

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Marcia Jones Snow

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 15 December 2015

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is December 15, 2015. My name is Therese Strohmer and I'm at the home of Marcia Snow in Raeford, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina of Greensboro. Marcia, would you like to state your name the way you'd like it to read on your collection?

MS: Marcia Jones Snow.

TS: Okay. Marcia, thank you for having me here. Why don't you start out by telling me a little bit about when and where you were born?

MS: Well, I'm a World War II baby.

TS: Okay.

MS: My dad was a submariner. He was on the first sub sunk by the Japanese in Cavite, in the Philippines, and they spent some time running around the South Pacific trying to find a place that was safe and wound up in Albany, southwest Australia.

TS: Is that right?

MS: Where he met my mother.

TS: Okay.

MS: And as they say, the rest is history. I was born in Melbourne [26 June 1943].

TS: And you were born during the war?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Okay.

MS: Came back on a troop ship.

TS: Oh, did you?

MS: Yes.

TS: You just were born there but you—

MS: I have no recollection of it other than what I was told, my birth certificate, snapshots, that sort of thing.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And meeting Australian family.

TS: Where would you call home growing up?

MS: Actually, North Carolina. Daddy stayed in the navy till he retired, and when I was twelve we came back to North Carolina because he was born and reared in Kinston and thought that's where he would settle his family.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Is that where you [unclear]?

MS: I grew up in Kinston from the age of twelve, went to the Woman's College, graduated from UNCG [University of North Carolina at Greensboro].

TS: Well, let's back up a little bit from when you're in Kinston.

MS: [chuckles]

TS: So you're a teenager there in those years, right?

MS: Grammar school, sixth grade.

TS: Sixth grade. Were you in the town? Where did you live?

MS: We were in town. It was a small town.

TS: In town. What was it like? You're talking about the fifties and sixties, right?

MS: For me it was culture shock.

TS: Was it?

MS: Well, as I said, Daddy was in the navy, so I can remember living in California, Guam, Kansas, Italy, and then coming to Kinston, North Carolina, which was—

TS: How was it different?

MS: It was a real letdown, actually. [both chuckle]

TS: I bet.

MS: Well, everybody there had been there forever and they hadn't been anywhere else. And I was very much an outsider, I think. I had never seen a black baby doll. I had never seen a white drinking fountain and a black drinking fountain. That was a real culture shock.

TS: The segregation that was going on?

MS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

TS: What did you think of that as a young girl? Do you remember having any thoughts?

MS: It didn't make any sense to me.

TS: No? What was it like when you lived in those other places? What kind of things did you do, do you remember?

MS: I think—Basically, I think—I remember the most about being in Italy because that was from the ages of ten to twelve. I mean, I remember the other places, but Italy was much more dramatic. I have a sister who is fourteen months my junior.

TS: Okay.

MS: So here we are, nine and ten, and we were allowed to roam around certain areas of Naples by ourselves. I mean, catch the funicular [railway operated by a cable], go down to the water. Walk up the street, catch a military bus, go to the beach way, way far away from where we lived.

TS: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah.

TS: A lot of freedom.

MS: A lot of freedom, and I don't know that it would be the same this day and age for children that age, but it was just a very exciting time.

TS: Yeah. Well, you were exposed to different cultures, but was there anything you really enjoyed doing in Naples that you couldn't do here?

MS: Well, we were introduced to pizza, which is interesting because, well, coming from Kansas, I don't think there were any pizza parlors in Kansas in the early fifties. [chuckles] And just getting out and going around and doing things. Driving to Sorrento on the weekends. Just things that you don't get to do when you're in Kinston.

TS: Right. What did you end up doing when you were here, like, for play?

MS: In Kinston?

TS: Yeah.

MS: Nothing really in particular. School, clubs. I was the oldest of, at that time, seven children.

TS: Okay.

MS: And so, spent a lot of time helping Mother.

TS: Oh, sure.

MS: That's when you hung the clothes on the line, starched and ironed everything else. So just—

TS: A lot of housework.

MS: Yeah.

TS: You're the oldest. The youngest is how far down the line, then?

MS: Twenty-one years.

TS: Twenty-one years?

MS: He was born the Fall of my senior year at WC [Woman's College, now the University of North Carolina at Greensboro].

TS: Is that right?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Okay. Now, you grew up during segregation, and the civil rights movement when you went to WC, but did you have any awareness of what was going on before you got there?

[The Civil Rights Movement took place from 1954-1968 as a reaction to the Jim Crow segregated South and racist beliefs/attitudes throughout the entire country. Landmark Supreme Court Cases *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Loving v. Virginia* overturned the separate but equal doctrine and legalized interracial marriage, respectfully. Congress ratified the 23rd Amendment in 1961 and the 24th Amendment in 1964, effectively ending many Jim Crow Era laws. During this time, Congress also passed the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, 1964, 1965, and 1968]

MS: No, I knew—This is really pathetic, I guess, really. There were a couple black students and all I remembered was they liked chicken wings. [chuckles] There weren't any in my classes. And school for me really wasn't fun. I was either in class, studying, or working my way through; it was a job.

TS: Yeah. You mean when you were in WC?

MS: Yeah, WC.

TS: Before you got there, when you were going through your elementary and high school years—

MS: Oh, you mean segregation in Kinston?

TS: Yeah.

MS: Well, it was interesting. The thing that I was very much aware of is the local newspaper did not report any black news.

TS: Okay.

MS: Specifically, anything that was civil rights-oriented; they didn't want to give it a platform.

TTS: Yeah. Was there much going on around here then?

MS: I really don't remember. They had their own schools, they had their own recreation, they had their own churches. I mean, it was two separate worlds.

TS: Yeah. Well, what did you think about, as yourself, as a young girl, after experiencing part of the world, what you wanted to do? Did you have an idea that you wanted to be something or go somewhere or do anything like that?

MS: It was funny. Probably my lowest ambition, I thought it'd be really cool to work in the store behind the candy county.

TS: [chuckles] That's a great ambition, I think.

MS: Yeah. Another one was, that I thought it would be really, really neat to go into the navy, start at the bottom, and work my way up. Sort of a version of Horatio Alger.

[Horatio Alger was a 19th-century writer, best known for his young adult novels about impoverished boys and their rise from humble backgrounds to lives of middle-class security and comfort through hard work, determination, courage, and honesty]

TS: Oh, okay.

MS: But my father had an absolute conniption. No daughter of his was going in the navy as an enlisted woman. He'd been in there for twenty years and that wasn't going to happen. Wow.

TS: What did he think was wrong with that?

MS: That was not discussed.

TS: No?

MS: [chuckles]

TS: He just said, "No"?

MS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

MS: And I was the first in the family to go to college.

TS: Okay. Was it an expectation that you were going to go to college?

MS: I don't know. Just academically, I was in the college prep program.

TS: Yeah. Yourself, personally, did you have a desire to go?

MS: Like I said, I thought I was going to go in the navy and work my way up.

TS: Oh. [both chuckle] And then you got a kibosh [stopped] on that.

MS: I guess I really didn't think much about it. In that era, women either got married or they went to school. If you went to school you could either be a secretary, a teacher, or a nurse, and that was pretty much close to it. The options—

TS: Yeah. Did any of those things interest you at all?

MS: I had worked in recreation—with the city recreation department—and so I thought that's what I really wanted to do.

TS: Were you involved in sports at all?

MS: Not that much.

TS: No?

MS: A little bit of archery, a little bit of baseball, but, I mean, really low-key stuff. Mostly the arts and crafts and working with the little kids. And at that point physical education was the only avenue that was reasonable for getting there, so that's the reason I majored in Physical Education. I had no athletic skills whatsoever. How I ever got through the program, I'm still amazed.

TS: What years did you get there? Sixty—

MS: Sixty-one.

TS: Sixty-one. Well, JFK [John Fitzgerald Kennedy] was president then. Do you have any recollection of his assassination?

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

MS: Oh, absolutely.

TS: What do you remember?

MS: Yes, I was in my dorm room in Mendenhall [Ragsdale/Mendenhall Residence Hall] and I remember I had an old wooden radio my daddy had painted this awful green color.

TS: [chuckles]

MS: And I was sitting sort of looking out the window and it came over the radio; just couldn't believe it.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And, of course, they had memorial services for him and—I mean, JFK and Jackie [Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy] were so refreshing after [U.S. President Dwight David] Eisenhower and his very unattractive wife by comparison.

TS: More glamorous.

MS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Very much so.

TS: Were you inspired at all by his speeches that he did?

MS: Yeah. What was it: “Ask not what you could do for your—what your country could do for you, what you could do for your country”. Yeah, just young, exciting.

[“And so my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country” is a famous quote from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, 20 January 1961]

TS: Yeah. Since your dad was in the navy and you had that experience around the world, with the tension with the Soviets—the Cold War and the Bay of Pigs and those kind of things—did you have awareness about that at all?

[The Cold War was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc (the US, its NATO allies and others) and powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Pact)]

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

MS: Oh, sure.

TS: Did you? Any kind of fears?

MS: I think the first time I remember the world's situation was Korea, actually, and I had to have been third grade or younger because we were in Kansas at the time, and I remember reading in the paper about how the American soldiers in this one particular incident had been captured by the North Koreans, hands bound behind their backs with barbed wire, put in these ditches and shot, and that was just horrific. And then Daddy got orders for Italy and in my mind Italy was next door to Korea.

TS: Oh, really?

MS: [chuckles] So the child's perspective of what's going on can be quite terrifying at times.

TS: Anything outside your little circle is the scary world outside.

MS: That part of it was, for sure.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And then when we got to Italy the Communist Party was very active, and May Day is a big thing for them.

[May Day, also referred to as Labor Day or International Workers' Day, is a national holiday that takes place on 1 May in Italy. It is a celebration of the labor union movement's social and economic achievements]

TS: May 1?

MS: Oh, yeah. And so, that was kind of scary. I remember my sister and I were walking to the bus stop to catch a school bus, and it was May Day and we were a little bit nervous, and we saw this truck go by and it had a tarp over it and the tarp kind of blew up and there were these guys—just blew off a little bit—and we saw these men that had kind of hunkered down underneath it. Now, who knows? This is what I thought I saw.

