixed wing flight can be seven or eight.

TS: Okay. So you get more hours in that way because the flights just longer.

DB: Well, they're more economical on fuel and the mission is longer. You'd have a longer range and—But we did. We'd often fly on weekends and fly reservists—pick up reservists and take them to their reserve duty and things like that. We did all kind of odd things.

TS: Yeah. What was the most interesting, do you think? Or memorable, I guess.

DB: We flew in to Fort Huachuca in Sierra Nevada—an Arizona army base—and the flight manual flying in said, "Expect wind shear on short final." That was kind of interesting. Okay, so, expect to go [makes "phew" noise] on short final. Okay.

[Short final is when the aircraft is lined up with the landing runway and close to crossing the runway threshold]

TS: Straight down?

DB: But it wasn't that bad.

TS: No?

DB: As well as we couldn't figure out how to pronounce Huachuca—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Huachuca. [both chuckle]

DB: —when it came in on the message. So that was just fun. And we flew some—We picked up some Hollywood guy in Burbank [California] who was a reservist and took him to his reserve duty. I couldn't believe that, flying into Burbank and it was—We had to use instrument flight to get in on a sunny day because it was so polluted.

TS: Oh, my.

DB: You couldn't see the place. I mean, flying fixed wing is—The most terrifying was one time we were flying down from somewhere up north. I think we took off from [Marine Corps Air Station] El Toro [California], and then the weather between us and San Diego had deteriorated badly. We couldn't go back to El Toro because there was a mountain on the east side of it and we couldn't get in, so we had to go on to San Diego. I've never been so scared in my life in an aircraft. We were icing, and the de-icing capability on the aircraft was not very good, and we kept trying to find somewhere the turbulence was better and we could get out of the ice. And we end up down at three thousand feet, which is pretty low for a fixed wing coming down the coast.

TS: Yeah.

DB: And the winds were horrible in San Diego. We had to land on a runway I've never landed on, coming up over Point Loma, which I've never done, because the winds were completely unfavorable to do anything else. Then we ground looped on landing and we landed like this.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: What does that mean "ground looped?"

DB: Well, I'll get you there. We landed like this—

TS: Like on one side of the—

DB: You have to land—When the winds are really strong, you have to do that so you don't flip.

TS: Okay. So you're describing it—

DB: And that caught it and turned it in the taxiway.

TS: Okay.

DB: The passengers never knew there was anything wrong, but my back hurt so much. I didn't realize I'd been so tense [chuckles] the whole flight. I'm so happy I was with one of those guys who had a lot of hours, but he wasn't really comfy either but we made it. It's one of those times you're so happy to be on deck. People ask me, "Do you miss flying?"  
I say, "Yeah, sometimes. But there's some times—"

TS: You don't.

DB: Yeah. Days like today, yeah, this is fine. Last night, nope.

TS: No? When you did join and signed up for the navy, you're a college graduate but you're still a young woman. What kind of expectation did you have out there? Did you think about, "I'll stay a few years?"

DB: I just was going to, like most people say, stay until it's not fun anymore, and at twenty-three years my fun-meter was pegged.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

DB: And there was nowhere else I could go that was interesting. There was really no other billet [a specific personnel position, assignment, or duty station which may be filled by one person] I was interested in doing.

TS: Yeah. As you're doing the fixed wing and you did the helicopter, I mean, are you enjoying it? Are you enjoying the navy? Even though you're facing a lot of discrimination and difficulties?

DB: I wouldn't have stayed if it wasn't interesting. Like I said, that one time I was on the flight line, where I was sitting in the helicopter—I was aircraft commander—I was sitting in the helicopter and the crew around and everyone was just doing their job, and there were a couple of women in the crew, and nobody was anything but just another navy person, and

that's what makes it worthwhile. And also, you just think—The hardest part was knowing everything you did would reflect on everybody else.

TS: Every other woman?

DB: Yeah. In my first squadron, we'd go out and do—At this point, they decided we could go land on a ship just for quals [qualifications]. We couldn't stay there but we could go out and do touch and goes. And you'd go out and they'd be holding up cards rating your landing and—

[A touch-and-go landing (TGL) involves landing on a runway and taking off again without coming to a full stop]

TS: Did they just do that for the women?

DB: Sometimes and sometimes not. But it was kind of like, "Okay." Although it was funny once. We were out working with a ship, and we were having to refuel at sea because we were, I think, doing drone recoveries or something, and I had to go to the bathroom and [unclear] it used to be very hard—[talking to dog] Nope. Hey, you, monkey. You can walk under it. No, he'd rather go that way. Anyway, I got out of the aircraft and flipped up my visor to ask how to get to the restroom, and one of the guys on the flight deck went—

TS: He was surprised to see you were a woman?

DB: It was hysterical. I asked him where the head [(Navy/Marines) bathroom] was. Somebody else had to take me. He couldn't get out of that face. It was the funniest thing I've ever seen.

TS: He was probably surprised, right?

DB: Oh, it was hysterical.

TS: We need to videotape this, I think, because your facial expressions, and the way you describe things, is pretty neat.

DB: There was some really funny things, and really it's not funny. But when I was going to sea one time—Every time we went to sea we had to ask—when we actually went out we had to send a message back requesting permission to go for two weeks.

TS: Was that a standard thing for everybody?

DB: No, just for women.

TS: Okay.

DB: So I was supposed to go on to sea with a—There was supposed to be a det [detachment?] of enlisted women and me, since I was still the only woman pilot on that coast, and Dave was on the propulsion examining board at the time, so they'd check the ship after it had certain things done to make sure it was ready to go back to sea. So they were examining the ship I was supposed to go to sea on and—[referring to dog] She doesn't care. She's tough—they had some warrant officer standing and supervising putting in a metal door, because a lot of the ships used to just have curtain doors. Though they had changed that when Deb Loewer went to sea. When she was XO [Executive Officer] on one ship, some guy came and hit her with a wrench, apparently in her head, and caused some severe damage; had to MEDEVAC [medical evacuation by helicopter] her off the ship.

[Deborah Loewer served in the United States Navy from 1976 to 2007. She was the first female battalion commander at Naval Officer Candidate School, one of the first women assigned to shipboard duty and the navy's first warfare-qualified woman. She went on to serve as the Director of the White House Situation Room and was promoted to rear admiral.]

TS: So they were putting in a steel door for [unclear]—

DB: No, they do now on ships but they were doing—Anyway, that was kind of a digression. They were putting in the steel door on the ship I was supposed to go to sea on, so one of the fellows with Dave asked, "What are you doing?"

He said, "[unclear] have some damn woman coming on board. We're going to fix her. We're going to drill holes."

TS: And your husband was there to hear this?

DB: Oh, yeah. He said, "I wouldn't do that. Her husband's on this team." Well, the ship did fail, not because of that but other things. So I did go to sea on a different ship with a very welcoming commanding officer who sat down everyone and said—And the enlisted couldn't go because they couldn't accommodate them, too, so obviously I'm the only woman on the ship.

And the only thing that happened there was, not thinking about it, they said, "Put your clothes out and I'll wash them." Well, one of my bras went up. The commanding officer sat everyone down and said, "I don't want to hear anything like that again." He didn't. That fellow made admiral. I can't remember his name now but he was a good leader and—

TS: Wait, so, when you say your bra went up, did somebody put it up?

DB: They took it out of my laundry.

TS: Oh, okay. I see. I didn't know if you had it there in a certain way. But they actually took it and were displaying it, and so he cracked down on that. I got it. Okay.

DB: Yeah, did a good job, and good crew. I mean, you could tell overall it was a really good ship and he set the example. He said, "No. No. That's not what we do." Like I said, I encountered a lot of really good ones.

TS: Do you think that a lot of the success and failure for men *and* women—but at this time, women who were facing this level of discrimination—do you think that the leadership played a key role in making it either work or not work?

