WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Patricia Gregory

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: February 5, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer, and today is February 5th, 2011. We are at Panera Bread in Durham, North Carolina, I'm here with Pat Gregory, and this is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Pat, how would you like your name to read on your collection?

PG: Patricia T. Gregory.

TS: Okay, great. Well, Pat, why don't we start out by having you tell me when and where you were born, where'd you grow up?

PG: I was born November 21st, 1967, in Raleigh, North Carolina. I grew up in Morrisville, North Carolina.

TS: How far from here?

PG: Which is about—fifteen minutes from here.

TS: Is that right?

PG: Yeah.

TS: That's probably changed a little bit since when you were born.

PG: Leaps and bounds.

TS: Yeah.

PG: Leaps and bounds.

TS: What was it like when you grew up, was it more rural, or?

PG: Very rural, I used to tell everybody, me and the dogs I had, we were the youngest people in Morrisville. There was nobody, really, for me to play with.

TS: Really?

PG: Because they—everybody was old as dirt. [laughs]

TS: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

PG: I did. They're nine and ten years older than I am, so they were—

TS: Half a generation younger.

PG: Yeah. They were gone by the time I was looking for a playmate.

TS: Yeah. What'd your folks do for a living?

PG: My mom worked for the United States Power Squadron as a examinations clerk, and my dad was the local mailman, and barber.

TS: Is that right, both?

PG: He did both.

TS: [unclear], huh?

PG: Yes.

TS: Well, so—you didn't have a lot of kids to play with, so what kind of things did you do?

PG: I climbed trees, played in the mud [laughs]. Played Barbies.

TS: Played Barbies?

PG: Yes. I'm a big Barbie—I'm still a big Barbie person. I collect, now.

TS: Do you?

PG: Yeah.

TS: And did you have—so your siblings were a little bit older, you didn't have a lot of kids around, so you did a lot of playing. And did you—did you like, catch a bus to school, or?

PG: I took the bus home in the afternoons, and my mom drove me to school in the mornings.

TS: What kind of school was it that you went to?

PG: Public school. Just your local public school in the middle ‘70s all the way up through the ‘80s.

TS: Yeah. Was there any of the, like, racial turmoil that happened with the bussing at that time, or—[unclear] not going on?

PG: There was a few—there were some.

TS: Was it an integrated school, then?

PG: It was integrated, it was integrated. I think, you know, we were ten years post-integration.

TS: Right.

PG: So, I don’t know if you’d say some of the bugs were worked out or not, but you know, you just—there were still divisions. There were some tensions and there was some division. You know, it wasn’t like it is now, you know, where—

TS: How would you describe it now?

PG: Very well integrated. You see everybody hanging out with everybody, you know, and it doesn’t—which is what I think is nice is that it doesn’t matter, you know, people seem to be more accepting. And so much smarter.

TS: [laughs] Is that right?

PG: My daughter is so much smarter—some of the things that they come up with.

TS: That’s interesting, because you know, you hear a lot about today’s kids not, you know, having—you know, they’re not learning like when we were in school. But you’re saying that they are?

PG: She’s learning so much more—now, we send her to private school, though. I think that makes a difference.

TS: Does it?

PG: But even—and a lot depends a lot on where you go to school at, too. I know her fifth grade class was—they really took advantage of—she’s gifted, and they seem to be more tolerant, just—maybe tolerant’s not the word. It’s not a, you know—I think you would agree, in our time it was like “You’re black,” you know, and for her, she’s like “Yeah, so?” It’s just like describing the color of jacket she—he was wearing, you know,

not—you know, it's not that big of a deal, like it was for you and I, coming through. You know, so—and she's—she made straight As this quarter. An A in math, which I'm like deliriously proud of her for. [laughs]

TS: What kind of subjects did you like, growing up?

PG: I liked creative writing. History, social studies. Science was okay, and when I was going through high school, computers had just started coming out, and so—and I had kind of figured out that was where I needed to be.

TS: Yeah.

PG: Plus, that was something I enjoyed, and I had to take one of the computer classes in shop. All the guys would go to work on the machine shop, and then it was a wood—I think it was a wood shop, too. And I had this male teacher, and he kept looking at me like "Why are you here? Why is this girl here?" But, you know.

TS: Well, did you have any sense of like what you wanted to be when you grew up?

PG: I wanted to be a spy. I wanted to work for the CIA, or the FBI, and all my Barbies were spies.

TS: Is that right? [laughing]

PG: They were all spies. Barbie had a little brown beige trench coat that she would run around in, and deliver the secret goods. [chuckles]

TS: What got that into your head, what made you want to be a spy?

PG: The Bionic Woman. With Jamie Sommers, Lindsey Wagner used to play her, the Bionic Woman, The Six Million Dollar Man, Wonder Woman, Charlie's Angels. You know, they were all—they were cool, you know.

TS: Awesome.

PG: So I had—Lynda Carter [of Wonder Woman] was—Lynda Carter and Lindsey Wagner were my all-time favorites.

TS: Is that right?

PG: All-time favorites. I just thought they were so cool. And—

TS: So, if you wanted to be a spy, and you have these role models in television, did you have a sense of how you were going to achieve that?

PG: No! [laughter]

TS: No, this is a dream, like a little girl's dream.

PG: Yeah, yeah, they were all little girl dreams, and—I think as I got older and started realizing what my—you know, kind of what was required to do things, that's one of the things that popped in my head, was "Well, you know, maybe the military might be a stepping stone."

TS: About when did you have that idea? I mean, how old do you think you were?

PG: I was about eighteen or nineteen.

TS: Eighteen or nineteen. Now, had your father been in the service?

PG: My dad was in the service, my brother was in the air force. Daddy was in the army. I had a cousin who was in the navy, she'd just gone into the navy whenever I was in the seventeen-eighteen time range.

TS: Right.

PG: And she had just gone into the navy.

TS: So it was like '85ish, or something like that?

PG: Yeah, '85, '86. Yeah. So I went off to Appalachian State, and my fall semester of my freshman year, they had a mixer at this little local club called Happy's. Happy Appies. [laughs] And I met this young man, and fell head over heels in love with him. Now, I figured by the crew cut he had, he was in ROTC. And I remember thinking "I'll go and I'll sign up for ROTC and I'll see him in the building, and then we'll just—we'll meet, and he'll just fall madly in love with me too, and we'll go and—you know, I'll be an officer's wife and we'll live happily ever after." [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

PG: It didn't work out that way, I never saw him in the building, and he got out, and I stayed in. So, I stayed in, and I found a home there.

TS: So do you think that originally, even though you had these ideas about the military, did you—did you only join the ROTC for these purposes, or did you have any other feelings about it as well?