TS: Right.

MS: And I thought I saw pitchforks and things. So I don't know. You just don't know. I used to get beaten up by some kids that lived in this neighborhood that had a big Communist hammer and sickle painted up on the wall of the top part of the building.

[The hammer and sickle is a Communist symbol that was conceived during the Russian Revolution. At the time of creation, the hammer stood for industrial laborers, and the sickle for the peasantry; combined they stood for the worker-peasant alliance for socialism]

TS: You used to get beaten up by them?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: What would you do?

MS: Well, I'd fight back; my sister ran home. [both chuckle]

TS: You stayed to fight and she ran, okay.

MS: Yes.

TS: That's interesting. What did your parents think of that when you got in those fights?

MS: What can you do?

TS: Well, I don't know.

MS: Nothing. [both chuckle]

TS: Okay. So you're at WC, and are you living in the barracks there?

MS: In the dorm.

TS: In the dorms—not barracks. Tell me a little bit about that experience. Was it the first time you were away from home?

MS: Yeah. Started out in Guilford Hall freshman year and then Mendenhall for the next three. And at that time almost everybody lived in the dorms. They had a few townies.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And it seems like the gals that lived on campus didn't have much contact with the gals that lived with their families.

TS: Sure.

MS: It was a very restrictive era. I mean, our first part of the year as freshmen we weren't even allowed to leave campus. There were gals who had never even chosen their own clothes; their mothers always laid out everything they were going to wear. And then we had to have permission from our parents as to where we could go and when we could go.

TS: In Greensboro?

MS: Yes, to leave campus.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And they used to have dances, but if you didn't have a date you couldn't go to the dance.

TS: You couldn't go at all?

MS: No.

TS: Not unescorted.

MS: No. They—The weirdest thing, in my freshman year, I don't know who sponsored it but they had a talk or a lecture for the girls who were engaged and it was on sex.

TS: Oh, really?

MS: But if you weren't engaged you couldn't go. So the engaged girls came back and showed us all the pictures.

TS: Is that right? [both chuckle]

MS: But it was a very, very repressive era when you think about how times have changed.

TS: You had curfews, right?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Did you sneak in at all?

MS: No, I didn't do—I didn't date. When—My first two years I worked in the cafeteria, and then my next two I was a—I worked the desk at the dormitory, so I was very familiar with the curfew and the lights flashing and everybody getting in that last kiss before the door was slammed and they were locked out, and then in big trouble.

TS: In big trouble. What kind of things do you remember around campus that you enjoyed doing?

MS: I think the thing that I enjoyed the most, I don't if they—do they still have Piney Lake?

[Piney Lake is a forty-acre recreation center owned by UNCG, and is used as a retreat facility, a private camp, and a recreational facility for students and faculty]

TS: I think they do, yeah.

MS: Yeah, that I enjoyed the most because we would leave for the weekend and spend it out there just out in the woods doing stuff.

TS: Yeah. Tents? Or did you have cabins or something?

MS: No, they had a building; they had a cabin.

TS: So you stayed in there.

MS: Yes. So that was always a lot of fun.

TS: That's neat.

MS: And sometimes the faculty would have us over to—there were several of them that lived together. The head of the department, Ethel Martis; my advisor, Ellen Griffin; I forget who else lived there. They had a big place out in the country and occasionally they would have us out there. And so, those things were nice because it was an opportunity to get away from the campus.

TS: How did you feel about your education here?

MS: Oh, the education was good. At that time it was considered one of the absolute best women's schools in the country. Yeah, no regrets about the education.

TS: Did you have any professors that were in any way remarkable to you?

MS: My advisor, Ellen Griffin.

TS: What did she do that you remember?

MS: Just her presence, her calmness. Just—

TS: Calmness?

MS: Yeah, yes. In fact, we're only about twenty minutes from the big hotel over in Pinehurst, and they have a wall with all of these people who have made their name in golf and she's up there.

TS: Oh, okay.

MS: Yeah. Walking down the hall one day and looking at some of the pictures and, my gosh, there she was.

TS: That's interesting. I guess the year before you came is when they had the sit-ins. Did they ever talk about that?

[The Greensboro sit-ins were a series of nonviolent protests in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960, which led to the Woolworth department store chain removing its policy of racial segregation in the Southern United States]

MS: No.

TS: No? Never said, "Be careful what you do out—" Nothing like that?

MS: No. Not that I'm aware of.

TS: Okay. Was anything particularly challenging for you at UNCG—or Women's College?

MS: Getting through everything. [chuckles]

TS: Everything they're telling you?

MS: Really. You go from a small school, because the school wasn't that big in Kingston. I guess we graduated maybe two hundred, I don't know. And then freshman orientation, look to your right, look to your left, one of you is not going to be there.

TS: Oh, is that what they say?

MS: Oh, yeah. Really inspires a lot of self-confidence.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah. Did you get to go see movies?

MS: They had movies on campus.

TS: Oh, they did? You enjoyed doing that?

MS: And then there was a movie theater off the campus where they showed more like art films and stuff.

TS: Oh, okay. Did you get to Yum Yum's [Yum Yum Better Ice Cream and Hot Dogs]?

MS: Yes.

TS: Did you enjoy that?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Were there other eateries that you enjoyed going to at the time?

MS: Oh, I didn't have two thin dimes to rub together.

TS: No?

MS: I would call home collect and pray that the dime came back out of the phone when the call was over, I mean—

TS: Yeah. So you ate at the cafeteria?

MS: Cafeteria, sure.

TS: Now, did you have a sense of what you were going to do with your education when you were done?

MS: Well, like I said, I thought I was going into recreation, and I had applied for a job with Army Special Services [entertainment branch of the American military], which is recreation, and had been accepted and I was so excited. So I thought, "Boy, I can just see myself in Europe with all these GI's [private soldiers in the U.S. Army]." I was going to have a ball.

And the summer of my junior year, four of my classmates went to Fort Sam [Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas] for what they called a practicum—physical therapy practicum—and they were all totally different in—their perspective on it was all different—but it sounded like a really good deal. You go in the army, you're commissioned as a second lieutenant, you get paid—it was like two hundred and fifty dollars a month at that time—and you wind up with physical therapy as an occupation. But I'd already been accepted for Special Services so, of course, I called home asking what they thought I ought to do.

TS: Okay.

MS: I knew what the answer was going to be but I didn't want to hear it. I wanted to go to Europe and play.

TS: [chuckles]

MS: And Daddy says, "Well, of course you're going to go into the army and go to school and have a commission." So that's what I did.

TS: Who were the other ones in your class?

MS: At that—Alice Park Fairbrother,, Cary Clarke Newlin, and Diane Barnes Kornett.

TS: Okay. Was Scottie [Hudson] in that one?

MS: No, Scottie went in the navy and—

TS: Oh, that's right, she went in the navy.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MS: In fact, she went in the navy later, yeah. And we actually had another classmate, Jamis Townsend, who went into the physical therapy program two years after we did.

TS: Oh, okay. You left a legacy for people to follow.

MS: We did. A lot of military in that small class.

TS: Yeah, that's true. So you decided to do that, you got a stipend of two fifty—

MS: No, it was a salary.

TS: Salary.

MS: We were active duty.

TS: Okay, a salary.

MS: A salary. [chuckles]

TS: Was that just your senior year or junior—

MS: No, no, no, no, no. That's when we went in the army.

TS: When you went in the army, okay. So you didn't have to be in the army—

MS: It wasn't like ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps].

TS: Okay.

MS: No.

TS: Alright.

MS: No, the requirement for the program was that you graduated and that you had the prerequisite science courses. And of course, in physical education, we were inundated with science courses. It made it hard to find an elective because of all the labs.

TS: You had to fill them up. Oh, right.

MS: We didn't have a lot of time to put anything else in there.

TS: I see. Your parents were supportive, then, of the decision to go in the army?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Well, what was that like, then? Why don't you talk a little bit about that experience when you first when in to Fort Sam Houston?

MS: Well, there were four of us. Alice had a car so she and Diane went down together. Cary had a car; she and I went down together. We were going to caravan; we lost each other the first day.

TS: You lost each other on the way there?

MS: [chuckles] Yeah. Daddy took me to the bank and co-signed on a personal loan so I'd have enough money to buy my uniforms when I got down there. It was a whole new world. We didn't know what we were doing, and Texas at that point was like another country. Because North Carolina was very sheltered, very provincial.

TS: Okay. How was it different in Texas?

MS: Well, it was just a different part of the country. I mean, everybody—all these guys in white starched shirts driving pickup trucks with a gun rack and a rifle hanging in it. I mean, you don't see that stuff around here. Not back then.

TS: No.

MS: [chuckles] Not back then.

TS: That's true.

MS: And—But we worked hard. We had one textbook the whole year, everything else was lecture and notes; if you can imagine physiology with nothing but notes. All this other stuff. It was—It was wicked. I mean, we worked really, really hard.

TS: Did you do your officer training at the same time?

MS: Well, we went through basic which—I mean, there wasn't much to it. I mean—

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

MS: Sit in a lot of classes.

TS: Marching?

MS: I mean—Yeah, we did some marching. Because we—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Not a lot of physical activity.

MS: No, no, no, we didn't do PT [physical training]. The medical corps is very unmilitary. I guess medical corps to army is sort of like air force to military. [both chuckle] If you get the analogy.

TS: Well, that's my service so, no, I don't understand at all what you're talking about.

MS: [laughs] And—But we really worked. No two ways about it. And then we had—Of course, after all the academic stuff, then they started throwing—putting clinicals in. So we did some clinical work at Brooke Army Medical Center [San Antonio, Texas]. We went to the army hospital at Fort Hood, Texas, and then actually they cut our practicum somewhat short and gave us our permanent orders—our PCS [Permanent Change of Station] orders—because they needed us.

TS: Because of Vietnam?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Did you know you would be going to Vietnam?

MS: Oh, no. Nobody even thought about anything like that. I mean, the first thing was your first assignment and where you're going. I wanted to go to Germany very badly.