DB: Oh, yeah. Of course, because that's where the climate comes from. And if you've got the guy—Though, actually, the rest of command didn't go along with the commanding officer that wanted to go—

TS: Oh, you mean to the Playboy place?

DB: Yeah. But the rest of the group wasn't like that. They were really good.

TS: It was just him?

DB: Yeah. He was just different. [both chuckle]

TS: So maybe if you have a group of guys that aren't going to put up with that themselves, and they have a culture maybe that they're creating that's welcoming and they can overcome that. Yeah.

DB: Yeah. It was interesting. We had different things in different places. I mean, I've seen intolerance towards men that weren't "their kind of guy" as well. We had one fellow in one squadron, nicest fellow in the world, but he just didn't believe in going out partying and all the stuff you could do in Olongapo in the Philippines, and they treated him so badly. I'm still very good friends with him. He flies life flight [air ambulance service]. He made—I think he went to command during the reserves, and he's been flying helicopters now for a long time.

TS: A long time, yeah.

DB: He's in Ohio now flying. He was in New Jersey for a long time.

TS: And he flies life flights?

DB: Yes.

TS: Pretty neat.

DB: Good, good pilot.

TS: Well, so, let's see. Where'd you go to next? Your anti-submarine warfare unit in San Diego?

DB: Yeah. And that one—That was the one that's the real competitive one.

TS: Oh, okay.

DB: So it was just—Nobody—It's kind of like when you go to a party and everyone's looking over your shoulder to see who they're supposed to be talking to, if you're not the right one.

TS: Right.

DB: That's kind of the climate there, and it's just the way it is, and that's not good, bad or indifferent. I mean, they're all good, but very competitive.

TS: But it's very competitive and you have to get the highest rating, and who's giving you the rating? Those officers with the—

DB: Yeah. That's just what it was. But still, the guys go out to lunch and they never ask the women. I was the only one but—So it was tough being the only one. And when I went to sea with that detachment, I was the only woman officer on board, and because of the no fraternization thing I couldn't hang out with the others, so that's tough.

TS: What ship were you on for that? Do you recall?

DB: Yeah. USNS [United States Naval Ship] *Chauvenet* (T-AGS-29). It was an oceanographic survey ship, so it was kind of neat. We got to go up and down, and that's where I was in Indonesia for two tours.

TS: Oh, okay!

DB: Yeah. But they had me sharing a bathroom with Muslim men, which I thought was a little awkward that they did that, but maybe it was—They dealt with it quite well, but it was still a little awkward. [chuckles]

TS: I wonder why they did that.

DB: I don't know. I always found that weird. Because we had Muslim Indonesians on board as liaison officers.

TS: I see.

DB: When we went ashore we needed someone that spoke the language, which wasn't us.



TS: Right, right.

DB: It was funny—

TS: Now, was this when you were in the Philippines?

DB: No, this is from HSL-31.

TS: Okay. So you're doing some deployments?

DB: Yeah, I did two deployments with them; I went to sea twice.

TS: Okay. How long were the deployments?

DB: Six months.

TS: Okay.

DB: So we flew—Because the ships always forward deployed, they flew us over to meet it and then we flew home; the ship never came back. Because it didn't go very fast, for one thing, and its mission was to map the ocean floor so it just went up and down and up and down.

TS: What did you get to do for flying for that?

DB: We had two purposes—Well, three, actually. If they needed someone to run into shore, we'd fly in if they could get close enough. Like, one time we flew in somebody that had died. He leaked. That was bad.

TS: He leaked?

DB: He defrosted from the freezer to the shore.

TS: Oh.

DB: Yeah. We don't know what he died of. He was a relatively young guy, and they had to put him in the freezer—the food locker—and the cook was very upset about it.

TS: I bet.

DB: What are you going to do?

TS: Yeah.

DB: Then when we got close enough to shore we took him out of there, put him in the back of the helicopter, but he leaked, so not nice.

TS: No, no.

DB: But anyway, we do that sort of thing. And then we also, if we were in—Because we were in unchartered waters that just need to be re-charted, we'd fly ahead of the ship when we were going into close-in areas to make sure they weren't flying into any coral heads. And we also fly—Because we didn't have the satellites for GPS [Global Positioning System] up in the air, in order to do precise points they had to have people—triangulation. They'd have a person there, a person there, a person—or a station on this side, one station on that [unclear], and then they'd do the intersection to find where they were. So we'd fly supplies out to them, and if there was anything going out that they needed—somebody was sick and needed to come in—because we had an independent duty corpsmen on board that could take care of him.

TS: Go out and take care of him.

DB: Yeah. That's kind of what we did. It was kind of nice to go see land and islands nobody's ever been on with the helicopter.

TS: Right.

DB: And like I said, helicopter flying is the best sightseeing in the world.

TS: It sounds like it.

DB: I landed on the backside of one of the big volcanoes on Bali once because we got an indication of a problem, so we landed and shut down. And once again, I got out of the aircraft, took off my helmet, and there was a little man wearing a loincloth with a walking stick that started pointing at me and saying the word for "woman" in Bahasa Indonesia [the language of Indonesia] and they were all staring at me.

TS: [chuckles]

DB: It was pretty funny.

TS: You're making friends everywhere. [chuckles]

DB: Oh, yeah. Scaring people.

TS: After this tour, you went to the [U.S. Naval] War College.

DB: Yeah.

TS: And that was, you said, in Newport, so it's your second trip to Newport.

DB: My second trip to Newport, yeah.

TS: Now, what was your rank at that time?

DB: I was lieutenant. That's right.

TS: Lieutenant?

DB: Yeah. I made lieutenant commander while I was there.

TS: Okay. Did you have to get selected for this position?

DB: Yeah, it's selective. And so, in other words, they thought we both were—

TS: You and your husband went together?

DB: [extraneous comments to animal redacted] Yeah, we did. And that's why if we'd done what they'd told us to and go places, we probably would have gone further, but doesn't matter.

TS: Right. [extraneous comments about animal redacted] Is this one of those things you check off your list as you're trying to go through your career progression?

DB: Yeah.

TS: But you have to be selected, right?

DB: Yes.

TS: Do you write a paper?

DB: Yeah, I wrote a paper on women in the navy.

TS: Did you?

DB: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DB: Because it was just something I was interested in because it was something I was living. [speaking to animal] You're a toad. And so, it was fine. We were just there. We were students.

TS: And so, you were there with your husband, which was probably nice, right? Was it a year that you were there approximately?

DB: Yeah, one year. [speaking to animal] Yes, you're a toad.

TS: We're having kitty fun here. Then after that is when you talked about where they wanted you and your husband to go to separate places?

DB: They wanted him to go to D.C., and I think they were—I don't remember they were talking about me—Hawaii, I think. Then we said, "Can we go to the same place?" And the only place they could put us together—because he's a service officer, he wasn't a pilot—was the Philippines, which is not particularly a career-enhancing place. The guy that was commanding officer said, "Everybody's here for a reason."

TS: And what was that supposed to mean?

DB: Men that couldn't make it somewhere else, or they just didn't have any place to put them at the time, or you're a woman.

TS: Really?

DB: Yeah.

TS: But did you enjoy that tour?

DB: It was okay. It was nice because it was nice living in the Philippines. We were there doing the [unclear] thing, and they were so worried about some insurgencies they wouldn't—we couldn't—I could fly all over the place but we couldn't go drive any places. You think "Golly, it's so pretty. I want to go there," but we couldn't.

TS: And you couldn't.

DB: No. It was obnoxious.

TS: What was happening at the time?

DB: There were some insurgent activities but they weren't really that bad; they were making out they were worse. Because we had friends in the embassy that told us what was really going on.

TS: Okay.

DB: But I don't know what the deal was. I don't truly understand why they did that. The major insurgent problems were down in the south, which is Muslim. The north part of the Philippines is Christian, so it really wasn't that bad, but whatever.