PG: Well, I think as it evolved, I saw it as a way to help pay for my college, to help my mom and dad out, paying for my college, because the state of North Carolina, at that time, kicked in—I want to say about two hundred and fifty dollars or five hundred dollars a

semester, to pay for tuition or your books or whatever. And that was, you know—and I got the GI Bill, then I got E5 pay, so I was looking, you know, I need to help my mom and dad out, pay for this, because this is, you know, this is very expensive for them. So.

TS: When you were at Appalachian State, did you—was it a computer-type program that you were on, or did you have, like, a particular major?

PG: I had originally gone in to be a computer programmer. And I got to looking at the course outline, and they had things in there like calculus, trigonometry, and physics and chemistry, and I was going "No." [laughs] "No."

TS: "Where's my history courses?"

PG: Exactly! So I chose political science and criminal justice.

TS: I see.

PG: And I chose stuff that all I had to do was just show up for, you know. [laughs] Pretty much, I showed up, you know. So that's—and I knew—it was—in a way, there was some things that I did not like being identified as, especially in my political science classes. Because, you know, we had to wear our uniforms every Thursday, to get used to them and the inspection and doing all this other stuff. And I did not like that, because that identified me as someone in the military, and a lot of the professors wanted me to speak as a representative of the military, and I couldn't do that, you know. I wasn't going to do that. And I learned very early on to say "This is my opinion, not Uncle Sam's, not the army, not anybody. This is Pat Tew's opinion, you know."

TS: Right. Because you're just learning, anyhow, what it's all about.

PG: Yeah, yeah, I was.

TS: So what did you like about it, what was it that kind of kept you there and drew you to stay in the program?

PG: The structure, the discipline. And then I had Sergeant Major Lynch, who was the battalion sergeant major, and Mrs. Muirhead who was the office manager of the ROTC department. They adopted me. They became my surrogate mom and dad, and they—they were good parents to me, you know, they understood things and they were there—you know, when you're away from home, I mean, yeah, Boone to Raleigh is only about three hours, but if it's your first time away from home, it's—it's a big adjustment to get used to. And they were there, they were very loving and very supportive, and I struggled with the physical training part. I struggled tremendously, and Sergeant Major and I would run, every day. [laughs] And that was his warm-up run.

TS: Yeah.

PG: Because Sergeant Major was a smoker. He was a chain smoker, and before he and I would go run, he'd have a cigarette, and then he would dust me.

TS: What does "dust you" mean?

PG: He would—we would go running, we had a two-mile route laid out. And he would be a half a mile ahead of me. [laughs] After smoking a cigarette. We'd get through running, of course, he'd always beat me to the endpoint, and he'd light up, and he's start smoking again, you know. And I'd sit there dying, trying to breathe. And then he would go and he would run with the young bucks, the Ranger Challenge [ROTC competition], the other—the senior level ROTC cadets, the guys, who had to run the two miles in like thirteen minutes. And they would run with full packs and combat boots, and they're out there running in formation and stuff. And what I loved about Sergeant Major was he never ran behind, he never ran ahead, he ran beside them. After he had smoked about two or three cigarettes with me, you know. That was like "How does he do that?" And so, there was—he really was my mentor. And—

TS: Did you ever get the hang of running?

PG: I did what I had—I got it to the point where I could pass. I was not the fastest, I was almost the slowest, but I could pass. [laughs]

TS: Had you done a lot of, like, sports or anything before that? No? Just climbing those trees and playing with the Barbies?

PG: Yeah. My ideal of running was what you did between commercials. You ran to the refrigerator to go get a drink, or you ran to the bathroom. But—

TS: What were some of the other things that you liked about the program, the ROTC?

PG: [pause] It was a place to belong. Even though I did not really like being identified as an ROTC, I did like being an ROTC person, because, you know, not many girls were in it, and it set me apart, it made me different.

TS: You liked the difference that made you stand out, but not stick out, right?

PG: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's a good way—it's when—well, when you're off at college, you know, you're looking for a place to belong, and where do you fit in in the big scheme of things, and that's why a lot of people joined sororities and fraternities and stuff like that. And mine was ROTC, and I also saw that, hey, this has potential. Because I can get a job after college. You know, this was—I graduated in 1990 [PG corrected later], so the economy was not that good then. And I thought, well, okay, either way, I'll—at least I'll have some income, if I get National Guard or active duty, either way, I'll have some income coming in.

TS: Well, what did your folks think about you joining the ROTC? And you had a brother, do you have a—

PG: A brother, my brother went into the air force. And my sister, she's a homemaker, in fact, now she owns her own business, she's a—owns a Port-A-Potty business.

TS: That'll keep her busy, I'm sure.

PG: Yeah. My dad told me—he said—and I told him, I said "Well, Daddy, I need to help, I need to get the money."

And Daddy said "No, you don't. I've got you covered, you don't worry about that. Don't do this for that reason, do it because you want to, if this is something you like."

And—because I had gone down to the MEP[Military Entrance Processing] station, and it was about time to be sworn in and ship off and go to basic training, and I called Daddy, and that's when he told me, he says "Don't do this because you're trying to help, do this because you want to, this is something you want to do." So I didn't go to basic training. [laughs] I went back home. And my mom never said anything. Mama never really said anything one way or the other. Her biggest concern was, was I happy, was I healthy, you know. And I think she tried very hard not to influence me, she wanted me to make my own decisions.

TS: Right. What about your brother?

PG: He and I, at that time we were estranged. My brother and sister and I, we've all had this kind of love-hate relationship. And it's a lot different now. [laughs] Now, I can tolerate them. So we didn't—I didn't really talk to my brother about it. I didn't say anything to him about it, actually.

TS: So you decided not to go to the basic training. So how did that affect your ROTC status?

PG: It didn't, because—well, I quote-unquote "enlisted", and I was a private, I was an E-3, and the summer between your sophomore and junior year, you contract—you can either go and do—you can go to basic training if you wanted to. Or you can wait, and then you contract when school starts back up in August, and you become an ROTC cadet, you sign the paperwork saying "yeah, I'm here", you know. And I don't know how they worded it, but that was just—it was part of the Simultaneous Membership Program, where that was a—you enlist, you have the option of going through basic training or not, and they put you—they, in theory, are giving you a on-the-job training of what it's like to be an officer. And some units—some commanders utilize their cadets, some didn't. So it just depended on where you were, and I think for mine, a lot of them didn't really know what to do, plus, this is a woman here. "What do we do with her? Well, I don't know, it's a woman and she's not really an officer and she's not really an enlisted and, I don't know."