TS: Right.

MS: And I kept putting in that request and it wasn't happening. And one of my bosses—my last boss at Fort Benning [Columbus, Georgia]—had come from Camp Zama, Japan, and she said, "Well, put in—" She says, "Put in a request for Camp Zama. You'll like it there." And she says, "Anybody who requests going east gets to go." So I didn't know what she was talking about; I put in Camp Zama and that's where I wound up.

TS: When did you get to Fort Benning? Was that before, in Georgia?

MS: Yeah, right out of PT school.

TS: You were there for about a year and a half?

MS: About a year or so.

TS: A year? Okay.

MS: More or less.

TS: What did you do when you were at Fort Benning?

MS: When you say, what did I do, what do you mean?

TS: What was your work like? What kind of work did you have?

MS: Well, physical therapists worked in the clinic and then we worked on the wards, and it just depended what your rotation was.

TS: What kind of treatments would you do?

MS: Mostly—My army experience from beginning to end was mostly orthopedic.

TS: Orthopedic?

MS: Every once in a while, something else would get thrown in, but mostly orthopedic.

TS: What kind of clients were they? Army, but what kind of problems caused them to have to go to the physical therapy?

MS: Well, I think a lot of it at Fort Benning, jump school was a real good provider for services. [both chuckle]

TS: Got a lot of clients that way.

MS: Oh, yeah. I think the big thing about army physical therapy is that you're working with a young, healthy population, so for the most part they're highly motivated and they want to get well and they do it. I mean, occasionally you've got some dependents, some retirees, but the bulk of it is young, healthy. And that makes—

TS: Okay. So they're working with you, right?

MS: Oh, yeah. And that makes a big, big difference, because physical therapists don't make people better, they show people what to do for themselves.

TS: Yeah. Were you enjoying it?

MS: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

TS: Now, you're living in—

MS: Lived in the BOQ [Bachelor Officers' Quarters], right next door to the hospital.

TS: And how was that? What kind of accommodations did you have there?

MS: I had an apartment. I had a nurse for a roommate. We had two bedrooms, a bath, living room, kitchen, army furniture.

TS: Okay.

MS: Not bad.

TS: Not bad? Are you enjoying it? Are you happy with your decision at this point?

MS: Oh yeah. Yes. No regrets.

TS: Yeah. But you're trying to get to Germany. Or Europe in some way.

MS: Europe, yes. Yes. Not going to happen.

TS: So you get orders to Camp Zama, Japan, and you said that's right outside Tokyo?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Tell me about that. How was that experience?

MS: That was really quite an experience. I had no idea what to expect. I thought it was going to be all red and gold and dragons and stuff; that's China. Japan is very—I think the term is *shibui*; everything is shades of gray, very dull, very uninspiring. We got there and it was—The day I arrived everything was misty and rainy and gray. Very unattractive.

[Shibui is a Japanese word used to describe a particular aesthetic of simple, subtle, and unobtrusive beauty]

TS: Was it?

MS: Yeah, yes. And—I mean, there are beautiful things there, don't get me wrong, and when the sun shines it can be quite beautiful, but it rains a lot there. [chuckles]

TS: In Japan? It does?

MS: It did where we were. And—But it was fascinating and the work was interesting. The hospitals that were there, the main purpose was to treat Vietnam evacuees; to either do one of two things, get them well enough to go back or stabilize them so they can be sent on to the States. And Zama was the only hospital that also treated dependents because we had military on the northern island, the southern island, and obviously if you've got hospital staff, you've got married people with dependents. So we did see some dependents but not many. I think because of the clientele that we had, I think the dependents didn't come in with a lot of minor symptoms. Putting things into perspective.

TS: Okay.

MS: And of course, I was in my twenties at the time and [chuckles] I think we don't think much about consequences when we're in our twenties.

TS: Okay.

MS: And so, after a year and a half of working with Vietnam returnees and hearing the stories and seeing what I saw, I thought, "Well, I'm going to check this out myself." So I put in an ITT—Intra-Theater Transfer request—and got Vietnam. Actually went to [71 Evacuation Hospital in] Pleiku in the central highlands and replaced a physical therapy classmate of mine.

TS: Oh. Which one?

MS: Judy Mellet. And our paths didn't cross there; she was gone when I arrived.

TS: By the time you got there.

MS: Yeah. But the work was challenging and it was rewarding. And I guess the best thing about army medicine—I mean, you have to work within your professional parameters, but it's also socialized medicine, so nobody's competing for dollars, and that gives people a lot of latitude in their disciplines to basically accomplish the mission. So we got to do a lot of—a lot of things that maybe we couldn't do in other situations.

TS: Give me an example.

MS: Well, in physical therapy we did wound debridement in the whirlpool, and that sort of thing, for burn patient's nasty wounds, dressings. Because of the type of injuries, oftentimes we found things that hadn't been picked up yet. So you'd make a note of that and send it on and somebody else takes care of it. I found—a couple of patients—it's interesting—PTs—I don't see it this day and age—what I see is a lot of talk and a lot of tapping stuff into computers—but in the era in which I was trained and working we were definitely hands on, and PTs were kind of wandering hands. You just don't think any—Patient's laying on the table, you don't think anything about just running your fingers up and down the leg checking things. Especially when you're dealing with war injuries, because obviously you treat—the surgeons are treating the biggest, most life-threatening thing and you work your way down the ladder, but that doesn't mean you haven't missed something.

TS: Right.

MS: And I was kind of tapping around on this guy's leg one day and I felt something that sounded like a—if it sounds or it feels—but it was kind of like a little flushing toilet and I thought, "Oh, that's weird." And he had what was called a false aneurism, and had he been evacuated out and had that thing blown he would have died on the plane. I found two of those when I was at Zama.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

MS: Yeah. And I don't know, just interesting stuff. I don't keep a catalog of it.

TS: Well, was there any particular patient that you had that you do have a memory of in particular? This one, apparently [indicating a photograph.]

MS: Well, I don't remember that patient, I remember the incident. One patient I remember that I thought was really, really sad, he'd stepped on something and it had blown up his feet, and his feet were like this wide and that big—I mean, just these great big blocks—and he was in traction. That was another thing, too, because in that day and age if somebody had a fractured femur they were put in traction for an extended period of time. They don't do that anymore. They put the bones in place, put them in a cast, and they're up and moving same day.

TS: Right.

MS: So our patients were there for a long time. And I often wonder if he lost both feet. I can't see how they ever would have healed to the point that he could have walked on them. And that wasn't the only injury but, I mean, that was just—every time I would walk on the ward I would see those. I used to—After hours, it was not uncommon to go back and get dressed in civvies [civilian clothes] and go back to the wards and just visit with all the guys.

TS: Yeah.

MS: Just start with bed one and go all the way the way through, just—change of scenery for them, which was—I enjoyed it and it broke the monotony for them.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [unclear]

MS: I remember this one little Puerto Rican guy, went in there one night and he's laying in bed and his chest is bare and he's got these banana peels and he's rubbing them all over his chest.

"What are you doing?"

"Oh, it makes the hair grow on my chest."

TS: [chuckles]

MS: I don't think so. But just crazy little things like that.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you're in Vietnam—did you come from Japan directly? Did you go home at all?

MS: Oh, yeah, I came home on leave.

TS: Came home on leave. Do you have any memory of arriving in Vietnam? Did you arrive at Long Binh or anything, or did you fly right into Pleiku?

MS: Oh, no, no, no. You go into Tan Son Nhut [Air Base].

TS: Tan Son Nhut? Okay.

MS: Oh, yeah. Yes. And get off-loaded and then wonder if somebody's going to come and get you somewhere. I mean, [chuckles] you just—and—

TS: When you were on the plane ride over were you one of the few women?

MS: Yes.

TS: You remember that experience? Because a lot of them said they remember being the only women on the plane.

MS: I don't think I really gave it a lot of thought. And I was met there by some—by a physical therapist who was stationed in Saigon. And they got my uniform together for me, and then eventually put on a plane and went up to Pleiku. And again, you're met by—It's like the military everywhere, it sounds so exotic, you're traveling all over the world, but I mean, there's somebody there to point you where you need to go. You don't have to think a lot, you just wind up there eventually.

TS: [chuckles] Is that right?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Do you have any memory, then, of getting there and arriving?

MS: I just remember thinking that Tan Son Nhut—we were in some great big huge shed and just, like, what next?

TS: Did they have any of the mortars coming in?

MS: No, not at that time.

TS: Nothing like that?

MS: No.

TS: What year did you get there, '69, '70?

MS: Yes.

TS: So it was after the—

MS: Tet [Offensive]?

TS: Tet.

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

MS: We were—I was in Japan during Tet. The number of evacuees at that time was just mind-boggling.

TS: Was it?

MS: And it was interesting, too, because sometimes it would be the same unit wiped out, and the unit's replaced and the unit's wiped out. It was just amazing how they kept coming in. And the guys that seemed to get it were the RTOs—the radiotelephone operators—and the point guys. And the medics. But Zama was so crowded that we even had beds in the corridors, and the beds were so close together you'd walk between them sideways.

TS: Okay.

MS: We had a—The gym was converted to a ward. We just had people on top of people.

TS: Is this one of the inspirations that you had; to go and see?

MS: No, no, no. That had—That was more—Clinically I knew I was quite competent so I had no concern about that. That's all I'd been doing all the time for a year and a half.

TS: Right.

MS: The rest was just hearing all the bravado.

TS: Like a curiosity?

MS: Yeah. And I mean, the bravado from the guys who had been there, that's survival. But to be on the outside listening to it, you think, "Oh, I don't know about all this stuff. I'll just go check it out myself."

TS: Yeah. What did you think when you got there?

MS: "What now?" And we lived in hooches [a hut or simple dwelling].

TS: Want to describe that?

MS: The hooches—Our hooches were these frame buildings. We had—one, two, three—I think we had four rooms on one side, three on the other, and then a communal bathroom. We had revetments around them but the interesting thing was they should have been filled with sandbags; ours had nothing in them.