TS: But they put restrictions on you.

DB: Yeah. It was really a drag. When we were first there we could go almost anywhere. We had a sail boat that we were able to sail, and then the last year we were there we couldn't even sail outside of the bay.

TS: Oh, goodness.

DB: Because he sailed in a race from Hong Kong [China] to Manila [Philippines] with his boat.

TS: Oh, yeah. How'd he do?

DB: They were leading in their class and then they got—broke the spreader. If you know anything about sailing, you have things to keep the mast in place, and there was one that snapped in the storm, and so they had to bring the mast down so they wouldn't get—

TS: Well, you need a mast. I know that.

DB: Yeah. They had to bring the [unclear] sails down so they wouldn't break a mast in the storm, and they had to go up on power, and as soon as you go up on power you get disqualified.

TS: Okay.

DB: But they still—When the storm passed through, they came into city bay, got it fixed, and then finished the race, but out of the running. But it was an all navy crew, which was kind of cool.

TS: Had to have been fun.

DB: Yeah. They had a good time.

TS: Now, you did tell me about your most wonderful part about being in the Philippines came back with you.

DB: Yeah. We kept her.

TS: You want to talk about adopting her? How did that come about?

DB: Well, I'd never gotten pregnant. I really never went through trying to find out why I didn't really—I figured, "Oh, well." So we were over there and we were talking about it. Is it [the audio recorder] dead?

TS: No, it's not. I just keep looking at it.

DB: And we got a call from somebody that said that an enlisted woman in another squadron was pregnant and wanted to give up her baby. It was due the next week. I couldn't deal with that that quickly. I thought, "Uh. I don't know." And somebody else did adopt her.

TS: Okay.

DB: Him, rather, who eventually adopted four kids.

TS: Oh, yeah?

DB: All under the age of two.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: They had the one kid whose mother had red hair, so the kid had red hair and a very pale complexion. They adopted a pure Filipino, a Filipino black, and a Filipino white. So they had four little kids, all under the little ones.

Anyway. We went through the process of applying and we—while he was on that boat race—He hadn't come back yet. I flew to Hong Kong because there was a lot of stuff we couldn't get in the Philippines. So in Hong Kong, my job was to go to the credit union, get money, and go buy the stuff they needed, because for safety purposes, there's all kinds of stuff they have to have. So I flew back home, and I got a call, "We have your baby."

"Am I ready for this?" And so, when he got back we went over there. They showed us pictures, and in every picture of her she was crying. It was like, "Oh, great. This is wonderful." [chuckles] And we went over there and—like I said, we took clothes for a two-year-old, but she weighed twenty pounds, which in the U.S., six to nine months old weighs twenty pounds. Her legs were that big around.

TS: Real tiny.

DB: Yeah, because she hadn't had good nutrition, and she had the distended belly, and black up here, and her hair was the reddish color. So we drove over to Manila, and it was funny because, since she was old enough, she was looking at us like [unclear].

TS: How old did you say she was?

DB: Two and a half.

TS: Okay.

DB: We were looking at her and she was looking at us, [chuckles] but she was good. They'd all been prompted to—"You're going to get a good home." I took her home and she just—she loved Dave right away, but she'd just cry every time—She just wouldn't let me do anything. So I took her outside and I said, "It can't be this way. We've got to get along." [both chuckle] So it worked out fine. But it was kind of neat having a little kid

there, and particularly a Filipino kid, because Filipinos are really, really good kids. So it was fun living right up the hill from the squadron and being able to take the kid to daycare or camp. We had full-time nannies, too, because they were cheap, and if you didn't have them, things went missing. [chuckles]

TS: So might as well.

DB: Oh, yeah. It wasn't that much. It was interesting going through getting her adopted. We adopted her through the Philippines system so—

TS: Did you have any trouble bringing her back?

DB: She was the last child adopted by people who didn't live—who lived in the country, because they claimed that Germans and Japanese were coming and getting kids off the street, and they were being used in snuff films.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: Good looking ones were being adopted and used in sex trade, so the country decided nobody else living in the country; you had to be from outside and through an agency entirely. So as we were leaving—fortunately, like I said, we had a friend that worked in the embassy—who is the same friend that was the one I flew with to begin with—The thread stayed for a long time. But they helped with the paperwork a lot, to make sure that we got everything done, but until we took off from the Philippines, when we finally moved, and we were in the air leaving, we weren't sure that everything—

TS: That it was going to work out.

DB: Yeah. That they were going to say, "Nope." But it was pretty cool. We'd fly to the embassy. They had country meetings every week so we'd have to fly the admiral over to the embassy. I always had a book in my helmet bag because we spent a lot of time sitting there.

TS: Yeah. In your helmet bag, huh?

DB: Oh, yeah. I remember I read one John [le] Carré [British author] book forever. I forget which one it was. It was very greasy by the time I finished it. [both chuckle]

TS: But that's what you did to pass your time when you were waiting?

DB: Yeah, I read. A lot. What else are you going to do? You sit out under a tree while you wait for them, because it was more cost-effective to just wait than it was to go back again, so we just stayed. I missed Mount Pinatubo. That went off right after we left. I missed the big earthquake.

[The second-largest volcanic eruption of this century, and by far the largest eruption to affect a densely populated area, occurred at Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines on 15 June 1991.]

TS: Oh, was that in 1990?

DB: Ninety-one.

TS: Ninety-one?

DB: So I missed that and the earthquake.

TS: That's probably a good thing.

DB: Yeah. I don't mind.

TS: I was trying to think about when they had that.

DB: It covered Clark [Air Base].

TS: Right.

DB: Where were you stationed?

TS: Well, I was out by then.

DB: I mean, where were you stationed though?

TS: Germany.

DB: Oh, okay. If I'd been either the air force or the army, I could have done the horses in Germany, but no, I was in the navy, which isn't over there much.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah. Well, you got to see things that a lot of people have never gotten to see.

DB: Oh, yeah. And I know places I don't ever want to go again. [chuckles]

TS: That's right too. After this, you went to the Pentagon, so about '90, '91?

DB: Yeah, ninety.

TS: Ninety. And you said you worked with the congressional liaison?

DB: Yeah.



TS: How would you describe the position?

DB: What we did is we'd—we were never this obnoxious—that—we would just make sure that we'd answer Congress' questions on what the navy needed or wanted, and we'd field them out to whoever in the navy was the right person to answer it. Usually you'd get back the answer—because you'd get the answer from them, then it had to go through a chop chain [the list of individuals that must review a document for approval], and when it went through the comptrollers [person responsible for supervising the accounting and financial reporting of an organization] they'd always say, "We support the president's budget," and they'd X out the entire question. Answered. [both chuckle]

So then you'd surreptitiously—but this was known because this is what you did next—then you'd arrange for a briefing. And so, then they'd talk to them directly, so it wasn't in writing. I was like, "What a—"

TS: Waste of time?

DB: [chuckles] We put so much effort into getting those answers and then, "We support the president's budget." You've got to be kidding. But you learn a lot.

TS: Yeah.

DB: Everybody should be in the Pentagon for a while. Everyone should live in Washington [D.C.] for a while. If you weren't a cynic before, you are when you're done.

TS: Is that right? Was that what you got out of that?

DB: Yeah.

TS: You said you got promoted to commander during this tour.

DB: Yeah.

TS: And the Gulf War happened.

[The First Gulf War occurred from 2 August 1990 to 29 February 1991. Codenamed Operation Desert Shield for operations leading to the buildup of troops and defense of Saudi Arabia, and Operation Desert Storm in its combat phase, it was a war waged by coalition forces from 35 nations led by the US against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait.]

DB: Yeah.

TS: Did you have any involvement in what was happening in the Gulf?

DB: Oh, and Tailhook happened then, too.