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

PG: God. You know, honestly, they didn't have me do anything. The commander never gave me an order, never told me to do anything. I just went and stayed with the enlisted guys, and if they went and—we called it "exercising the vehicles", you drive the vehicle around, I was in there with them, doing that, and you know, I just—there was a couple of guys that I just stayed around with and, you know, saw what they did and figured out what was going on and I would occasionally go to some of the training classes that they had. But for the most part, I didn't really have an assigned duty.

TS: No?

PG: No.

TS: Well, at what point did you decide that you liked it enough to stick with it?

PG: [pause] I don't remember there being a particular point. It was just—here it is, this is what I'm going to do, you know?

TS: Right. Then, time-wise, at what—where was the step where you actually had to make a commitment, then? That junior year, the start of your junior year?

PG: Start of my junior year. So that would have been August of '88.

TS: And so what kind of a commitment did you make, then?

PG: Signed up to do—to go and—to get your commission.

TS: Did you have a—I mean, did you say "I'm going to serve for X number of years," or anything like that?

PG: You know, I don't remember.

TS: Was it like six years or something? I'm trying to—

PG: I don't remember what it was for the SMP[Simultaneous Membership Program] contract. I really don't remember.

TS: But, so you made that commitment.

PG: I made the commitment then, and then—

TS: And then, so you went into—so when did you graduate from Appalachian State?

PG: Appalachian State, I graduated in May of 1990. I was commissioned May 20th, 1990, as a second lieutenant in the military police. And went to officer basic course at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and there, you learned how to be an MP officer, more drill and ceremonies, more tactics and leadership training. But for me—you go in what are called cycles.

TS: Right.

PG: The cycle ahead of me was—about the time they were finishing everything up, Desert Storm kicked off. And a lot of these guys were told "You will meet your platoon on the airplane going to Saudi Arabia. Good luck!" You know, and that was primarily for the active duty people. So I was the cycle behind them, and some of my classmates, they were in that situation. I wasn't, because at the time, I was assigned as excess to the state, so they didn't really know what to do with me. So those of us that lived in the area, we went to the headquarters, to the National Guard headquarters in Raleigh, and tried to look busy. [chuckles]

TS: Now, was that a full-time duty, at the National Guard?

PG: No, at that time it was just regular weekend drill status. But I had a—my dad being the barber, the local barber, he knew a lot of these guys.

TS: I bet he did.

PG: Because, you know, he gave them all their haircuts. And the—at the time, I think he was—he was the sergeant major, but I can't remember which level he was at—but the mayor of Morrisville was a sergeant major. And so, somehow or another, I ended up—I had found out that the public affairs office needed full-time help.

TS: At the National Guard?

PG: At the National Guard—at the state—

TS: Headquarters.

PG: At the North Carolina [Army—PG corrected later] National Guard State Headquarters. So I went in there, and I talked to the colonel who was in charge of it, and said, you know "I'm here, I can do whatever you need me to do."

TS: Right.

PG: So he put me to work, and I had several days on active duty and then federal technician funding became available, so I was a federal employee. And that went on until about September, and what I did in that time frame was—by the time I got in there, Desert

Storm had come and gone, and so I did a lot of work for photographing and recording some of the homecomings for the soldiers. And—

TS: As they were coming back from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and stuff?

PG: As they were coming back. And in June of '91, June 29th, they did—the state did a massive welcome home ceremony for all the guys. And I had to—I was there taking pictures and—I don't think I—yeah, I was just there from the public affairs office, taking pictures. And I'll never forget, I met Governor Martin at the time. "Hi, Governor!" All this other stuff. But Charlie Gaddy, who is the icon of anchor here in North Carolina—at least in Raleigh, I got to meet Charlie Gaddy. He was the news anchor for WRAL Channel 5. And I got to meet him, and I was more tickled at meeting him than I was at meeting the governor. I mean, eh, that's just the governer, but Charlie Gaddy? Oh my God, you know. He was—you know, I grew up with that man, you know, he was on my TV every night.

TS: How was he?

PG: Um, he was fatter than what I'd thought he would be. [laughter] But he was in—somewhere in the public affairs archives, there are pictures of me with Charlie Gaddy. And the governor. And I never got them. So, the state photographer at the time, he and I were good pals, and he did weddings on the side, so I would go and help him work the weddings and you know. In fact, those pictures of the one in my uniforms and stuff on there?

TS: Right.

PG: The portrait types? He did all those. He did all those. And he had the thing to do the military balls, he had that contract.

TS: You do have some nice pictures in that little packet.

PG: So—

TS: Well, can I ask you a couple of questions?

PG: Sure.

TS: What do you think about—because in this time, we haven't talked about—like, were you politically-minded at all, I mean—so you're a political science major.

PG: Yes, I was, I was a political science major, but—

TS: But, I mean, had you—you know, the idea of the Gulf War and all that, did you have any thoughts about that?

PG: Well. This doesn't sound macho very much, but I was scared. Because I didn't know—

And I remember having a conversation with one of the master sergeants, and he was a Vietnam vet, and I said, you know "Joe," his name was Joe, I said "Joe, what do I—how am I going to—"

He said "Well, you'll just go, and you'll do your job. If they send you, you'll just go and do your job, and be done with it." So it was like, okay. And after that, I kind of—well.

TS: Yeah, because prior to the Gulf War, there wasn't a lot of conflict, so we were involved in—if you went into the Guard or any military service.

PG: Yeah, and especially the Guard at that time, in the early '90s—the Guard didn't go anywhere, and the Guard had that reputation as the "Nasty Guard", that we were all a bunch of, you know, country bumpkins and hillbillies who get together in the armory, we're just drinking our moonshine, you know. And that was one of the stereotypes that was very, very hard to deal with in having any type of working relationship with the active components. It was a prejudice of that, that if you said "Oh, well, I'm in the National Guard," it was like—and even to this day, if I tell people I was in the Army National Guard, they're like—you know. You get that "Well, you weren't a real soldier." And in fact, I had that in one of the places that I worked at, and it was like "No, I put the uniform on, I did my job, I went to work, I did what was asked of me. Just like you did. The only difference was the pot of money we were paid out of, that's the only difference. You were Title 10, I was Title 32. That's it." You know.

TS: Well, now—so what did you do, then, after the service, and where were you at? This was at Raleigh, right, with the state?

PG: Yes.

TS: And how long were you—how long were you there?

PG: My last—let's see, my technician time ended in September of '91, and October 1st, I went to work for the inspector general, they had active duty special order funding. And I went to work for the inspector general. And I didn't stay with him very long, until Sergeant Major Taylor—until I found out that he was part of JTF105—Joint Task Force 105, which was—we were called *Fuertes Caminos,* which means "strong road". And we were going to Honduras as part of a nation building project, to make the U.S. look good in these third world countries. And he and I got to talking, found out we were related by marriage, and I went to work for him as his deputy funds control officer.