[Revetments are barricades of earth or sandbags set up to provide protection from a blast]

TS: Oh, they didn't?

MS: No. The only revetments that had anything in them were the doctors because they made—they filled up their own. And I was befriended by a [American] Red Cross gal who's still a friend of mine. She introduced me to everybody and she explained what to do when there was a rocket attack. So in our room we had a small bed not much bigger than a cot, I think a wall locker, maybe a bookcase. I think that was about it. But at least you had a room. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

MS: And she said if there's a rocket attack and you hear the rockets and the siren goes off get under the bed. Well, I'm six feet tall, and I standing there and I'm looking at this bed and I'm thinking, "Yeah, really." And she showed how after a while you made it very comfortable; you put an air mattress in there, have a little flashlight, have some food, a book. Of course, your steel pot [military slang, meaning helmet] and your flak vest.

Well, the first—I'd only been there a couple of days and we had—we had a rocket attack, and I was under that bed so fast I didn't even know how I got there. And scared; really scared. And all I kept thinking was, "Marcia, don't vomit because you will be laying here in it all night long."

TS: Oh.

MS: [chuckles] And when I finally rolled out from under that bed in the morning I looked like a tank had rolled over me. So I made my little nest. I got the air mattress and the flashlight and—yeah.

TS: Did you have a lot of times you'd have to go under it?

MS: I think fairly often considering it was a hospital. We used to joke that they weren't really going to mess with us because we probably were treating NVA [North Vietnamese Army] and didn't know it; who knows who these people were.

TS: Right.

MS: And you learn the difference between incoming and outgoing very quickly.

TS: How do you—

MS: They sound different.

TS: They do?

MS: Yes.

TS: Do you remember the sounds at all?

MS: No, not now.

TS: But at the time you would recognize it.

MS: Oh, sure.

TS: Yeah. So it was kind of a frightening experience.

MS: In the very beginning, just because I didn't know what was going on.

TS: Right.

MS: I was the only physical therapist, so when we would have staff meetings, weekly, I went. And our CO [commanding officer]—Colonel Bellis—had been in Korea, and his unit had to evacuate down to the south part of the country—they were being overrun—so he was very much aware of the possibilities that we could encounter there. So every week there's a big map with the little red squares and little blue squares, and what they were going to be doing to us the next week and all this intel. It would take me about a week to recover from it and then there would be another meeting. We—Pleiku was isolated in there was only one highway out, so that could very easily have been blocked. And so, you became aware of these things but you couldn't—I don't think people spent a lot of time concentrating about it because then you really couldn't survive.

Then the other thing, we had to take malaria pills and a lot of the guys in the field wouldn't take them because they would just as soon get malaria and then be evac-ed [evacuated] out, not realizing the complications that arise from that. But once a week in the mess hall, when you signed in at lunch, they had this little—the bowl was kind of a brown yellowy color plastic thing and the malaria pills were in it. You'd have to take one

and sign. Well it was chloroquine/primaquine, and it'd make me sick for a week.
[chuckles]

TS: Every time you took it?

MS: Yeah.

TS: How often did you have to take it?

MS: Once a week.

TS: Oh.

MS: And so, I mentioned it to one of the nurses and they had something on the ward I could take that would make it better, so that was handled eventually.

TS: Yeah. But you still got sick all the time from taking it.

MS: One of my most intriguing patients was a French missionary. He had been coming to the hospital prior to my arrival there. He was in the village when the NVA came in and they shot him in the elbow, which will kind of destroy your elbow permanently. And he was still coming in for wound care and exercise, and he came in fairly often, he didn't stay very long. And between visits we had this tiny little PX [post exchange: on-base retail store], and who knows why or how but they had French wine in it one time; three bottles, I bought them all.

TS: [chuckles]

MS: Cleared it with his doctor and gave him the wine when he came in on his next visit. And then on a subsequent visit when he came into the clinic he gave me a—the Montagnards [indigenous peoples of the Central Highlands of Vietnam] use crossbows a—he gave me a small one that his houseboy had made for me as a thank you gift for the wine.

TS: Oh my goodness. Do you still have that?

MS: Which I still have. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

TS: Oh, that's very nice.

MS: Yeah. Another memorable patient, this guy came in one day, I mean, he was a hunk. American. He was a—He was a Ranger advisor. And he was asking about socks for amputees, because what happens to the stump is, it shrinks, and you can't keep changing a prosthesis every time it shrinks so you add more of these socks. And he was asking where he could get some and I thought it was for one of his men or something; it was for him. He was a below the knee amputee and he's running all over Vietnam with a prosthetic leg. And there wasn't anything we could do to help him. I suggested he check

with some of—there were some civilian PTs that were missionaries in country, and I'd suggested that he check with them, that they might be equipped for that, but we certainly weren't because anyone that would require that would have been evac-ed out long before they even needed that.

TS: Yeah. That's interesting that he just continued to serve.

MS: Yeah, he didn't want to—didn't want to go through channels because he knew he'd be evac-ed out.

TS: Oh. How long had he had the amputation?

MS: That really wasn't a part of the conversation, but obviously long enough to be rehabbed to be there.

TS: Yeah. Interesting. So you're living in the hooch.

MS: Hooch.

TS: And where are you eating at?

MS: Mess hall.

TS: The mess hall. How was the food?

MS: I thought I never wanted Kool-Aid again in my life.

TS: [chuckles]

MS: That's the only thing I really remember, this watered down Kool-Aid. Obviously, the food was okay. I was—Mother was really upset when I got back, about how thin I was, which I didn't realize. I've looked at some pictures recently, and now we're sitting here in 2015, and when I came back in '70 I was considerably lighter than I am now. [both chuckle] So maybe I was thin enough to be worried about.

TS: You told me earlier—before we turned the tape on—that where you were at, you were close to the Cambodian border?

MS: Yes.

TS: What kind of contact did you have with other service members who maybe weren't patients? Did you have parties?

MS: We were invited out to the 4th [Infantry] Division. The general and his staff would host an evening for the nurses. And they'd gone through all the nurses at the hospital and then they were going through the nurses a second time. It was interesting; being a physical

therapist, you're not a nurse; you don't belong to the Army Nurse Corps; and so you kind of get left out of things sometimes. I finally did get out to the 4th Division. That was neat. Just change of scenery.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And generals live well. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. How well?

MS: Roof over their head, somebody fixing their meals, that kind of stuff.

When I was in Japan, I had a friend who was a Red Cross worker—another one—she had come there from the Philippines. And when she knew that I was going to Vietnam she said, "Now, it's real important that you always look nice. It's very important to the soldiers." And she said, "Be sure to wear nail polish, paint your toenails." So when I wasn't on duty I tried to be a little bit more attractive than I could have been otherwise, and when we went out to Camp Enari [former U.S. Army base east of Pleiku in the Central Highlands of Vietnam]. —that's where the 4th was at the time—and I had this gold lamé dress that I had from Japan; miniskirt era. And so, that was the one opportunity to wear it in Nam [Vietnam]. The only reason I had it was, my luggage, when I was coming home on leave, went to the Philippines instead, so I had to buy all new clothes. And then when I came back to Japan my other luggage had returned, so I went to Vietnam with a lot of luggage. [chuckles] Including the gold lamé dress, which I still have somewhere.

TS: [chuckles]

MS: So that night after dinner they were all going to sit around and drink and talk and stuff, and one of the guys had to go out and check the sentries, so I went out in the jeep in my gold lamé dress.

TS: Oh, that would have been fun.

MS: Yeah, which was fun. Just break the monotony for them.

TS: Good novelty.

MS: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Did you get to fly in any helicopters?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: What did you think about that?

MS: It was fun.

TS: Did you have to do it for work or did you do it for opportunity or what?

MS: No. When they would have the MEDCAPS, the—some of the doctors would go out to the Montagnard villages. We also did MEDCAPS to the leprosarium. And so, occasionally you'd get the opportunity to go just for a change of scenery.

[Medical Civic Action Program (MEDCAP) consists of medical doctors, nurses and specialists with equipment and supplies, who set up a temporary field clinic to provide limited medical treatment to a local population. MEDCAPs are generally narrow in scope and usually provide targeted assistance, such as inoculations]

TS: When you did the MEDCAPS, what was that experience like?

MS: When we went to the Montagnard village, it was like—I felt like I was in a National Geographic episode. I mean, it was amazing, because they were still living in buildings that were made out of wood and bamboo and straw and stuff. And the steps were a log that had had notches carved out of them. The way they let the people know when to be there for the next visit was they would give them a bottle of pills and it would have thirty pills in it. So one pill a day, when the pills were gone, come back, we'll be here.

When we went to the leprosarium, that was run by an Australian nurse. They'd do wound care, put casts on the legs, things like that. The lepers kept cats, which I thought was interesting because they lose sensation in their distal extremities.

TS: Okay.

MS: So if they were sleeping and a rat were to start chewing on their toes they wouldn't know it.

TS: So you have to have a cat to—

MS: Yeah, yes.

TS: Oh, wow. Interesting.

MS: Yeah, just little things like that.

TS: How many years were you supposed to serve when you—

MS: A rotation was one year.

TS: Right, but when you signed up in the army, how long were you supposed to be in? How long did you expect, originally, that you were going to serve?

MS: I think it was only two years after school. I don't really remember because I just—I re-upped. I don't remember now. You just—

TS: Right. Did you think that you were going to stay in longer?

MS: I probably thought that I was going to stay in indefinitely. And then after returning from Nam to Fort Ord [Monterey, California], that's when they started the Reduction in Forces—RIF—and that was absolutely devastating. It was a—we were a very small corps, and it was interesting because back then you may not even see your efficiency report.

TS: Right.

MS: And the things were all on microfiche, so if you wanted to see them you went to Washington [D.C.] Well, I mean, that's nothing I knew anything about.

TS: Right.

MS: And when the Reduction in Forces was started, my classmates who were at Walter Reed [Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C.] knew what was going on. Several of them transferred to public health service.

TS: Oh, okay.

MS: Yeah. Rather than be around to see if they were going to be relieved.

TS: Because of less need for the physical therapists?