[The Tailhook scandal was a series of incidents where more than one hundred U.S. Navy and United States Marine Corps aviation officers were alleged to have sexually assaulted eighty-three women and seven men, or otherwise engaged in "improper and indecent" conduct, at the Las Vegas Hilton in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the 35th Annual Tailhook Association Symposium in September 1991.]

TS: Tailhook too, right. That's right. So there was a lot actually, yeah.

DB: And one of my friends talked on the Diane Rehm Show [American National Public Radio call-in show that was on-air from the 1970s to December 2016] about it.

TS: Oh, yeah.

DB: And she—We were the only two pilots in the Pentagon at the time—navy pilots—so if we were ever seen—we were just friends, and if we were ever seen together—"They're talking about *it*."

"For heaven's sake, no, we weren't."

TS: Talking about what?

DB: *It*.

TS: It?

DB: Tailhook.

TS: Oh, talking about Tailhook.

DB: But I didn't even know what it was. When I was in the King Air—the C-12 [aircraft]—there was one task [unclear] to take people to Tailhook and the guys all jumped on it. They said, "No, you don't want to go."

And I said, "Oh, okay." I didn't even think about it. [chuckles]

TS: Right, right.

DB: [chuckles] Oh, boy.

TS: But you learned. We all learned.

DB: Yeah. I guess it was pretty bad. They were pretty obnoxious. They were a bunch of little boys thinking they can get away with a lot.

TS: Did you feel like the command or the culture or the men—I mean, you're just talking about a certain type of—It's the pilots, right?

DB: Yeah.

TS: You're involved in piloting, and so they get a pretty bad reputation of being really crude towards women.

DB: There wasn't a day I didn't hear a joke that wasn't funny, the first time, much less the second, third, fourth or fifth. But after Tailhook, things weren't so overt. They went covert, and they still are, I understand. Well, things are generally better. I think there's still a lot hanging out there.

TS: But still not good.

DB: Yeah. I mean, you're probably much more aware of that than I am.

TS: Well, we're all connected in some way.

DB: I mean, because you're talking to women who are recently in this.

TS: Sure, sure. I think saying that it's covert is probably a good way to describe it.

DB: Yeah.

TS: But you were on the task force, and I wanted to ask you about that, right?

DB: I must have been on just a little piece of it because I was on a panel.

TS: Right, a panel, because they had all—there's all sorts of different, I guess, figures[?] that went out on that. So we're talking about—for the transcriber—the 1992 Presidential Commission on Women in the Military.

[In 1991, Senator William V. Roth (R-DE) introduced a U.S. Senate bill to clarify women's roles in the armed forces, including combat. The "Presidential Commission on the Assignment of Women in the Armed Forces" states: "In general, the Commission shall assess the laws and policies restricting the assignment of female service members and shall make findings on such matters"]

DB: And my admiral, who was a submariner, appointed—put my name up for doing it. He was a good guy, because his opinion was it's stupid to have a hundred people standing in front of you, your best fifty might be these, and you can't pick from them.

TS: Because they're women.

DB: Right.

TS: What was that admiral's name?

DB: Oliver; David Oliver [USN (Ret.), Rear Admiral Dave Oliver]. He was a submariner, but really good sort.

TS: But just saying, "Oh, the submariners are against women," isn't true all the time, right? It just depends on the person.

DB: Yeah.

TS: Well—Go ahead.

DB: It's unfamiliar, too. I don't know how it's going to go now. I wouldn't want to go on a submarine if I'm a man or a woman. I just don't want to be under sea. The thing about aircrafts, what goes up must come down. What goes down doesn't have to come up.

TS: Right.

DB: So no thanks. And you smell funny when you come back. [both chuckle]

TS: On this panel, what did you do? I'll just ask you what you did.

DB: I barely remember. I just remember Phyllis Schlafly [American anti-feminist conservative activist], and there was one other woman; I'm trying to remember who she was. I remember General [Evelyn Pat] Foote being on there. I'm trying to remember who the other woman that—No, no, it was a man that was ridiculous. I can't remember.

TS: Did you have input or were you a listener?

DB: I was there because I was a navy woman pilot. We had several sessions in which we were just discussing, and I think we brought in some members of Congress a couple times, too, to brief them while it was going on, because I was in the congress thing anyway, and I can't believe I can't remember. It was one of the sort of things that—like, when Dave and I talk to normal people who aren't in the military and didn't go places, you tend not to talk about some things and places you've been because sometimes people think you're bragging about stuff, but we've just done so many things and been so many places, and it's just because that's what we did that you just kind of—

TS: Well, if I find your name as I'm doing my research I'll let you know.

DB: Let me know.

TS: Because it was after Panama and after the Gulf War, and so they were trying to determine whether or not they were going to allow women—

[The Invasion of Panama occurred between December 1989 and January 1990. The United States broke both international law and its own government policies by invading Panama in order to bring its president, Manuel Noriega, to justice for drug trafficking, as well threatening the lives of 35,000 U.S. civilians living in the Panama area.]

DB: It opened up some more combat billets.

TS: Combat, but also—Yeah.

DB: Because I remember—

TS: Sexual harassment was another issue they were following.

DB: Yeah. And that's what we were going through, all that—Oh, what did they have us have to do? One of those—

TS: Like a training?

DB: Oh, yeah. What did they call that thing? We had to do—Everybody had to do some things. They're always good at that. I'm trying to remember what they called that stuff. It was when we were doing the total quality management stuff. It was kind of like, "Okay, right."

[The U.S. military adopted total quality management (TQM) initiatives to help maximize effectiveness during downsizing]

TS: So they're having you do some kind of training that—

DB: Oh, sensitivity training, yeah.

TS: Oh, yeah. Sensitivity training.

DB: And I usually said nothing.

TS: Usually?

DB: Yeah.

TS: No?

DB: It doesn't do any good so why speak up; why say anything?

TS: Were you ever in command, in charge, of people underneath you that you had to rate?

DB: Yeah. I had three hundred people working for me in the Philippines. I had no problems. People just—I was maintenance officer and they just—

TS: They just did it? Were there very many women there at that unit?

DB: There were a few.

TS: Just a handful?

DB: Yeah. Let's see. There was another woman pilot. There was one woman jet pilot; they treated her very badly. There was another one that was there when I first got there who was a very strong sort of individual and she did fine, but they didn't go out of their way to be very nice to them. I will say that.

TS: Yeah. Are these the ones that you were in charge of?

DB: They didn't work for me.

TS: They didn't, but they were just within that space.

DB: Yeah. They were in somewhere else and they were other pilots.

TS: Did you think that as you gained rank that anything got any better, as far as that harassment level went?

DB: Not really. It just depends on circumstances; where you were and what you did. I didn't encounter—once I was in the Pentagon and all that, that's kind of beyond—Some of it was just—someplace that just [unclear] possibly do that still. It's kind of like when I was flying the first helicopter, the Huey, someone said, "Women can't fly that, because if the assist goes out, how are they going to do things?"

I said, "Women have more lower body strength than men." And I flew one. I mean, it's not that hard with the assist out because that was part of the training.

I had one marine colonel come up to me one time—we were in the Philippines—and he said, "I have to tell you this, and don't be offended." He said, "My guys had to go into an LZ—" a landing zone—"take some people in, and they said, 'We can't go in there. It's too dangerous.'" And he said, "That woman over in VC-5 [squadron] goes in there all the time. If she can do it, you marines can do it." He told me because he—I mean, it was fine. It was kind of close, but there was a good in, a good out. It was no big deal.

TS: You were the woman he was talking about?

DB: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. I heard a story about in World War II, that there was a particular plane—I can't remember the plane now—

DB: Yeah, the Widowmaker?

TS: Was that what it was, that the men didn't want to fly in? And the same sort of conversation—he went and had the women fly it, and then they were like, "Look, they're flying it."