And everybody would pick on him, say "You know, you're the only sergeant major who has his own personal second lieutenant." [laughs] Didn't matter that technically I outranked him, you know, he had been a sergeant major, at that time he had been a sergeant major for forty-four years, so, you know, you just kind of—I had no problems working for him.

TS: Yeah.

PG: I like to tell everybody "No, I had my own personal sergeant major." [laughs]

TS: That's right, that's right.

PG: I had my own personal sergeant major.

TS: Well, how was it at the Honduras? You showed me some pictures, those were real interesting. What was that—what was it like for you, now had you been, had you traveled around the country at all up to—the United States or outside the United States?

PG: No. Honduras was my first trip out of the United States. And it was hot. [laughs] It was hot.

TS: Gets kind of hot here in North Carolina sometimes.

PG: It was a hundred and thirty degrees in the shade.

TS: Yeah, that's hot.

PG: And I'll never forget—you know, my duty day started about five thirty every morning, and every—it'd be blazing hot, it'd hit a hundred and thirty degrees during the day. And at night, it would drop down to about eighty degrees, and it would rain. And you would see these—when I got up at five thirty in the morning, there'd be these huge puddles of rain. At five thirty in the morning. By eight o' clock that morning, the puddles were just, you know, about the size of a Frisbee.

TS: Evaporated?

PG: It was—those of us who were full-time duration staff, we became a family. You know, it was—we fought like cats and dogs, amongst ourselves, you know, we had our pissing contests, but don't let a stranger try to mess with us. Don't let a stranger try to mess with us, because he would lose. And that was where I learned about men in a thirty-six inch zipper, known as a flight suit. How you could take a fat, ugly man, put him in a flight suit, and he's the sexiest thing alive. [laughs] And I learned how to make them my friends, and it also came in handy when they—you know, at the time, I was a second lieutenant, but I was the only qualified military police officer on the base camp when they had to relieve the current provost marshal. And most of the time, a senior officer captain or major is usually the provost marshal. So here I was, a second lieutenant, you know, stepping into those shoes.

TS: What kind of role did you have to play for that, as a provost marshal?

PG: I went from being a—hanging in the background, looking around, seeing what was going on and learning the lay of the land, to "You are now in charge of the land. You need to know everything." And it was a—it was an eye-opening experience, and then—that's when it really—you know, going through the OBC[Officer Basic Course] school, there was always "You are not above the law. You may be the law, but you're not above it." And I really got that drilled in my head, and I was very lucky in the fact that my MPs, they rotated in from all across the nation. We even had soldiers from Puerto Rico come in, and they were my force. I had over a hundred and thirty, as I thought, multi-national peacekeeping soldiers that I was in charge of, and the units were predominantly from Alabama. And they were Desert Storm people. So they knew how to handle these type of operations.

And I learned very quickly, there was a lot of things that you just say "Well, I'd kind of like to have this, because it'll make things easier," and it would appear. It was acquired. Nothing is ever stolen, it's just acquired. And I—

TS: What kind of things did you need?

PG: We needed places to store our weapons, our ammunition, because when I walked in—whenever I took over the provost marshal, the place was a pigsty. It was a pigsty, there were no records, there was nothing to—you know, it was—to me, it just struck me that it was the guy's—my predecessor's storage facility, to store all this junk in it. There was nothing there, we had no proper operations desk, nothing—you know. Because we were running twenty-four/seven operations, and you couldn't tell it when you walked in there. So.

TS: It was—you said it was a strong road? I forget the—what was the Spanish word? You've got the—

PG: *Fuertes caminos*.

TS: Okay. And so what was the mission? You said nation building, what was it that you were supposed to do for the Hondurans?

PG: We were building the last section of the San Lorenzo Yoro-Abaja Road. It was about eight klicks [kilometers] that we were finishing up, and it was a farm-to-market road. The ideal was, we were building a road that they could take their crops to and from the market, from their field to market.

TS: And why was it that—you know, the National Guard is out there building the road? For the Hondurans, for their commercial market?

PG: It was a "nation-builder", it was—in a round-about way, it was a way to make the United States look good in a third-world country.

TS: So it's a joint task force within our military, but is it a—

PG: With the Hondurans, we were there—they were there too, they were our perimeter defense, and they also had the Honduran engineers who were helping us build the road as well. And we also had the active components helping us, too. And what was really interesting to see about that is, you know, going back to that stereotype that "Oh, you're just the nasty Guard."

Well, it's like, "No, no." Because you'd get these guys that would come up and, you know, they've got the beer belly and they're not exactly high and tight and groomed and everything, but you put them on that bulldozer, and they work all day long, because that's what they do in their civilian job. You know, they know how to handle it, and they would take these young guys from the active duty, and say "C'mere, let me show you how you do this." And the old taught the young how to do it, and because of that, those guys got faster. Those—

TS: The younger guys.

PG: Younger guys got better, and they got more of an experience that you only get from working with a senior person on it. What was really so interesting, I had gone in—our higher headquarters was Soto Cano Air Force Base. And so I was there talking to their provost marshal, and saying, you know, "Hey, sir, I'm new, this is the first time I've done anything, and like this, and I need help, can you help me." And he did, he sent me—I think it was him who sent me a—excuse me—a female MP desk clerk. What was her name. But anyhow, she came down there, and she revamped the filing system, and did it as it was supposed to be done, so if there was ever a court case, we would legally be—

TS: Covered?

PG: Covered, like we were supposed to be.

TS: Well, how was it like, then—did you have a lot of women that were there, besides this?

PG: There was—for duration, there was me and three other officers, female officers. I remember there being two enlisted, junior enlisted. And I don't know about the medical side. I know we had a female doctor as our top doctor. But I don't really, you know—

TS: So what were your accommodations like, then, for?

PG: We lived in a huge tent that—

TS: When you say "we", who's "we"?

PG: Me and the three other lieutenants.

TS: Okay.

PG: We all lived in a tent that we—we'd set our wool blankets and some five-fifty cord, and we strung them, these blankets up, to give us privacy. And we took the wall lockers that we had, and we sort of made a little walkway and sectioned it off, so we could have some privacy, and we tied the wool blankets to give us like a little divider.

TS: Right.

PG: And the air force—the air force lieutenant, she and I got to be buddies, and she had, at that time, a VCR/TV combo, so she was cool. I mean, we'd all go and—at the end of the day, we were all sitting in her tent—or sitting on her side of the tent watching movies, you know. And at night was when—during the day it was ungodly. You did not want to be sitting still, because it was just awful.