MS: Yeah. Well, everybody's cutting back.

TS: Everybody.

MS: Yeah, yes. And so, I got out and did civilian physical therapy, and then Glyn, who I met in Japan, was divorced and he was going to Fort [George G.] Meade [Maryland], and so I went up to Fort Meade and worked there as a civilian, and of course, here in the D.C. area and in the network, and that's when I learned there was a possibility of coming back on active duty, so they took me back and I did four years at Fort Bragg [North Carolina].

TS: You met your husband at—

MS: In Japan.

TS: In Japan. When did you get married?

MS: Seventy-nine.

TS: So you got married after your first time that you got out? Seventy-eight, I think, is when you said you went back in, or '77.

MS: We went up to Maryland together, we came down to North Carolina, and then we got married after coming down here. And the reason for getting—The thing that pushed the marriage was that he had been in the hospital, and when you go in for surgery you have to list your next of kin. Well, we weren't married so I couldn't be the next of kin so he had to list his sister in Kentucky. And he wound up with some complications, and the only reason I even found out about it was I was AOD that day.

TS: What's AOD?

MS: Administrative Officer of the Day. And the NCO [non-commissioned officer] that was on duty that night happened to work in Intensive Care. And I knew that Glyn hadn't come back from surgery, and I said, "By the way, I'm checking on such-and-such."

He says, "Oh, yeah. He's up in Intensive Care." He said, "Don't worry about it. They've got it under control now." Now, he was allergic to penicillin, which they gave him IV [intravenous]. [chuckles] I wouldn't have recognized him. His face was like a beach ball.

TS: Oh my goodness.

MS: So we decided next of kin had to be a little bit closer to home.

TS: Yeah. There you go. Now, was he in Vietnam when you were there?

MS: No, I was in Japan.

TS: In Japan. He was in Vietnam?

MS: He had a—When he—Years before, he had been in Saudi Arabia and developed an inner ear infection and it ate the three bones in the ear, and when he went to Vietnam that fungal infection came back again and they had to evac him out.

TS: Oh, so he was a patient?

MS: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Vietnam was a petri dish. I had a Filipino patient and he had some sort of wound to his foot, and he'd come in, we'd do the wound care, the whirlpool, and all the rest. And to keep it clean, what he would do is, he would put a plastic bag on it. So he was creating his own petri dish in his foot. [both chuckle] We used to say, "Don't put the plastic bag on it."

TS: Yeah.

MS: So, yeah, it was a good place to get bad stuff worse.

TS: When you were in Japan, did you get to do anything in the country?

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: What kind of things did you do there?

MS: Oh, we would travel; go to the different festivals, go into Tokyo. I had a car. We'd drive into Tokyo, park at the [New] Sanno Hotel—which is still there, which amazes me with all the real estate the military's given up—and we'd do Tokyo. And the Sony Building was one of our main places because it had a Western toilet on one of the floors. Very important. [both chuckle]

And one weekend we caught a train and we went on the Izu Peninsula, and the idea was, every time the train stopped we were going to get off. We didn't know where we were, didn't care. So we spent the whole weekend doing that. But it's an interesting country and there's plenty to see and to do and we tried to take advantage of it.

I think the married people had the best opportunity because their assignment was three years, so they had a year for figuring out what to do, a year for doing it, and then another year for catching up with what they'd missed.

TS: How long were you there?

MS: About a year and a half out of the two year tour because they cut it short.

TS: To go to Vietnam?

MS: Yes.

TS: What kind of lessons do you think you learned in Japan and in Vietnam?

MS: Well, it was interesting, because in Japan that was the first time—because I worked my way through school, and two hundred and fifty [dollars] a month doesn't make you rich in the army, so by the time I got to Japan, actually had a little bit of money for a change, so we had to convince ourselves that we were rich captains and we could do what we wanted to, which was sort of ridiculous.

When I got to Vietnam, I realized that you can live very comfortably with nothing, because basically we had a roof over our head, we had food, but we didn't have anything. Where are you going to go? What are you going to do with it? I took fifty dollars a month out of my pay and couldn't spend fifty dollars.

TS: Oh, really?

MS: Yeah.

TS: What were you going to spend it on?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Some of the comments I've had from some of the women is, they really didn't have a lot of things stocked in the PXs for women's needs, things like that.

MS: No. I took a lot of Tampax [tampons]. [laughs] And had to send home and ask for more.

TS: Yeah.

MS: Oh, yeah.

TS: Those kinds of things.

MS: Yeah. I think they're probably better about that these days, but.

TS: Hopefully.

MS: No, no. Even getting laundry detergent. One of the gals was dating an air force pilot and he flew us to An Khê [Base] to go to the PX to buy laundry detergent one night.

TS: Oh, really.

MS: Yeah, yes.

TS: What did you fly on for that?

MS: Some big air force plane.

TS: Yeah.

MS: Some fixed wing something or other, I don't know. [both chuckle]

TS: Did you get an R&R [rest and recuperation (or recreation), a scheduled vacation from duty] while you were in Vietnam?

MS: Yeah, I had an R&R and a leave. Went to Hong Kong on one of them. That was—and then the second one I went to Australia; Sydney. And Hong Kong; I did that from Pleiku. And my friends had been prior to my going so I sort of knew what I was looking for and that was kind of neat. And I had been to Hong Kong before from Japan.
 Sydney, by the time I got there, I had been transferred down to [the 67th Evacuation Hospital—MS added later] [at] Qui Nhon [Airfield], and I would just as soon have gone home.

TS: Instead of going to Australia?

MS: Yeah. Yeah. And—

TS: You just had four months left or something?

MS: About three, yeah—total—down in Qui Nhon. Because, see, the thing was, when we were sent over we didn't go as a unit, we went as individuals. And so, I had my support group in Pleiku and then I was moved down to Qui Nhon, so here I am the odd guy out and I'm also a short-timer.

TS: You didn't know anybody.

MS: Yeah. So—

TS: Why did they move you?

MS: They needed somebody down there.

TS: Okay.

MS: And they were starting to phase out and—

TS: So that was not as—

MS: I didn't enjoy it as much because I didn't have a chance to really—

TS: Meet people.

MS: And do things there. I met—On the compound where the hospital was, was also an airfield—an army airfield—and the CO of the airfield was a lieutenant colonel, and somehow or other he had access to the general's yacht, so we did get to go on a little boat ride one day and out to some island to go snorkeling. Went to an air force base one time—yet again, the nurses going—which was amazing because there were all these houses and they had paved roads with painted center lines; never seen anything like it.

TS: Oh, is that right?

MS: Yeah. Even up in Pleiku the officers lived in—looked like civilian housing. They do well. The joke was they built the civilian housing and the Officers' Club and then said they didn't have money for the runway. So who knows?

TS: Right. Those are typical military jokes too.

MS: Oh, yeah, yeah.

TS: How were your relationships with the Red Cross; the nurses?

MS: Basically fine. Typically, in all of my assignments my friends wound up being Red Cross because we worked 8:00 [a.m.] to 5:00 [p.m.], more or less.

TS: Okay.

MS: Nurses worked shifts. I had friends who were nurses but we couldn't go and do as much. But OTs [occupational therapists], PTs [physical therapists], dieticians, didn't have the night shift.

TS: No. You just had your hours during the regular day.

MS: Sure.

TS: But there was just one of you, too, right, in a lot of the places that you were at.

MS: Yeah.

TS: So you can't really work 24/7, right?

MS: Well, in Japan I had—we had the officer who was in charge of the clinic and then he had two therapists; myself and a guy. And then of course we had all the enlisted. In Vietnam, it was just me and one enlisted guy. And then bigger staffs in other places.

TS: Did you enjoy your job?

MS: Oh, yeah, very much so.

TS: Since you're working by yourself in a lot of these places, the training that you had had to really drive what you did, right? Then you must have learned things on your own as well. Is that true?

MS: Yeah. And then when I got back to the States—When I came back after getting out of the army, I worked as a civilian, and then the four years at Fort Bragg, but what we had—what we were doing at that time was musculoskeletal evaluations. Somebody would come to us and we would do an upper or lower quarter screening and very, very thorough exams, and lots of times pick up stuff that was not what the person was sent there for. Either they—It could have been we discovered something different, or it could be that the symptoms and the provisional diagnosis they were sent with wasn't what was really going on.

TS: Interesting.

MS: And we had the professional freedom to refer them to another doctor—not another doc—Well, another from the original referral.

TS: Right.

MS: And so, professionally it was wonderful. Very much a challenge and very, very good. And we were very good at what we did.

TS: Yeah. How were your relationships with your superiors in the different places you were at?

MS: Okay.

TS: Good?

MS: Yes.

TS: No problems?

MS: No. Like I said, it's just a matter of doing your job.

TS: Did you ever have to supervise anyone? Did you supervise the enlisted personnel?

MS: Oh yeah, we all had to write OERs [Officer Evaluation Report].

TS: How was that? Did you mind doing that?

MS: Oh, I don't think anybody really enjoys doing paperwork.

TS: [chuckles] Well, some people do.

MS: Well, that was part of the job. We had to do the efficiency ratings for the—we had civilians, we had enlisted military, and we had officers, so depending on your rank and who was below you was who you were told you to write up, sure.

TS: Did you mentor anyone at all?

MS: Well, I mean, you always do because you're in charge and you're training. And it was interesting because years later I heard from other people that there were several people who met me as a patient and because of that relationship went into physical therapy.

TS: Oh. Interesting.

MS: Yeah. Which really surprised me.

TS: Yeah.

MS: But I thought that was quite nice.

TS: Did you have any mentors yourself?

MS: I don't know that there's anybody I would really think of as a mentor. I had people that I enjoyed working under more than others. I had some that I felt were more supportive.

TS: Any that you want to mention that you really enjoyed working under?

MS: In Japan, Harry [unclear]. At Fort Bragg—[phone ringing]

TS: We can pause for a second.

[Recording paused]

TS: Okay, so you had a mentor.

MS: Yeah, and out at Fort Bragg, Colonel Jane Gerhart; Colonel Putnam. I think those were the three. And at Fort Ord, Colonel Eason. Those were the ones that I liked the best.