DB: And there was one case that one of the women WASPs [Women Airforce Service Pilots] was flying it in and landed it and apparently did a beautiful job, and when she got out all the guys were—

TS: They were surprised to see—

DB: Yeah. And now, I guess they *are* going to allow them to be buried in Arlington [National Cemetery].

TS: In Arlington, yeah.

DB: Now, I guess, the women in military service monuments are being challenged for being allowed to exist, and it never quits.

TS: That's too bad.

DB: And the WASPs took forever in order to get veteran's benefits, and they were incredible women. Have you met some of them? Have you talked to them?

TS: We have WASPs in our collection but I don't think I actually interviewed them.

DB: They look like someone's grandmother, and they probably were, but they flew all kinds of difficult aircraft and did a good job of it. I was in the Ninety-Nines when I was in San Diego for a while because it was real active, and we had a lot of the WASPs there.

[The Ninety-Nines: International Organization of Women Pilots is an international organization for female pilots that provides professional opportunities to women in aviation]

TS: Now, the Ninety-Nines are a group that—

DB: Started by Amelia Earhart [American pilot who was the first female aviator to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean], because there were ninety-nine women pilots at that time.

TS: It's just pilots, right?

DB: Yeah, women pilots.

TS: Isn't there a special one for helicopters?

DB: Whirly-Girls.

TS: Whirly-Girls, that's it.

[The Whirly-Girls, officially known as Whirly Girls International, are a non-profit, charitable and educational organization that aims to advance women in helicopter aviation]

DB: Yeah, I'm like number three-hundred in that or something.

TS: Are you?

DB: I'm not a member right now. Sometimes I am, sometimes I'm not. It's like my friend, Colleen, who—she's very active still with all the military things. After she got out and went reserves, she made her living doing helicopter investigations, so it was still part of her life. I kind of haven't had much to do with it.

TS: Well, you got your horses and you're not having to go find some [unclear] anywhere.

DB: Yeah, I have things to do. This and a full-time job.

TS: Yes, exactly. That's right too. After the Pentagon, then you—

DB: Well, what I really wanted to do was be XO [Executive Officer] of the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] down here.

TS: Oh, yeah?

DB: Because Chapel Hill [North Carolina]—It was one XO/CO [Commanding Officer] for [University of North Carolina] Chapel Hill, Duke [University] and [North Carolina] State [University]. It was a navy billet and I extended for one year to try and get it. They changed it to a marine billet.

TS: Oh, no.

DB: Yeah. Rats. So I looked at other ROTC billets because that's—I was working on my dissertation. It would have—



TS: Right, been helpful.

DB: Yes. But there just wasn't anything that particularly appealed to me, so I ended going to [U.S. Naval] War College because I thought, "Well, he can go up there and sail." And—

TS: Back to Newport.

DB: Yeah, back to Newport. And so, we spent two years there, and it just wasn't really what I wanted to do.

TS: No?

DB: No.

TS: Were you thinking about getting out?

DB: Well, I'd planned to do twenty-six—I was going to try to do twenty-six, but at twenty-two—Because it took a year. You had to—

TS: Right, apply.

DB: Yeah. I just said, "No, I think it's time."

TS: Well, you said at the beginning that if it wasn't being fun anymore you would finish. Was that kind of where you were at then?

DB: Yeah, because I couldn't do—It just wasn't interesting. It wasn't inspiring. And it was kind of like back when I first got into the navy to begin with; I don't want to go somewhere and do nothing interesting.

TS: Right, right. Did you and your husband retire around the same time?

DB: No, he retired five years—He got in five years before me and retired five year before me.

TS: Oh, okay. Alright.

DB: He was already retired.

TS: He was retired. Oh, that's right. So he just went up with you to go sailing.

DB: Yeah, but he did some construction and dinked[?] around some. And I got another master's while I was there. I was still working on my PhD. You're not supposed to do that.

TS: No, I don't think you are. [chuckles] I could not do that.

DB: Yeah, but I did. So I got a master's in secondary science education while I was still enrolled in a PhD program.

TS: When you, then, finally transitioned out, how was that transition for you?

DB: It was time, and I was looking forward to moving down here. But then, right after I retired, they did a—my physical didn't catch it but they caught—My doctor called me and said, "You've got an appointment with the oncologist tomorrow."  
I'm like, "Oh."

TS: Was this before you got out or after you got out?

DB: I had just gotten out. My separation physical didn't catch a tumor in my leg.

TS: Oh, you had a tumor.

DB: Yeah. And I don't have my hamstring on the inside.

TS: Not anymore?

DB: No, they took it out with the tumor. [speaking to husband] Dave, it's Connecticut, it might yours.

[extraneous background speaking redacted]

TS: Okay, so you had surgery on your leg because of a tumor.

DB: Yeah, I had a sarcoma. I'd had a tumor here for years.

TS: But you didn't know it?

DB: Well, every flight physical I'd go in and you could see it, and they said, "I don't know what that is." [chuckles]

TS: They didn't do any kind of examination?

DB: No, nothing.

TS: Like, "Can you still fly?"  
"Yes."

DB: Yeah, that was all they—and then when I was in the Pentagon, I was riding my bike in one day and I fell and I had a huge goose egg [bump] here and I went to make sure I didn't have a blood clot or something. They said, "No, that's okay, but what's that?"  
 I said, "I don't know. Nobody else ever cared."  
 They said, "We care." And so, we went in. That was not malignant but they did remove it. So they followed it for years, and when they did an MRI [Magnetic Resonance Imaging] follow-up, they determined that this time it was malignant, so when they took it out they took out the hamstring.  
 And I really—When I was down in Florida one time recoiling[?] in the helicopter. I did go through flight engineer school because I had plenty of time, because I'd done that aircraft before. A matter of fact, it was so bad that they—Because I'd done external loads and most H-3 pilots don't, they had me teaching. I said, "Wait a minute. I'm supposed to be a student. I'm supposed to be able to goof off. You have me teaching classes. Okay."

TS: It's sounds like you got it in your blood.

DB: So I had somewhat thought about flying. Life flight was what I thought would be good, but I can't pass a flight physical now because I cannot run.

TS: Oh, okay.

DB: I walk with a cane because it doesn't work so well. So I had the horses I'd always wanted and they weren't ponies, they were show jumpers, and I can't ride now because this leg doesn't work well, and I have neuropathy [weakness, numbness, and pain from nerve damage] on this side too. It hurts when I'm touching it, so it's really a bummer.

TS: Yeah, I imagine that that would be.

DB: This is just right after I retired.

TS: Difficult transition.

DB: Yeah. And then I discovered that this is one of the—more drivers here than anywhere else in the United States, so I compete in driving competitions.

TS: What kind of driving?

DB: It's called combined driving [an equestrian sport involving carriage driving]. Do you know what combined training is? Eventing?

TS: I have no idea.

DB: Okay. There's three phases. There's dressage, which is memorized tests; that your horse has to be obedient and do things and all that sort of stuff. And then there's marathon, which is about fourteen kilometers. The first part is just somewhat an endurance and timed. Then you have a vet check to make sure they're ready to go, and then you go out to

another one in which you have to negotiate some—that horse park you came by over there—

TS: Yes.

DB: —some of those things are our obstacles. They have to go through a maze of obstacles in the order in which the course designer marked them, which might be you have go through that one and one here, one here. You can't go through there so you have to go that way, and you're penalized for every second you're in it.

TS: Now, are you riding?

DB: Driving.

TS: Driving?

DB: Yeah, I have carriages that I use now.

TS: Oh! Okay. Now I get the driving part. Because I was like, "I don't really get how this works." Alright, I get it. [chuckles] That's kind of neat.

DB: I'll show you what I do. Things like that.

TS: I'm being shown a picture. These are called ponies?

DB: Those are both ponies.