TS: The temperature?

PG: Hot. So I feel for those guys out in Saudi and Iraq and Afghanistan, and plus—see, we didn't have to carry the equipment that they're carrying, you know. All I carried was my .45. But these guys are having a full pack and they've got the body armor and all this other stuff on them. I mean, I just—my hat's off to them. But the—you know, we'd [unclear] out there, because it was a non—the threat level was very low for us.

TS: Now, you had told me earlier, I think—off-tape, that they were all air-conditioned tents?

PG: Our offices were air-conditioned.

TS: Your offices, not your living quarters?

PG: Not our living quarters.

TS: Okay.

PG: But by the time we got in at night it was eighty degrees, which—you know, that's a fifty degree temperature drop. So I was very glad to have my wool blanket.

TS: And how did you like working with the Hondurans, how were they?

PG: They were—we were told that for the local Hondurans, that—the young men, especially, you know, if you were fourteen or fifteen, they didn't care, they would snatch you off the streets and put you in the military and you went to work. And if you didn't do whatever they expected you to do, they had these pits that they dug in with a tin roof on top of it, and they'd throw you in the pit. So you've got that heat coming in—and you know, these guys, they would—they were all young boys, you know, and you could just tell they were scared to death. They were teenagers, you know, here they are, teenagers, they're given a gun and a shovel. And I'll never forget—

TS: And they're the ones guarding the perimeter, you said?

PG: We had some guarding the perimeter, and then some would go out and help us work on the road.

TS: I see.

PG: But I'll never forget, we went—our airhead [area of hostile or enemy-controlled territory secured by paratroops or air-assault forces], where the soldiers were deployed out of, in and out of. It was a little—hour, two hour ride from where we were to there, and I went and did a site visit. And as we were riding through, there's this sign—and at the time, I was blonde. Blonde-haired, blue-eyed. So many pounds ago. But there was this billboard with a blonde-haired, blue-eyed woman, selling condoms. So it all of a sudden clicked for me why all the Honduran men were looking at me the way they were, like "What, she's going to give us condoms?" I mean, "What is she here for?" And that was—that was funny. And then to go out and—I rode along the road and everything and got to see what that was like. And there was a little—little area off the river that the local Hondurans had set up a little, like a fire pit, and they would cook chickens—you know, you may see him one day and he was gone the next, and actually he wasn't gone, he was on your plate, and you were eating him.

And the landowner that we rented the land from, his granddaughter was deaf. And she was beautiful, these beautiful soft brown eyes, just a little doll. And I remember thinking, you know, if I had had a way, I would have adopted her and taken her back with me stateside. And—but, had she been born to anybody other than a landowner, she would have been abandoned. They would have—because she couldn't speak, she couldn't hear, so she wasn't productive—she was not able to be productive. But because her grandfather had all this land, she was considered a catch. And she was dressed—every time I saw her, she was always dressed in a little white lace dress with white little bobby socks and black patent shoes. And she was just a little doll, she was a little china doll. And I just remember feeling so sad that, had she not had any money—

TS: Right.

PG: She wouldn't be living the life she was living. And the other thing they—the Honduran government would come in and nationalize your land if you didn't pay them off. And so there were people—you know, we'd hear, away from us, there'd be firefights, you know, the guys would—the Hondurans would go at each other. And they would assassinate people. They wanted your land, they'd assassinate you and take it.

TS: And what years were you there?

PG: Ninety-two.

TS: Ninety-two. How long were you there?

PG: Six months.

TS: Six months?

PG: Six months. That was kind of a mild threat, but, you know—because we didn't know. And then, let a religious holiday come, and they would all get drunk, and all go riding.

TS: Riding?

PG: Riding in—they had these pick-up trucks, that they would haul ass down—wherever. And I'm sitting there like "I don't want to know this." I could just see a massive wreck. But it never happened with those folks, they were always, you know, on the spot. [laughs]

TS: Well, how did they treat you? Since you're, like, in charge of all these young men, right?

PG: In some ways, I was fortunate. I had my full-time sergeant, was Puerto Rican, so he could talk with them. You know, they could do the machismo thing, you know, and I'd let him handle the Puerto Ricans and the Hondurans, because I certainly couldn't speak the language. And I depended upon him to, you know, be straight up with me. Of course, he ended up having a breakdown. He had a nervous breakdown.

TS: What happened?

PG: Best I remember, his wife back in the United States was having an affair, and decided to divorce him, but he didn't find out about it—I can't remember if he got a "Dear John" letter, or something. I can't remember how it all went, but he flipped. And I had gone on vaca—I had gone on R&R, you know. And I get back—

TS: Where—go ahead.

PG: I get back and the S1 comes in there and says "Uh, here's your sergeant's weapon."

TS: So it happened while you were gone?

PG: "This has happened, you know, [unclear] had a nervous breakdown, and we took his weapon, because he was suicidal." So he gets back to Bragg and he does all the stuff. So I'm sitting here, and I'm going "Great. I barely know what I'm doing, and I have to figure out for him, too?" So, but like I said, fortunately the Alabama guys that I had, they stepped up. They stepped up and they started running things and doing things, and I just was like "Okay, cool. No problem. Y'all teach me." And they did, they did. I could tell the Honduran men did not know what to think about me, you know, because I was—you know, here I am doing all this stuff and I have all these guys, telling them to do and what all—you could just see, there were—"Is she going to give us condoms or what?" [laughs] You know, they didn't know what to think.

TS: So you're like twenty-five?

PG: I was twenty-four.

TS: Twenty-four? Had a lot of responsibility at that age.

PG: Yeah. And it was—it was a double-edged sword, because I had somebody tell me, he said "You've just got a major ticket punched for you, because if this blows up, it's okay, you're a second lieutenant, you're inexperienced, you know. You're just—you were young and in—you know. But if this works, you're an extraordinary future officer with a huge amount of promise." And it worked, and so when I came back and started going into a—reverting back to a regular National Guard weekend warrior duty role, it was very hard for me, because the commander that I had when I first came back didn't understand—or—he kept—what it was was, his attitude was "Well, I was in Saudi, where were you? I've been in combat, where were you?" You know. He thought I was just pushing paper, you know, and he didn't—he never—he didn't get to know who I was and what I was about, and so there were decisions that I had to make. I bucked the good ol' boy system. I wouldn't sign paperwork because it was wrong and it was a lie and I was not going to sign my name to a lie.

TS: Like what kind of stuff are you talking about?