TS: What was it about them that made them good to work under?

MS: I think just being approachable, just being nice people.

TS: Yeah.

MS: There when you need them; not in your face.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah. Things like that.

MS: Yes.

TS: We didn't talk about Fort Ord much. How was that assignment?

MS: I think probably my reaction to Fort Ord was typical of anybody who's been in a war zone; you come back and you have a different set of priorities; can't understand why people are so concerned about such trivial trash. It was fun being in California. The interesting thing was I had been out of the country now for two and a half—pushing three years.

TS: Right.

MS: Came to California in the big hippie era. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. So how was that?

MS: I can remember being more intimidated by the hippies that were panhandling than being in Pleiku City.

TS: Really?

MS: Yeah. I thought, "Who are these people? What's going on?"

TS: Did you get down to San Francisco?

MS: Yeah, we'd go out to San Francisco fairly often. Which was interesting. [both chuckle] I had never really thought much about gay people. We wound down there one day and a big gay parade and there were these guys dressed up like brides and their wedding gowns were made out of window curtains. And there were—And that was the go-go era, and there were these go-go boys and, I mean, just stuff I've never seen before; like a real culture shock coming from Japan and Vietnam.

TS: Sure.

MS: Whatever.

TS: What did you think about that counterculture movement at the time, when you were a young woman yourself?

MS: Definitely not for me.

TS: Yeah. [chuckles]

MS: That was about the extent of it. But it was alive and well. There's no doubt about that.

TS: Did you face any anti-Vietnam protesters or anything?

MS: The most disheartening thing about that was, on the trip back we landed in Seattle—Sea-Tac [Seattle-Tacoma International Airport]—and we were told when we got off the plane to get out of our uniforms. Most of us wanted to anyway, but to be told that you need to get out of your uniform, that was really—It's like, "What's going on here?"

And when I was at Fort Meade as a civilian I had a very close friend. In fact, she was the OT at Camp Zama with me. She was stationed at Walter Reed and they were told not to wear their uniforms if they were using public transportation going to work; change when they got there. And that sort of thing is very disappointing. Where do you go from there?

TS: Yeah. When you left the service for the first time, what was the transition, then, back to the civilian world like for you?

MS: A little bit panicky in the very beginning. I mean, like, I'd never had to shop in a civilian grocery store.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

MS: For starters. I mean, just adjusting. I worked for a civilian PT in Monterey, and worked hospital setting, home visits, and in his clinic. So the work wasn't any problem. And then at—toward the end of the year, came back to the Southeast because they would still move me.

TS: Who would move you?

MS: The army.

TS: They would?

MS: Yes. One move.

TS: Oh, since you hadn't made your move.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MS: Back to Home of Record [the place one was living when they entered the military], yeah.

TS: Okay. What did you do here?

MS: I worked down in Georgia—Albany, Georgia. Albany. Was the head of the PT department in the hospital down there, and then moved up to Maryland to be with Glyn. So I was at Fort Meade, and then from Meade to Fort Bragg, [North Carolina—MS corrected later].

TS: What inspired you to go back in in '78? Seventy-seven, '78, somewhere around there.

MS: When I was working at Fort Meade I was civil service and I was earning less than the new second lieutenants right out of school in PT, which really rubbed me the wrong way.

TS: Sure.

MS: I mean, I had the experience, the expertise, but I sure wasn't being paid for it. And then the opportunity to come back on active duty occurred so I did it.

TS: Yeah. And so, then you were married, so you were both in the service at the same time at Fort Bragg. What kind of things did you do at Fort Bragg? Anything different than what you had been doing?

MS: The musculoskeletal eval. It was interesting because in Vietnam, for example, I had certain patients who were referred to me, but I also had the freedom just to walk through the ward. I'd pick up anybody's—the medical records were hanging on the end of the bed;

I'd pick it up and go through it and if I saw anything I thought I needed to take care of I just did it.

TS: Okay.

MS: Then during the time that I was at Meade and Bragg we were doing musculoskeletal evals. So again, a lot of freedom and a lot of independence, which I enjoyed very much. I didn't like civilian physical therapy because physical therapy was viewed as a moneymaker and I resented that; moneymaker for the hospital. Like, for example, I worked in a hospital where the neurosurgeon wanted hot packs on his patients three times a day. Well, during the course of the time that patient was in the hospital he paid for the machine that they were in and every hot pack that was soaking in the thing to get hot. It's ridiculous.

TS: How would you have done it differently?

MS: I would have changed the fee scale. But at any time it seems like they needed more money they would up the charges in physical therapy very easily.

TS: Oh, really?

MS: And see, the thing in the hospital, Admin doesn't pay for its way, so the services that provide patient care are paying for the hospital administrator, his secretary, so on and so forth.

TS: You said something earlier about how the military and what you're working in is more like a socialized kind of medicine.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MS: Well, socialized in that nobody has to pay and if you need it you get it.

TS: But I think one of the points you were making then, too, was that you got it done.

MS: Yes.

TS: Because you did whatever you had to do.

MS: Yeah, we weren't competing for dollars.

TS: Right.

MS: It wasn't like the doctor wouldn't let me do something because his PA [physician's assistant] was going to do it and then the money would go to them.

TS: I see. Okay. So it didn't matter who did it.

MS: If you were professionally licensed to do it and competent, sure.

TS: Right. Sure. Of course. Do you feel like you were treated fairly while you were in the service?

MS: By whom?

TS: Well, by anyone.

MS: [chuckles]

TS: We can break it apart.

MS: Well, I don't think it was fair that they RIFed me.

TS: Right.

MS: But I think probably in the long run it was one of the best things that happened to me, because had I not been RIFed, I would have figured anybody who had certainly was RIFed for a reason.

TS: Oh, I see.

MS: Yeah, the nebulous reason.

TS: Sure.

MS: Who knows what? Incompetence, being a slacker, or whatever the case might be, and that's not the case at all. And Glyn had been RIFed. And I seriously wonder if I would have—not having been RIFed myself and he had been, would I have thought that there was something wrong with him that I didn't know about.

TS: Right.

MS: And so, probably it was one of the best things that ever happened to me.

TS: That's interesting. You stayed on in the Reserve, and we talked about this a little off-tape. You're not exactly sure when you ended, right, because of how the paperwork—

MS: Well, I could go find out. I can't even tell you my date of rank. I mean, I don't care. When I was commissioned—these things just don't mean anything to me.

TS: Why did you want to stay in though? Why did you want to stay connected to the Reserve? Why didn't you just retire?

MS: Well, at that point it was a retirement situation.

TS: Was it?

MS: Yeah. And like I said, my position was IMA [Individual Mobilization Augmentee] in the PT clinic out at Fort Bragg. And I mean, I certainly knew the job; it was easy to do.

TS: It was more for that kind of security.

MS: Oh, sure. Yes.

TS: Okay. Was there anything particularly challenging that you had to face while you were in the army?

MS: I can't think of anything in particular. I mean, it's like every day just unfolds, you just do what you've got to do.

TS: Right. Anything physically hard?

MS: Not especially. I hated the PT [physical training] test. I'm not an exercise person. I mean, just because you're a physical therapist doesn't mean you're a jock. [both chuckle] Even though I'm six feet tall I didn't play basketball. Hated that. And when it came time—getting near time for the PT test—I'd drive out on post and I'd see these units who were running.

TS: Yeah.

MS: My hands started sweating. I just hated it.

TS: Oh, you had anxiety about it.

MS: Oh, yeah, I hated that stuff. And it really bothered me because I was certainly physically able to do my job without any difficulty.

TS: Right.

MS: So why did I have to do that test? I mean, I wasn't going to be running a mile. It wasn't like I was taking the combat inf—medic badge and going to be hauling a litter [stretcher] anywhere. I mean—But that's the way it is.

TS: We forgot to talk about when you were at Fort Bragg, you went to the Reforger in Germany.

[The Reforger (Return of Forces to Germany) was an annual military exercise conducted by NATO during the Cold War. The purpose of the exercise was to make sure that NATO could quickly deploy forces into West Germany in the event of a conflict with the Warsaw Pact]

MS: Yeah.

TS: Why don't you talk about that a little bit and tell me about that?

MS: Well, it was interesting. It was a little bit upsetting to see how disorganized they were. I mean, they'd been doing Reforger forever. All the gear—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: This is in '77, '78 somewhere in there; '78 maybe?

MS: Yeah, I can check that and give you a date later. But I mean, all the equipment was there, everything's all planned and—I mean, we were in a convoy and the convoy got separated. Everybody—Yeah, it was weird. All of a sudden you strag—A little bit here, a little bit there. And so, in my little truck I made a command decision. I'm sitting in the back because the driver wanted his buddy with him who could read the map or whatever. And so, anyway, made a command decision, and I said, "Okay," I said, "we're going to stop here and we're going to wait and see how many other people we collect." So we pulled off and we really collected a lot of people. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, did you?

MS: Yeah. I guess the most difficult thing—that brings up something—I guess overall the most difficult thing in the military—the combination of being medic and a combination of being female. Because in that era physical therapists were never in a position where it evolved to a command rank. You might be the chief of your clinic, you might be the chief of the corps, but you weren't going to be the XO [executive officer] of the hospital or the CO of the hospital or anything like that. And the women, when I first was in the army, didn't even pull AOD. The guys did—the male officers—

TS: What's AOD?

MS: —Administrative Officer of the Day—but the women didn't. When I got to Bragg the women began to pull it, which meant you worked in the clinic all day, then you were the Administrative Officer all night.

TS: Right.

MS: And then you went to work a half a day the next day. Hated it. [both chuckle] But—

TS: Did you ever have any kind of weapons training?

MS: Not until I got to Fort Bragg. One day they took us out and we fired a .45 [caliber handgun], prone, kneeling, and standing. And I can remember when I was in the prone position, which was very awkward, it bothered my neck, the NCO who was in charge came over and he says, "Ma'am, which target are you aiming at?" [both chuckle]

TS: What did you answer?