TS: With a two-seater carriage and somebody—

DB: No, it's one seat in the front. The guy in back stands up.

TS: It looks like a seat right next to you there.

DB: Oh, that one could have a seat. I don't have that one anymore. The one I have now—

TS: It's just a one-seat with somebody standing behind?

DB: Yeah, I have—

TS: Is that person behind you evaluating you?

DB: No, your navigator, to keep the back end from flipping. [chuckles]

TS: Well, that's probably handy to have then. No matter how you're piloting or driving, you got your navigator, right?

DB: Yes, got my navigator. And that's my husband in that case.

TS: Oh, yeah. I guess it is him.

DB: I don't have—Well, one of those ponies is out there. The other one's been long dead. But I drive single now, and one of my goals was to compete at the FEI [Fédération Equestre Internationale], the international level, and—so I couldn't do it anymore riding and I had qualified him. I went to Florida—

TS: "Him" being your husband.

DB: My pony.

TS: Oh, your pony. I don't know where you're pointing. [both chuckle]

DB: The barn. We qualified to do international, to be able to compete at the next higher level, and he's a very nice pony. He was given to me because he didn't want to jump.

TS: No? Now he doesn't have to, right?

DB: He was bred to be a very fancy show hunter and they sell for several hundred thousand dollars. His breeder's a friend of mine. He said, "I have this pony you might like." I've had him two and a half years and he took to driving really well.

TS: Oh, that's really great.

DB: And he's gorgeous, besides.

TS: Yeah. And then you're also teaching?

DB: Yeah. And I breed ponies, so there's actually thirteen animals around here.

TS: Oh, okay. Gotcha. I see why you have the gates.

DB: Yeah, I don't want them on the road.

TS: Yeah, no, of course not.

DB: And the fireworks the other day were—one of my ponies was so spun up that even by Wednesday he was still—You'd touch him and he'd flinch. So I'm pretty sure that some of the fireworks may have come across the fence.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, might have landed? Oh, my goodness.

DB: He was okay yesterday but the day before he was just not [unclear].

TS: That's pretty scary.

DB: I taught high school first, when I came here, for six years. Then people said, "You have a PhD." [chuckles]

TS: Yeah.

DB: And my daughter graduated so the [unclear] tuition wasn't—I got a pay cut immediately so I started looking for professorial jobs, and I got hired as an adjunct over at Methodist [University] to start with, and then after I'd been there about three years they asked me to apply for a job. Well, I didn't know that I wasn't exactly applying. I was just going through the motions and I was really—I had the job.

TS: Oh, they just wanted to make sure that they could get you.

DB: I've been working there for ten years.

TS: Oh, great. Well, can I ask you a few general questions about being a woman in the military?

DB: Sure.

TS: Some of it's not even that. Did you feel like you were treated fairly at all?

DB: Sometimes, sometimes not.

TS: Sometimes, sometimes not?

DB: Yeah.

TS: When we talk about the issue of sexual harassment—We kind of covered some of that. Do you any memorable award or decoration that you've received?

DB: Nothing special. I got a couple navy achievement awards and meritorious service merit, but I was in between combat things so I didn't get any of that stuff.

TS: I've had a couple of women who, it wasn't like a medal but it was more like they really appreciated her—

DB: Well, I got an inspirational leadership award.

TS: Yeah, something like that.

DB: Yeah, I still have the watch. It's pretty nice. Battery's dead.

TS: You do? You got a watch with it?

DB: That was kind of neat.

TS: That's a practical kind of award.

DB: I think I got something else but I forget what. [chuckles] Some people, when they get out of the military, they die because that's their whole life, and I have so many things that— Sometimes you go places and that's all people want to talk about because it's all they've ever done.

TS: Right, exactly. They very much connect their life with being in the military.

DB: Yeah. That's how they identify themselves.

TS: Yes.

DB: Sometimes, when somebody addresses me as Commander, I go, "Oh, yeah. Yeah. Right."

TS: You have to remember.

DB: I do respond to "Doctor" much better than "Commander." [chuckles]

TS: There you go, alright.

DB: Because I'm used to that.

TS: Alright, well, Dr. Branson, when you were in the service—I've got to keep remembering when you got out, here.

DB: Ninety-nine.

TS: Ninety-nine. So the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was implemented, and it wasn't repealed by the time you got out. What did you think about the implementation at the time, and now what do you think about the repeal?

[ "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was the official U.S. policy on military service by gays, bisexuals, and lesbians. The policy prohibited military personnel from discriminating against or harassing closeted homosexual or bisexual service members, while barring openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual person from military service. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed 20 September 2011.]

DB: I'm glad they can serve openly, because when I was on the *Chauvenet* there was a woman who was gay and she was their best worker, and she got out because she just couldn't not be who she was.

TS: Did she just got out? She wasn't—

DB: Yes, she did; she got out. And she was such a nice—I mean, nice person. One of Dave's best friends, and one of his roommates, was gay, and he didn't even know it. He said, "I thought it was really strange he kept having guys come over." [both chuckle] "I thought it was just nice of him."

TS: When did he find out?

DB: We went over to his house to pick up something that he gave us, and he'd told us to come over at a certain time so I thought, "Oh, maybe he's in the backyard." Well, he was. I said, "Dave, Doug really is gay." [chuckles]

He said, "How do you know?"

"Dave."

I now have—One of my friend's sisters was in before the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and now she's in and married to her wife, and it's just nice that she can be who she is. It's a—Again, it's silly to have a group of people and not be able to use them if they want to serve.

TS: Right.

DB: And now transsexuals too. Which, we have one friend that retired from the air force, and right after he retired he got some jaw work done, and then he went and had a sex reassignment.

TS: Was he transitioning from male to female or female to male?

DB: Male to female. Much better looking woman than he ever was a man.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

DB: And his ex-wife helped him pick his clothes, and his sons supported him, so it was just interesting.

TS: Yeah. It's a different kind of world that we have.

DB: It was just nice that now Susan can be a—I think she's a lieutenant colonel now in the army, and she can do that and it's okay.

TS: Right.



DB: They don't have to play silly games. Even though Dave didn't know Doug was gay, I sure did. I got a call once at squadron, and somebody I was in a squadron with's wife was on the ship with Doug. It was a supply ship so she *could* be on it; it was just starting. And then I got a call from NIS [Naval Investigative Service] and they said, "We can't talk to you at squadron. You have to come down to our office."

I was like, "Oh, no, please don't ask me about Doug." I was afraid that's what it was.

TS: Something had happened.

DB: And that he wanted to—Yeah. They wanted me to do some undercover drug thing, which, fortunately, I didn't end up doing. But I was so sure they were going to ask me about him because the guy in my squadron said, "Do you think Doug is?"

And I said, "I don't know," because he wasn't the type of guy I'd tell anything to. And when he was the one that called me in because NIS was calling, I was sure.

TS: What was it that they asked you to do?

DB: They wanted me to go down to South America to do something but they ended up doing something different. I'm very happy that I didn't. I probably would have done it just because I would've, but I probably didn't want to.

TS: Right.

DB: I don't know why me. I have no idea. They never went that far with that one. But when you're in the military you do all kinds of weird things, and you forget about a lot of it. [both chuckle]

TS: I'm not even going to ask you if you were a trailblazer because you were, but do you look at yourself as a trailblazer?

DB: Yeah, I know.

TS: Did you feel that way at the time?

DB: Oh, yeah. Like I said, everything you did, you knew that it would reflect on everybody else, so you felt like everybody's eyes were watching you, particularly when you had to send a message back to Washington [D.C.] every time you wanted to do anything.

TS: Right.

DB: Yeah. It was hard not to be aware of it. When I was the only woman pilot on the West Coast, I'd tell people, "Yeah, if you hear a women's voice coming in, it's me. I'm the only one." Because there just weren't very many of us.