PG: They had a—one of the junior enlisted had been transferred into my unit. I was the detachment commander, we were in Asheville, and the company headquarters was in Clyde [North Carolina.] The guy, this guy had just joined up again, and they wanted him to be promoted to an E-5. And I was "No, that's not our SOP [standard operating procedure?], because before you get promotion, you need to be in the unit at least a year." And he'd only been in the unit like three months. And I had watched his performance, and I wasn't very impressed with him. Then I learned that the soldier worked for the company commander's father. And he was a rising star with this guy. Well, this soldier was also on the fat boy program [derogatory term for an army weight loss program] and he managed to lose two inches in his neck, gain an inch in his chest, and lose two inches in his waist in thirty days. I went over and I talked—we were co-located with a medical unit and I went over and talked to the doc and I said "Is this possible?"

And he said [speaks slowly] "It's possible, but it's not probable." And I refused to sign the paper.

TS: What do you think that—

PG: They had false—you could—

TS: Oh, that's the falsification, okay.

PG: You can wiggle the tape to make it read what you want it to read.

TS: I see, I see.

PG: And they were doing that because they wanted to get him—

TS: To pass.

PG: To pass—and I wouldn't do it. I would not do it. And the—they wanted me to be responsible for all the equipment at the detachment, but yet they would never give me the responsibility for it. You know, it was like "You're responsible, you need to sign for it."

TS: But not authority to—

PG: But not authority for it. And it was wrong, the list was wrong. And I tried working really, really hard with the full-time folks to get it squared away, and they would miss meetings, they would never call me, and—mind you, I'm in Raleigh, and this is in Asheville. So it's not like I can go up street, you know. It's four and a half hours from me. So after I finally got fed up with it and went to the IG[inspector general] and—I knew my career was over then. Because once you squeal, you're done.

TS: When was that?

PG: That was March of '94.

TS: Ninety-four?

PG: So I knew that was it for me. And I'll never forget, we were on annual training at Fort Bragg, and I got so mad, because—you know, there's one thing is—yeah, big whoop, you're a captain, and all this other stuff. But you know, treating you with human dignity. You know, courtesy. You know I want to speak to you, and he that and he knew that I wanted to talk to him, but there was something else going on. And all he had to do was say "Pat, give me a couple hours and I will get back with you." That's all he had to do. And he looked at me and he walked away. He walked away from me. Then he threatened my life. So, yeah. I'm trying to keep the really nasty, ugly stuff out.

TS: Well, you know, we've been talking for a while, let me pause for a minute here. [recording paused] Okay, this is Therese Strohmer, I'm back with Pat Gregory, we're just continuing our conversation in this lovely Panera Bread. Now, so you were—last we were talking about, you were in the Asheville detachment and you had had some unpleasant experiences and you went to the IG.

PG: Yes.

TS: And so what happened after that? I know you don't want to get all into the nitty-gritty of that, but what kind of happened after that?

PG: Well, I had to go back to Fort Bragg, and we did a lot of witness statements about the events that had happened. And fortunately, we were almost at the end of annual training, so it was kind of—I could kind of keep to myself and stay out of the way.

And—but that night, when I came back from Fort Bragg, I was going somewhere, and one of the enlisted guys—he was a Spec 4, he stopped me, and he was almost in tears, and he said "Ma'am, please don't leave us. You're the only one that's ever cared about us. Please don't go."

And I said "I'm so sorry, but Mama needs a divorce. I've got to." Because my health at that time was deteriorating very quickly, and I couldn't continue doing it. And so, through a course of events, I managed to transfer into another unit, and—

TS: This is the one at Rocky—

PG: I went to transfer to the unit in Rocky Mount.

TS: Rocky Mount.

PG: Where I was the public affairs officer, and during this time, I had met the man that was going to be my husband, so I went into the inactive Guard in April of '95, which was the year that I got married, the month that I got married. And kind of—[pause] I was very, very wounded by having to give up my commission. There was things that—it was done in a way that I knew it was over for me. They never came out and said it, but if you read between the lines, you could see that it was over, and that I was a hot potato and nobody was going to take me back. And so, it worked out—I went inactive and a year later I resigned my commission. And I had gotten married and went back to school and—for network administration, with computers, and—

TS: That's what you used the GI Bill, for that?

PG: And used the GI Bill for that.

TS: And—so, but you said, you were also medically retired? Was that during this period?

PG: No, I had—

TS: That's later, you had to go through?

PG: That's much later. I had to—in '96, they started doing the story about the Aberdeen proving grounds, where a lot of the recruits were being raped and traumatized. And that brought up a lot of stuff for me, and I actually—what had happened was, at that time frame, I had also lost my GI Bill. They said because I was no longer in the unit—

TS: Oh, because you were attached to the National Guard, I see.

PG: I could no longer have my GI Bill, so I wrote to Jesse Helms and said "What in the world is going on here? Help me." And I told him my whole experience. I wrote it all down, wrote everything down, and my paperwork and everything. And I was referred to the Raleigh vet center. And from there, I filed my claim with the VA. So I went from there.

TS: So, went through that process.

PG: Went through that process, and—

TS: How long did that take, to get it through?

PG: The first time, it took three years.

TS: First time?

PG: The first time, I filed in [PG corrected later] of '97.

TS: Yeah.

PG: Was denied.

TS: I see.

PG: And was awarded thirty percent compensation in June of 1999. So.

TS: Two years.

PG: Two years, I'm sorry, two years.

TS: That's okay.

PG: Because I remember I got the award letter and I was on maternity leave with my daughter. [laughs] So I'm running down the hill screaming like a madwoman, you know.

TS: Well, when you look back at your time, I mean, obviously you're very proud of what you did in the National Guard, in the army.

PG: Yeah, I have my moments with it, where I'm proud of it. I have my moments. But I also have a lot of moments where I'm very conflicted. It's—it's still a mixed bag of emotions to carry, because there're things that, you know, no other people get to do, you know. And I've seen things and done things that very few people understand, unless you've been in it.

And it's very interesting to me, I was telling—my best friend's daughter was thinking about joining up, and I told her point blank, I said "You will not have any female friends while you're in. If you do, you are very, very lucky." Because I only had

one, that I've kept up with, and she's kept up with me. Now, she's a lieutenant colonel. But I said "After you get out, you'll find the women—you'll find that support network that you had been missing while you were in, you will find it once you get out." Because it seems like, okay, now that we're out, there's no competition, you know. Women come together and help other women, once you leave. But while you're in, it's a "This is my territory, these are my men, this is my turf, you're not getting into it." You know.

TS: Do you think there might be a difference, it's that—we talk about having a critical mass of women in certain areas. So if there's few numbers, that competition might be much—the way, you know, the way you're describing it. But when you have a larger group, you know, and maybe that—like that critical mass, where you get to a tipping point where—that women are then allowed—or create these camaraderie groups. Do you think maybe it just depends on not so much just because you're a woman, but there's more complexity to those circumstances?