MS: Who knows. The only thing I kept reminding myself was, they said that marksmanship was a mental skill not a physical, and I kept thinking, "Okay, just think about it, think about it, think about it." But that was the only weapons training. None for Vietnam.

TS: Yeah.

MS: We weren't given a weapon.

TS: Did you feel vulnerable not having a weapon in Vietnam, or how did you feel about that?

MS: Well, it was really weird because our hooch—between our hooch and the little bit of ground behind us was a barbed wire fence and a public road. We didn't have any protection.

TS: But did you feel vulnerable?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Did you? Would you have wanted to have any kind of weapons training?

MS: I guess I really didn't think about it because it wasn't an option. You don't—Why bother about it?

TS: Did you feel like the male soldiers would protect you?

MS: We didn't really have any male soldiers to protect us. One of the things that our CO wanted to do was have—I believe, have a 4th Division rotating unit in, when they were back at camp and sort of getting a rest, to protect the hospital. And that never came to pass. And a lot—We had some sentry towers. And almost seems like some of the enlisted guys that didn't work too well in the hospital were the ones that wound up with those jobs, which certainly didn't inspire much confidence.

TS: Yeah.

MS: So you just deal with it and go on. What are you going to do? I mean, [chuckles] you're not going to say, "I quit."

TS: Right, right.

MS: If you screw up, what do you do? You say, "What are they going to do, send me to Nam?" [chuckles]

TS: That's right.

MS: So you just sort of—An attitude was developed that was survival mode, I think.

TS: You kind of put up a boundary of not worrying about it.

MS: No.

TS: Back to when you were in Germany in the Reforger, you were saying you might have been one of the first women—

MS: I was.

TS: You were the first woman—

MS: Physical therapist.

TS: —physical therapist out in the field for Reforger.

MS: Yes. And that was to justify having physical therapists in field units; to prove that we could contribute something in that work environment. Which I thought was very well-supported.

TS: Were you out in the field for a certain number of days? How did that work at that time?

MS: Well, during Reforger we were in the field the whole time. I mean, that's where the hospital was.

TS: Like a month, was that?

MS: I think it was a month, maybe six weeks, I don't know.

TS: Okay. How did you do there?

MS: Did fine.

TS: Yeah. What did you think about it? Did you enjoy being out in the field?

MS: I don't think I really cared one way or the other. I mean, we had shelter, food, and showers.

TS: So it's just about doing the job?

MS: Yes. Every once in a while we'd get a chance to go into a town. [unclear], Germany.

TS: Yeah. Was that the only time you got to go to Germany while you were in the service?

MS: Very, very, very tiny village. Yeah, yes.

TS: Well, you finally got back.

MS: I never really thought about that but you're right. [both chuckle]

TS: They didn't say how they were going to get you back, but there you go.

MS: I finally got there, yeah. The mail was really screwed up. I wrote to Glyn regularly and I wasn't getting any mail and I was really, really getting upset. Told him in one of the letters, I said, "I'm really glad we're married." I said, "If we weren't I'd wonder what was going on at this point." And then all of a sudden all the mail came in one day.

TS: Oh. Somehow the—

MS: Yeah. That was probably the hardest part of Reforger.

TS: Not having any contact.

MS: One of our encampments, we were in a pasture that had been where the sheep had been, so we're sleeping with the sheep turds [feces], literally. We were in a GP medium [general purpose tent] and it collapsed one night. They weren't real good about cleaning the latrines. They—In fact it was awful. Real, real bad. I won't go into details but super, super bad. Latrines were a premium item. I can remember seeing a guy from another unit—an officer with his sergeant—come in with a jeep and steal a latrine.

TS: Oh, really? Were there other women in the unit that you were in?

MS: Oh, yeah. There were nurses, yes.

TS: Nurses. So as a first, did you feel like you were doing pioneer work or anything like that?

MS: Oh, definitely; for the reason I was sent there, yeah. And when I was working I was by myself all the time.

TS: Yeah. You still didn't have a weapon to protect yourself from all those—

MS: In Reforger?

TS: Yeah.

MS: [chuckles] No.

TS: No? Did you ever experience any kind of discrimination, on or off the job?

MS: I don't really think so. No, I really can't think of any. Like I said, I think the most awkward thing was, in that era we were not brought up with command responsibilities and I think that that was a disservice. But basically, equal pay for an equal job, which was wonderful. I think if there was any discrimination it wasn't men versus women—in my situation—it was single versus married.

TS: Okay. How was that discrimination?

MS: Well, holidays. The married people need to be home with their families. Well, what about the single person who's family's five hours away? Maybe they need to be able to get there. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

MS: That kind of thing. And the rules for single women were awful when I went in the service. If you were pregnant, whether—this is for women in general—if you were pregnant you were out of the service. It didn't matter if you were married or single. And the only women that I ever met in that particular timeframe who had children had adopted them. Which was a really strange, strange rule, especially when you think about today. At that time also, if a woman married, her husband could not be her dependent, which was quite unusual. So again, I think the discrimination was more single/married than men/women because the women were paid the same for the job that the men were. The only difference would have been in a housing allowance because that increases with your dependents.

TS: Not being able to get it for your husband, you mean?

MS: Well, no.

TS: If you were a woman and you were married to a civilian husband you wouldn't be able to get any, right?

MS: And I think their dependents—their housing allowance goes up with the number of dependents also.

TS: For children.

MS: Yeah.

TS: When you say equal pay for equal job, do you feel like it was equal respect for women?

MS: In that setting, yes. For the women in the hospital, sure.

TS: Yeah. Do you think there were settings where it wasn't?

MS: I would think in field units it could be difficult, but I don't have any firsthand experience about that.

TS: Right.

MS: And of course, now you hear an awful lot about sexual assaults and things of that nature. And the one overview that I have—unfortunately, if a guy is considered to be a good soldier, commands tend not to pay too much attention to what he does otherwise. Like, if he's a wife beater or anything else.

TS: Was any of that going on that you heard about when you were in?

MS: Yeah. They had a dependent who was a female, she worked at one of the housing units cleaning, and her husband was a high-ranking enlisted guy and he went in and he—I don't know why, but he cut her throat.

TS: Where was that?

MS: Fort Bragg. And he wasn't convicted of anything. He was a good soldier.

TS: He wasn't?

MS: No.

TS: When you talk about the sexual assaults on military women, was that something that was happening—

MS: That, I don't know anything about. I just know what I read in the paper.

TS: But in your time, when you were in.

MS: I didn't hear anything about it.

TS: No? Nothing?

MS: But times were different. So, I mean, who's to say it didn't happen and people weren't going to talk about it because there was no support system for it.

TS: Right. There wasn't really anything called sexual harassment, right?

MS: No. None of that stuff existed.

TS: Yeah.

MS: I'm sure it existed; the actions.

TS: Yeah. Did you ever receive any kind of special training or education as part of your service?

MS: Well, a year of physical therapy school, and continuing ed[ucation] from time to time, yeah. And the hospital would have training. And then most PT clinics, they would have what they call a weekly in-service. One of the officers would be tasked to present a class on something. So it was always—

TS: Something ongoing.

MS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you never stop with what you leave school with.

TS: Yeah.

MS: You'd be dead in the water.

TS: [chuckles] Well, did you ever receive any memorable award or honor?

MS: I guess the highest one was an MSM, Meritorious Service Medal. But I think they give those to colonels who retire, I don't know. And then from—It was interesting, in Vietnam Colonel Bellis told me that he had put me in for a Bronze Star, so I figured when I got to Fort Ord it would show up one of these days. Well, it never did. And so, when I got to Fort Bragg I actually located Colonel Bellis and asked him about it, and he resubmitted the paperwork and I was awarded my Bronze Star from Vietnam when I was at Fort Bragg.

TS: Oh, good.

MS: Yeah.

TS: That's good. Took a while. He had submitted it and it got lost.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

MS: Yeah, it took a while. [chuckles] Who knows?

TS: Who knows?

MS: Who knows?

TS: In that era that you were serving, was there anybody who you looked up to as a role model; not necessarily in the service, but someone who might have been a role model, hero, a heroine, things like that, at that time?

MS: No, not particularly.

TS: Did your views about the war change at all? I don't even know what they were. Did you have views on it?

MS: Well, it was real interesting because the main thing was professional from a physical therapy point of view more than from an army officer point of view. I felt—In Vietnam, I felt like—I really felt like the government didn't really care about us. It's like, here you are, they drop you off, and, "If you're here in a year we'll bring you home. Good luck."

TS: Really?

MS: I did.

TS: Why did you feel that way?

MS: I guess because we went over as individuals, we didn't go over as a unit; there was no real connection with anybody or anything. New people coming in to units weren't readily accepted because you were the new guy.

TS: Right.

MS: I actually knew of some cases where some of the new docs [doctors] that came in made it a point to get old fatigues so they'd look like they weren't new.

TS: Okay.

MS: The new guy.

TS: So being isolated and not part of a unit was one of the more difficult challenges.

MS: Oh yeah, and they had realize—the government—the army has realized that and they don't do that anymore.

TS: Yeah. Interesting. That is interesting. Oh, Kent State. Do you remember anything about that, when Kent State happened?

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

MS: Yeah. And I—not knowing a lot of the details, just the gut reaction was I was more on the side of the—was the National Guard, wasn't it?—the National Guard than the students. And I guess ambivalent feelings about whether the war itself was right or wrong. From what I've read even recently, the Gulf of Tonkin incident didn't occur the way we were led to believe.

[The Gulf of Tonkin Incident, also known as the USS *Maddox* incident, took place on 2 August 1964. It was an international confrontation that led to the United States engaging more directly in the Vietnam War]

And so, you always wonder who's behind these moves, who's—like they always say, follow the money; who's going to benefit. And I really think that people are pawns. And of course, Vietnam was draft era and a lot of the guys in the service was—they stand in front of a judge: "You want jail or you want the military?" And a lot of—There were people who were from families with money and influence, but they often got cherry picker jobs too. Or they would be in country just long enough to get their ticket punched and then out. So there was a lot of manipulation. They say it was a poor man's war and I definitely think it was.