TS: How do you think your life would be different if you hadn't signed up for the navy?

DB: Eh, probably more boring.

TS: More boring? [both chuckle]

DB: And I don't consider my life boring at all. It was a good thing. I got to see a lot, do a lot. Good stuff, bad stuff. It's all good. Because most of what you encounter, I think you'd encounter anywhere if you're in a high-power environment.

TS: You think?

DB: With stuff going on.

TS: Well, how do you think it's been different because you joined, then? I mean, what kind of value did you get from being in the navy that you might not have gotten if you hadn't joined?

[extraneous comments about cat redacted]

DB: I don't know. The nice thing is I don't have the longing a lot of people do to have to travel, because I've been places.

TS: You got it out of your system?

DB: Well, not really. I have places I still want to go, but it's not a, "Gee, I want to—I have to go to Hawaii for vacation." I've been there. It was a place. I'm not ever going back. It's too expensive for, "Who cares?" Lots of other people. Now, I want to go on some things that I didn't get to do because I wasn't in Europe. I was with the horses but I couldn't go anywhere.

TS: Right.

DB: But it's an opportunity that—and I tell people, particularly young folks that are at the eight and ten and twelve-year point that are trying to decide what they're going to do, that twenty goes by real fast. It's—For both of us—He had sudden cardiac arrest a couple months ago.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: Right there. I'd just left for work and, fortunately, my daughter was here and she heard him fall. And she'd taken CPR [Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation], and he was already turning blue, and she started the CPR. We had an EMT right around the corner. He got here, got him started and he's fine. That's what—He'd just gotten back from cardiac rehab physical therapy stuff, and so that's why he brought lunch we he came back. And it's so

nice having Medicare and TRICARE, because it was a quarter million-dollar bill and the patient due was zero. And that's not what you think of when you walk into the recruiter.

[TRICARE, formerly known as the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS), was a health care program of the United States Department of Defense Military Health System. It was disestablished on 1 October 2013]

TS: No.

DB: But in your sixties, you realize, "Golly." When we got married I had four hundred dollars—that's all I had—and I put it all down on—But had to carefully select what we could have for things to eat because I didn't have much, put the rest on the [unclear]. Because we got married in Milton at flight training, everyone was in uniform—saved money there—and I had the navy arches, and I had people from three services in the arch; I had [U.S.] Army, Coast Guard and [U.S.] Navy. It was kind of cool. But as you see, we're doing okay now.

TS: Yeah. It's a gorgeous place.

DB: Yeah, we've got seventy acres here.

TS: Seventy?

DB: Yeah.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: And I got my herd of ponies. We own a house over in Wilmington [North Carolina]. So it's just a thing about the stuff you do in the military, you can't do anywhere else.

TS: Do you think that there's anything that a civilian might not know or understand about being in the military that you'd like to express?

DB: Well, I wasn't in a combat zone going through that, and I've got numerous students that came back with various injuries of various natures from both the war before and the war recently, and the comradeship you get in that, I didn't get that because I wasn't in that sort of situation.

In flight training though, all of us became very, very close; all the women that were together, mostly, and a few of the men, because we had a few of them. So there's some closeness you get. And also, when I didn't have wings, I thought, "The guys all have something and I want to have something." Because it is something. You can look and see someone's wearing a set of wings and you know what they've done, whether it's water wings there for surface warfare officer ones or for aviation wings. You know they've gone through. It's like in the army, the two women that just finished Ranger

School. I don't care what people say, they finished, and I think that's pretty cool. And I don't think they cut them slack.

[In August 2015, First Lieutenant Shaye Haver and Captain Kristen Griest became the first women ever to successfully complete the U.S. Army's Ranger School at Fort Benning, GA]

TS: They did it, for sure.

DB: Yeah, which is impressive.

TS: Well, what do you think about that whole thing of opening all jobs up to women throughout the military?

DB: I think they have to be physically and mentally able to do it. They can't just put someone in, like the four ten [four foot, ten inches tall] woman I was in officer candidate school. She couldn't have done a lot of things. I mean, she weighed about eighty-five pounds. But the woman I told you that was gay that was on the ship with us, she could have done anything. Can do—She became a truck driver, by the way, [chuckles] when she got out.

But there's some men that can't do stuff. And yeah, you maybe have a smaller pool but I think—They had us do women's push-ups at first, on your knees. Oh, for heaven's sake. And then they figured out women really can do real push-ups. They had us do the flexed arm hang, and it killed me; some women couldn't do that? They have so little upper body strength they can't just hang? It's just a matter of conditioning and what you've done. Yeah, you need to start younger, for some, but a farm girl is every much as strong or stronger than a guy that's been playing on his computer all his life. They can do it and a lot of it's the will. There's a lot of things I've done.

I got a deviated septum before I got in the navy. I fell off a horse, broke my nose, and it hurt so bad but I didn't get it fixed till right before I retired. "Why didn't I do this sooner? I can actually breathe."

TS: [chuckles]

DB: But yeah, when I'm exerting, I don't have to keep my mouth open, and I sucked down more flies over the years. But when I did the crawl, in our swim quals, I'd have to hold my breath because I could not blow enough air out of my nose to keep water from coming up my nose. And so—Why did I go into that? There was a reason. [both chuckle] I can't remember now.

TS: Well, we started out talking about if there's anything that a civilian should know—

DB: Yeah, I know, but—I don't know.

TS: That's okay.

DB: It's the sort of thing that—Oh yeah, just, I can do it. I don't care if—

TS: Oh, women in combat. Yeah, that's what we were talking about.

DB: Well, I mean swimming. I don't care if I've got to hold my breath that whole distance. I can do it because I have to finish and I will, because I've never not finished something I started.

TS: So the determination and will.

DB: That's what—Like those two women, I'm sure—

TS: That's what you were talking about. Right.

DB: Yeah. And I'm sure—Like I said, I'm very happy I've had the deviated septum fixed now, but with those two women, I'm sure that determination and drive was what really got them through.

TS: A big component.

DB: Yes. And I'm sure they had support.

TS: Yeah.

DB: Because that's the one thing they did teach us from officer candidate's school. It really is—Military really is a team. I think that's something that also—when I have students right now that have been in the military, the difference between those that have learned discipline, working as a team, deadlines—when you got to get up, you got to get up—is amazing, because I know the difference immediately between them. Right now my night students that I have, fantastic group. I love teaching night ones because most of them are military or have military spouses, and they never shirk, whereas some of the millennials we have, they don't even know what it's all about.

TS: What would you say if a millennial, male or female, said that they wanted to go in the military? What kind of advice would you give them?

DB: It would depend upon the person I talk to, but mostly I'd tell them, "Do it." I have one who's a Haitian national who is trying to join the army right now. Their life back in Haiti, there's not much for them. The earthquake killed many people and destroyed a lot, and it's a failed country. It's really bad. So I hope he does because he's the right kind of guy. He'll do a good job. His English will get better too, which will be good. You don't hear too many people that say, "I wish I didn't do it." My first job—My first thing in the navy after I was commissioned, I swore my younger brother in.

TS: Oh, did you?

DB: The one that was the nightmare child. And four years as an enlisted guy was all he could stand, because he didn't like being—

TS: Told what to do?

DB: Yeah, he didn't like that. But you know what? He learned that he liked getting regular meals, he liked getting regularly paid, and when he had a set of parameters he did a pretty darn good job. He went back to college and he got a degree in electrical engineering. And if he hadn't had straight zeroes his first semester in college before he went in the navy, he would have graduated at least *magna cum laude*.

TS: Yeah. So it helped reorient him in a more disciplined path?

DB: Oh, yeah. He's got an MBA [Masters of Business Administration] now. He makes plenty of money. He works for Seagate [Technology]. Lives in Longmont, Colorado, works below the mountains there. He loves it.

TS: Real pretty.