PG: I think there is now, because the ongoing conflict with Iraq and Afghanistan, and I don't know the exact number of those women who are over there, but I know it's a much larger percentage than—well, number one, what we had when I was in, it's a much larger percentage now.

TS: Right.

PG: And some of it, I think is—I didn't know the history as well as I've gotten to know it. I didn't know that—about the Women's Army Corps, about the WACs and the WAFs and the WAVES. And I didn't know that, you know—not like I know about it now, and not knowing that, you know, you figure the army allowed women in, instead of being the WACs in the army, it became an "Army of One" in—'79? '78, '79? [The WAC was discontinued in 1978.] And from what I understand, it wasn't until like '80, '81 when you started seeing women being trained with the men. And so, I didn't understand that, and that, you know, that is—you know, every woman who is in the service now, we're making history. Particularly those women in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those women doing those jobs that they're doing. Even though they say that, you know, the women are not in a combat zone, well, there really is no rear area operations anymore. There is no defined combat zone, because it's fluid, you know. You get a lot of women coming back with IEDs, you know, they're out on the supply routes, they're protecting soldiers, and you know, you've got your pilots, your MPs, and everybody else. And so it's no longer "Here's the rear area, this is the fighting zone, and that's the enemy area." It's not like that. And so I think the—I think it's changing. I think it's changing. In fact, I saw something where Congress is doing yet another focus group on women in combat. You know, it's like "You've been looking at this—" because even—there were women in combat in Panama, and Grenada, I believe. There were MPs in there, you know.

TS: Linda Bray was the MP that led that unit.

PG: Yeah. So you know, it's—you just—when you get that history, when you put that history together and you lay it out for somebody, you go "Oh, this is a trailblazing piece that I'm doing." And if I had understood that, then, I think I would have approached things differently.

TS: Really? How do you think you might have approached it?

PG: I think I would have been more [pause] more serious about what I was doing. More intentional about what I was doing. Along the way, it stopped being a hunting ground for the MRS degree, the MRS badge, and it became my career, it became something I enjoyed doing, and I wish I had had that intention soon—earlier on. Because it would—I would have played things a lot differently. I wouldn't have, you know—when sergeant major and I got through running two miles, I would have pushed myself to run another mile, you know.

TS: Are you saying that—I just want to understand you. Are you saying that you would have tried to like, hmm, I'm not really sure of the right word. The idea of being a trailblazer, would you have set higher standards for yourself, then, is that what you mean?

PG: Yes, yes, yes.

TS: Okay.

PG: Yes. I would have pushed harder and done it a little differently. And it wasn't until much later in my career where I realized the expectations, and you know, one of the things that—one of the proudest moments I had was, one of my junior enlisted told me, he said "When I saw you walk in that drill hall floor, I thought to myself 'Oh god, here comes a stone cold bitch.'"

And I said "Thank you. I've done my job. I've done my job, I've worked really, really hard to present that image." I would rather they say that, but I also work to be fair. And where my guys knew that, if I lead you to the very gates of hell, I will make damn sure we all come home. And that was what I wanted, and I think I was working to that, and that was one of the hard things about walking away, was not knowing if—you know. Because I really felt like I had the men—the men's support and respect. You know, that they learned—because I fell on my sword for them, several times, and—

TS: So do you think you got treatment different from your subordinates than you got from maybe your peers and superiors?

PG: Yes.

TS: So, your subordinates, you think, had a great deal of respect for you?

PG: Yes, I think so. They—and the other thing, too, my subordinates were in my age range. And so they, too, had gotten used to seeing women—you know, they were also prior

service. They had been in the army and they just, you know. So they had gotten used to seeing women doing stuff, you know. It was—and I also, as some of the senior level NCOs, I had their respect too. Because I'll never forget, I had my platoon sergeant, some—I'd gotten chewed out for something.

And he told me later, he said "We've never had a lieutenant who fell on her sword for us." And that was—you know, that was just this—I could feel the shift in the atmosphere about that. And you know, it was one of those things that was—I did my best to take care of my guys. And I think the officers had lost sight of that.

You know, I had one of my instructors at OBC say "Yeah, once you become a major, they do a lobotomy, and you know, you spend the rest of your time trying to put the brain back in." And I really think that a lot of those officers there had had a lobotomy, and had gotten so used to things being this way, and the females who come through there, you know, they were a certain way.

And then I come in, and I'm like "No, we're not playing that, I don't do that."

TS: So you rubbed against that old boy network and got a big shove back from it.

PG: Yes, I did. I did.

TS: Well, what would you say the experience—what was the best part of your experience in the National Guard?

PG: [pause] When it works, it is an amazing experience. When you know you're in the right place at the right time, and everything works, it'll knock your socks off, you know. But when it doesn't work, when you don't get the respect that you expect those people to give a dog, you know, you don't even get that, and you're treated less than, it is a living hell. It's a living hell to go through and be in that environment with. And there are people that I will never, ever forget, that I've been blessed to have in my life. I've seen things that I would never have gotten to see. You know, I've seen the Leaning Tower of Pisa at twilight.

TS: That's right, we didn't talk about when you were in Italy.

PG: Yeah. Italy was amazing.

TS: Well, talk about that a little bit. What was that like?

PG: My first day there—

TS: This is after Honduras, right?

PG: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PG: Yes, this was in ’93.

TS: Okay.

PG: I went in there, and we got settled at Camp Darby, that’s where we were staying. And I can’t remember how it ended up, but we ended up going to Pisa and seeing the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and what a lot of people don’t realize is, you know, you have the tower, but to the left of it is a baptistery with this stained glass that is amazing. And then, at twilight when we saw it, you’ve got the moon reflecting and the stars twinkling and I was so mad—I had all these pictures, okay? On the camera roll. Took the camera roll out, put it in my helmet bag. Came back on a KC-135. Got home, opened the bag. No camera roll.

TS: Uh-oh.

PG: So some crew chief has got my pictures.

TS: Oh, no.

PG: And he’s probably going—

TS: But you have the memory.

PG: Yes, I have the memory.

TS: No one can take that from you.

PG: And we—it was actually a cake[sic] duty.

TS: Was it? Now, what—how was it that you ended up in this duty?

PG: The unit I was in was—we got picked to go to Italy. And—

TS: I know it wasn’t nation-building like Honduras.

PG: No, it was just part of our annual training.