TS: Yeah.

MS: And I tend to think that the people who make these decisions ought to be the ones out there slugging it out. They don't do it and their kids don't do it.

TS: Might make a big difference.

MS: Oh, I think it would make a tremendous difference.

TS: What do you think about the current conflicts that we're involved in today?

MS: I think we should stay home.

TS: Stay home? Everywhere?

MS: I don't think that we can go into places and change culture that has existed for thousands of years. I often think, how would we feel if the Chinese came in and decided that they're going to decide how the Republicans and the Democrats should treat each other. We'd go nuts. There are a lot of forms of government. I don't know where we get off thinking that

everybody should be a democracy. And how much of a democracy do we have? How much of this government is being bought and paid for? I'm not sure that's too democratic.

TS: Yeah. That's true.

MS: If one man, one vote's, supposed to count, why do we have all these PACs [Political Action Committees]?

TS: For the politicians? The super PACs and things like that?

[In the United States, a political action committee (PAC) is a type of organization that pools campaign contributions from members and donates those funds to campaign for or against candidates, ballot initiatives, or legislation. Super PACS, officially known as "independent-expenditure only committees," may not make contributions to candidate campaigns or parties, but may engage in unlimited political spending independently of the campaigns]

MS: Yeah. Yes.

TS: What about the way the roles of women have changed?

MS: In the military?

TS: Yes.

MS: I think it's fantastic. I think if they can do the job, let them.

TS: No matter what the job is?

MS: Yes.

TS: Nothing that they can't do if they can pull their weight?

MS: Yeah, if they can pull their weight, which is mental and physical. I know I sure couldn't do some of this stuff. Oh, gee. [chuckles] Don't even want to. Would die trying. But for the people who are able to, I think that it's—I don't see why they should not be given the opportunity.

TS: Your formative years there, during the time when the Women's Movement was going on.

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

MS: Oh, Gloria Steinem? [chuckles] In that era, yeah. Yes.

[Gloria Steinem is an American feminist, journalist, and social and political activist recognized as a leader and spokeswoman for the feminist movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s]

TS: What did you think of feminism and the campaign for equal rights and things like that?

[The Equal Rights Amendment was a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution designed to guarantee equal rights for women. In 1972, it passed both houses of Congress and was submitted to the state legislatures for ratification. It seemed headed for quick approval until Phyllis Schlafly mobilized conservative women in opposition, arguing that the ERA would disadvantage housewives. To this day, several organizations continue to work for the adoption of the ERA]

MS: I think I really didn't pay that much attention to it, again, because I was in the army. You're going to be paid on your rank and your time and grade.

TS: You saw it as an equal pay issue?

MS: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

TS: What are your thoughts on the issue of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," when that got implemented? It would have been implemented after you got out. Homosexuals weren't allowed in the military when you were in there but they didn't have "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

["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]

MS: Well, there were plenty in there and people knew it. And then, like, "So what?"

TS: So what?

MS: Yeah.

TS: Do you think it should have been an issue at all?

MS: I don't see why anyone of that persuasion should be prevented from serving in the military. Either—Whether they want it for a career with an income and a retirement, whether they want to do it because they want to serve their country. I think those are the two main things, and with career and retirement you can put educational benefits because that definitely is a draw. But I don't see why they should not have that opportunity. And the funny thing is—to me—people worry about homosexuals. Well, what about the heterosexuals that are causing the trouble to the person of the opposite sex? Nobody ever uses a parallel on these two developments.

TS: So it just depends on if you can do the job and not all that other stuff.

MS: Yeah.

TS: I think we talked about this off tape, but did you ever use your veteran's benefits?

MS: Just—I used a very little bit of it when I came off active duty a second time. I decided I wanted to go into real estate and I was able to use it at the community college. I didn't use much of it.

TS: Yeah. Did you use it for housing at all?

MS: Oh, yeah. I was thinking GI Bill, not just veteran's benefits. I'm sorry.

TS: That's okay. Have you used the VA [Veterans Administration] services for anything?

MS: No.

TS: You were saying before you were under your—for your medical.

MS: At this point I'm using Medicare and TRICARE For Life.

[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: Yeah.

MS: [chuckles]

TS: So you haven't had to use the VA for anything?

MS: No. Well, unfortunately, the VA in Fayetteville doesn't have a good reputation and I really didn't want to get involved.

TS: No? So just keep what you're doing right now? What do you think about the current wars we've had, with the issue of PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] being in the news? What are your thoughts on that kind of attention being focused on it?

MS: I think historically that injury has existed forever; used to call it shell-shock and a few other things. And unfortunately, if we can't see the injury we don't acknowledge it. For example, Fort Bragg, take the 82nd Airborne, I mean, that is a really gung-ho unit. I mean, if you're not able to perform 150%, forget it. Well, perhaps I had a guy that had a shoulder injury, he needed light duty. The injury didn't require a sling but I put him in a sling because he needed to have something they can see to protect him.

TS: Interesting. So you knew that so you would do that.

MS: Yeah. So if the guy has post-traumatic stress syndrome and nobody can see it, it's a very difficult thing to acknowledge that the other person's got it. I'm sure there are people that have it that don't want to admit that they've got it because it's a stigma of sorts. I also think it's a situation that people who do not have it can take advantage of it, which is a shame, because I think that that's a disservice to the people that have the problem.

And again, it goes back to my thing about the U.S. getting involved in everybody's business, and the price we pay. And I don't think that the price we pay is acknowledged. Just like my husband, Agent Orange. Eight years. It's not right.

[Agent Orange is an herbicide and defoliant chemical used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam war as part of its herbicidal warfare program Operation Ranch Hand. The Vietnamese people and the U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War who were exposed to Agent Orange suffer serious health issues as a result of the exposure.]

TS: What do you mean by "eight years?"

MS: He suffered with it for eight years before he died.

TS: Yeah. Did he receive any acknowledgement from the VA?

MS: He did. He did eventually. He didn't apply for it. He was one of these guys that— independent and was going to do everything his way and wasn't looking for benefits and stuff, and he finally did get an Agent Orange settlement, and the amount of money he got for Agent Orange in that settlement thing was less than the Congressional pay increase that year.

TS: Really?

MS: Yeah.

TS: What do you think about that?

MS: I think that our government doesn't take good care of the people that they screw over.

TS: Veterans?

MS: Yes.

TS: Do think that can change?

MS: I doubt it because it all comes down to money.

TS: Yeah. Well, how do you think your life has been different, if it has, from you joining the army?

MS: Oh, it's given me a career that I can take anywhere. It's certainly given me opportunities to be places and see things that I wouldn't have otherwise. I have no regrets about having been in the army. Glyn didn't either. I mean, he was proud of his time in the service. It's kind of a two-edged sword. It's like anything, there's good and there's bad. But no, no regrets.

TS: Do you think that there's anything that civilian people don't understand or maybe misinterpret about people who have been in the service?

MS: I think most civilians don't appreciate the fact that you've got a job, basically, that's 24/7. And I realize that a lot of civil—I mean, in this country people move all the time. I mean, what is it, seven years is the average?

TS: Something like that.

MS: Yeah, for everybody, and the military is a very small percentage of the country. But I think the military and what it does is one of those entities that's taken for granted. It's like everybody expects them to be there and do what needs to be done, but in the meantime, don't bother us with it. Now, the situation that I live in here, this is obviously a very active military community, and originally when we moved here in the late seventies Fort Bragg—and immediately surrounding Fort Bragg—but the people who are at Bragg now are living Aberdeen, Southern Pines, Pinehurst, Fuquay-Varina, way north over in—north of Spring Lake. So the immediate impact of the military is spreading in this vicinity and the community's very pro-army, very supportive, which is nice.

TS: So it's a good community to be in.

MS: Yeah. I remember once I was driving across country, I was out of the army at the time. It was, I guess, during the Gulf War. And it was interesting to me to see the impact of the military in towns where the post office was no more than a flag pole and a front door.

TS: The yellow ribbons?

MS: Yeah, yes. It's—The military reaches everywhere, but the impact of it isn't the same everywhere.

TS: That's interesting. Would you recommend the military to a young person today, man or woman?

MS: Oh, absolutely, if they thought that's something they wanted to do. In fact, I have a niece that graduated from the Coast Guard Academy. She's out in Astoria, Oregon, now.

TS: Oh, is she?

MS: And I have a nephew who is a Navy Seabee who's a recruiter out of Charlotte, North Carolina, now.

[United States Naval Construction Battalions, better known as the Seabees, form the Naval Construction Force of the United States Navy]

TS: Did you give them any advice?

MS: No, they made the decisions themselves.

TS: Would you give anybody advice if they asked for it?

MS: Oh, sure.

TS: What would you give them?

MS: I think they need to know what they think they'd like to accomplish.

TS: Have that in mind before they get going?

MS: Yeah. And realize that if—especially if they're going in as enlisted, that what the recruiter tells them in terms of their job may not be exactly what's going to happen, and they need to be real flexible. And they need to look at the different branches of the service and the lifestyles that they offer because they're different.

TS: True, very true. What does patriotism mean to you?

MS: I think—I think the more I travel, the more I'm glad that I'm here. Mother always used to tell us, "Be thankful that you were born where you were and when you were." Of course, I was born in Australia, but Daddy was American. But the interesting thing is, as I travel, I realize that most people are patriotic about the country that they know and love. Some people want to leave for obviously the reasons that are so public these days, but most people have a link to home and they want home to be safe. And my observation has been that what people want is to be able to have food, shelter, clothing, and a decent life for them and their families, and I don't think it really matters where you are. I'm glad I'm where I am. I'm not interested in trading it. And when I travel, I think every place offers something that is good, and we can always bring something of that home with us. But I like coming back here.

TS: You like coming home.

MS: Oh, sure.

TS: Is there anything we haven't covered that you'd like to add or mention?

MS: No.

TS: No? Well, I think I've asked all the questions.

MS: Okay.

TS: Thank you very much. It's been a lovely interview. I enjoyed being here.

MS: [chuckles] I'm afraid to read the transcript.

[End of Interview]