DB: He was with the [Navy] Seals. He liked that. He wasn't a Seal—

[The United States Navy's "Sea, Air, and Land" Teams, commonly abbreviated as the Navy SEALs, are the U.S. Navy's primary special operations force and a component of the Naval Special Warfare Command.]

TS: But he worked with them.

DB: Yeah. When they were out training, he could train. If he didn't want to, he didn't have to.

TS: Right.

DB: He did his last—his fourth Ironman competition [triathlon] when he was sixty-two.

TS: Oh, wow. Good for him. That's pretty good.

DB: So the military trained him and made him very fit and straightened out a screwed-up kid.  
[both chuckle]

TS: You talk a little bit about the VA [Veteran's Administration], and their TRICARE was beneficial for your husband and for you.

DB: Oh, the VA itself is a nightmare.

TS: Yeah, the VA is?

DB: [chuckles] Jeez. When they say about the appointments, I used to wonder—They sent you a letter and they say, "Your appointment is such and such a time, somewhere." Okay. And you go, despite the fact that I was teaching high school at the time and I'd have to rearrange my whole schedule. Alright, well, that's what it is. That's what it is. But now I can see why a lot of people didn't go, because they *couldn't* get covered.

Then I got an appointment for January 6 in 2000, and I remember it vividly because that's the day they cut the tumor out of me. And I got the letter about a week or two ahead of it for a change, instead of two days before like they usually did. I contacted them. I said, "I can't. I'm having major surgery that day."

"Okay." Then I got a letter that said, "Because you failed to make your appointment, and it's difficult to get these, we're going to have to schedule it for a long way in advance."

And for the last few years, every time I get a letter from them, I dread what they were up to this time. I'm now 100% permanent and total. I don't have to go in anymore, because this is not going to heal, and it's just going to get worse. I've spent—I've been on antibiotics since last September because I have an infection down inside my leg where there's a graft that they did, and they don't want to take it out because they're afraid I'll lose my leg.

TS: Okay.

DB: They don't want to see what will happen.

TS: So they're treating the infection?

DB: Yeah. But I was on IV [intravenous] for two months, I was in the hospital for ten days.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DB: I'm missed more days of work in the last year than I've missed in the last—in the entire time I've been teaching; in twenty-years. But fortunately, I didn't have to do it through the VA. I don't care if I can go to VA for everything. I don't care. It's great for those who have to, but I don't want to go there.

TS: If you don't have to.

DB: No. My students tell me the nightmares all the time. Some of them have really bad problems. One's paralyzed from the waist down. He's great on his wheelchair though. He can do some amazing stuff with it.

TS: Oh, yeah?

DB: Several have PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] issues. One, finally, is coming out of it because he finally sought some good care, and he's going to go to nursing school, because he was a medic, but he just couldn't deal with it right then because—

TS: Right. He needed some separation.

DB: Yes. But now he's going to go back. And his skills—It's great he is. But he goes to the VA. There's something wrong with his hands. He has strange circulation and his fingers are always blue and they can't figure it out. I've got a couple of guys with that same sort of problem.

TS: Really?

DB: I'm wondering if it was something they gave them that created that one.

TS: Interesting.

DB: And those two don't know each other.

TS: They don't?

DB: No, because they're at different timeframes with me. Maybe I should make sure they do know each other.

TS: Yeah, maybe you should.

DB: Because both of them have mysterious things they can't quite figure out.

TS: Yeah, they should probably be talking to each other. Well, do you think you would do it all over again?

DB: Oh, yeah.

TS: Would you do anything differently?

DB: Well, I chose helicopters because I thought it'd be the first place women would be treated normally, and I didn't want to fly fixed wing because I didn't want to fly a bus in the air. A lot of people did that so they could go fly for the airlines, and I thought, "How boring." And actually, the first one that made captain was Rose[?] Marie in jets, which surprised me.

TS: Yeah.

DB: But then, like I said, she did have good mentorship, which helped. But I do think helicopters are the most interesting. I can't think of—I don't think there would have been anything different. Some places I wish I had known—I'd sought out more—I'm an



introvert, and I'm an extreme introvert, which doesn't actually show very much but I am, so sometimes I don't just go, "Hey, let's go somewhere."

TS: Right.

DB: And I wish I'd had that kind of personality; might have made it a little different.

TS: Yeah. Well, it didn't keep you from calling all the women who had been in aviation.

DB: No. I thought that was important.

TS: Yeah. That's interesting. Well, I just have one final question for you. What does patriotism mean to you?

DB: Supporting our country and being proud of it. When I went to SERE [Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape] school, courtesy of the air force—

TS: When did you go to SERE school?

DB: Oh, boy. When did I go?

TS: We skipped that.

DB: Yeah, well. Eighty-one? Eighty-three? Somewhere in there.

TS: Yeah.

DB: But I went courtesy of the air force. Because the navy had tried a few women. They sent Karen, my roommate, and she came home very black and blue.

TS: Oh, really?

DB: There really singled her out and beat on her. And so, they decided not to send any more women there until they had recalibrated their trainers. So I went with the air force, which was pretty funny because—Did you go SERE? Okay. I picked my month too. August is beautiful in Washington State. It's gorgeous in the wilderness areas.

But they were interrogating—and I was the senior ranking officer because I was lieutenant at that point and most people go when they're younger—and they sat me down in the room and they said, "We know everything about you. We've got this blue book here that tells everything about you." And he opened it. I wasn't there. And then in the air force, they can do this academic situation thing, so he called academic situation and [unclear] we're not in the scenario right now. He said, "Why aren't you in there?"

I said, "I'm in the navy."

He said, "You're supposed to tell us that," because [unclear]. But it was pretty funny, because they made me senior ranking officer. They'd start killing off my staff, and

I didn't know how the air force functioned so I didn't know what that person did so I'd have to ask somebody.

TS: Oh, yeah.

DB: It was funny. But—So they finally killed me entirely, because that's what they do; they remove the leader to see how they restructure—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: How everybody reacts to that.

DB: So I got to watch for a while. And then I got to watch—this is the sort of thing that still—They raised the American flag. It's like when someone plays Taps [bugle call] [unclear], and you just thought, if you were a prisoner of war, to see your flag go up—It was pretty cool.

TS: I think you just told me what patriotism was. [both chuckle]

DB: Yeah.

TS: Is there anything that you'd like to add that I haven't asked you about or that you would like to tell us?

DB: No, I think—I'm surprised you didn't hear that thing about the women's memorial [Women in Military Service for America Memorial] losing funding.

TS: I have heard that, yeah.

DB: Yeah. I think, "Good grief, we can fund everything else but we can't fund that." Several of my friends chose to retire but I didn't. [chuckles]

But there are—I was in with a really—a good time to have a lot of exceptional individuals that had to do a lot to rise. What Colleen has done, and what Deb Loewer did, and Trish Beckman is another one that did a lot. She became one of the first engineering duty officers, and she still works—I think she works for Boeing [American multinational corporation known for designing, manufacturing, and selling airplanes] now—and she's still very respected in the aeronautic design world. They were all the ones that I was in with when I went there. It's kind of like now it's all semi-normal.

TS: More like a normal environment for women when they're working in the same field that you were when it wasn't normal, right?

DB: Yeah. Well, it's kind of like how in vet school, there's more women than men.

TS: Oh, yeah, veterinary school.

DB: Yeah. And then there were very few because they want to work on things like that.

TS: Like this beautiful kitty. Yeah, there we go. Finally, you made a sound. [both chuckle]  
Well, I don't have any more formal questions.

DB: Okay. I should go find that box and see if it's some use to you guys, because the only reason I saved it was to give it—I kept thinking I should write something but I haven't yet.

TS: Well, you've just told a story on a few things.

DB: Yeah.

TS: Deborah, thank you so much. I'm going to go ahead and turn it off.

DB: Okay.

[End of Interview]