TS: I see. Was it part of like [Exercise] REFORGER or anything, that they do for return of forces to—Oh, but that’s Germany. But, to Europe?
[Exercise REFORGER (REturn of FORces to GERmany) was a recurring exercise to practice reinforcing American units in Germany. The last one occurred in 1993, but very few U.S.-based troops were actually involved, and all of the exercises only pertained to Germany.]

PG: I don't know. What I do know is Jerry was doing some work over there, Jerry was my colonel that I had in Honduras. He was doing some work, and they needed a group of MPs to come in. And, well, we got to go. [laughs]

TS: And how long were you there?

PG: We were just there for two weeks.

TS: Yeah. Did you do a lot of work or did you do a lot of play or both?

PG: I did a little bit of both, and then I got sick.

TS: Oh, no.

PG: Don't ever eat a sandwich—an open-faced sandwich that has sat out since six a.m. with mayonnaise.

TS: Good tip.

PG: [breathes] I used the bathroom from Rome to Pisa. [chuckling] I went across the boot.

TS: What was it like in Europe, though? You just—you had made a wonderful description, you know, of part of it. But did it seem different than the United States?

PG: It was—at the time we were there, and mind you, we were there in '93, so a lot of the—there was a drawdown of forces. And Darby was where, if I understand and remember right, Darby was where a lot of the Desert Storm equipment went back to. Now, in Honduras we were told whatever equipment we brought over there, it stayed there. Like the tents and those type things. And the linens and all—they were burnt, because you could not bring them back into the United States, because of the FDA, with whatever parasites and all this other stuff. So I don't know if the equipment we had, I'm assuming was stored at Soto Cano and kind of rotated in and out, but Darby, where we were at and I'd go out and check on my guys, as far as the eye could see, there were tanks and Humvees and deuce-and-a-halfs [probably M35 2.5 ton cargo trucks] and 105s, as far as the eye could see. So it was a collecting area, at that time, for the equipment. And Darby is centrally located—[pause] Not Somalia, uh—

TS: You're talking about in Italy, or in Europe?

PG: In Europe. Bosnia.

TS: Oh, Bosnia, yes.

PG: If I remember right, Darby's not that far from Bosnia, and so we were at a jump-off point.

TS: I see. So they had all the equipment ready to go there.

PG: If need be.

TS: Right.

PG: Because at the time, tensions were kicking up, and, you know. If they needed us to go, we could've—we could've been there [unclear]. But we got to play, and I got to go through Rome in a horse and buggy at twilight. That was amazing.

TS: Now, you're—oh, you hadn't met your husband yet, though.

PG: No.

TS: Okay.

PG: No. I—and then we went to the Vatican. And if Leonardo [sic, Michelangelo] came home and said "Baby, rub my neck," I hope he got his neck rubbed. [laughs] Because you look up and the ceilings are just amazing. And to see, you know, the world—all the little cherubs, the big deal, and then the actual Adam and God almost touching—

TS: The hands.

PG: The hands, to see that, the original of that, is just—it'll blow your mind.

TS: Yeah. I've never seen that, I would love to.

PG: I want to go back. I want to go back, and—do it right, you know.

TS: So these are the kinds of opportunities you're talking about, that you had, that you wouldn't have had otherwise.

PG: Yeah. I mean, I would never have gotten anything if I hadn't have done that.

TS: Well, do you think of yourself as a trailblazer?

PG: No.

TS: No?

PG: No.

TS: You don't? Not even in what you did in Honduras, in that position, as such a young—you know, really inexperienced, at that point, for what you—all that you got to accomplish.

PG: No, not really. It was just something that I did.

TS: Something you did.

PG: You know. I also know that in the after-action review, that we do, of course, after every exercise, we do an after-action review. I think someone told me—I'm not mentioned by name, but when they were talking about the military police and the whole operations center, I'm the only second lieutenant—they said "The second lieutenant who assumed control of the provost marshal did an admirable job."

TS: It's too bad they didn't put your name in there!

PG: I know! [laughs] But I think somebody said they'd never done that before.

TS: Excellent.

PG: Because the active army was there rating us and writing the review. And, you know, so. I'm just very pleased that—so it's like, that's pretty cool.

TS: Well, what would you like people who aren't familiar with the military, National Guard, the army—what would you like them to know, what would you like to, you know, say to them about your experience?

PG: When it works, it's the best thing since sliced bread. When it doesn't work, it is the godawfulest thing you've ever been through.

TS: Yeah. And then what'd—and the one young girl that you talked to, did she join the service, or?

PG: No, she's—she's—can't make up her mind what she wants to do. The last time she and I talked, she was going to go through ROTC. But she was also going to work part-time as a daycare provider and go to school and do ROTC, and I think she was going to throw in drag queen and racecar—you know, she's twenty-four, she changes her mind like the wind, you know. We all do at twenty-four, you know, so.

TS: Well, you have an eleven-year-old hockey-playing girl.

PG: Yes.

TS: What if she wanted to join the military, what would you say to her?

PG: No.

TS: You would simply just say no.

PG: And she and I have talked about it, and I've told her, I've said "No, baby, I've served your time."

TS: Yeah.

PG: "I've done your time for you, you're not doing it." I've told my nephew the same thing.

TS: Yeah.

PG: "I've done your time, you're not doing it." Nope, nope. Yeah. It's—when—I love the fact that she is—that my daughter is very spirited, and she's very bright. But so was I, and that makes you an easy mark. That makes you an easy mark for the predators that are out there. So. Because you are spirited, and you are bold, and you are daring. You think you're invincible. And—you become a target. So that's the hard part, for me.

TS: And that's what you don't want for your daughter.

PG: No.

TS: Right.

PG: Because I don't want her to have her spirit crushed.

TS: Right.

PG: Because she's going to do amazing things, even if they are—even if she just raises babies, she's going to be amazing, you know. And not to put that down at all, but—

TS: No, absolutely not.

PG: But if that's what she chooses to do, she's going to be amazing at it. The last time she and I talked, it was—she was going to be a local politician, veterinarian, goalie.

TS: Hey.

PG: So. [laughs]

TS: I like her. Emma, right?

PG: Yes.

TS: All right, Emma. Rock and roll. Well, is there any—go ahead.

PG: She changed from—

TS: Sure.

PG: She was going to be an autistic teacher, to autistic children, be the veterinarian, and a goalie at night.

TS: Okay, well.

PG: So she—[laughs]

TS: If she can do it, I'll come watch her! Well, is there anything that you wanted to talk about that I haven't asked you or that you'd like to add?

PG: [pause] No, I can't think of anything that we didn't touch on.

TS: Covered it?

PG: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

TS: Okay. Well, Pat, thank you very much.

PG: Sure.

TS: It was a pleasure to talk with you today.

PG: Yeah. Thank you, Therese.

[End of Interview]