**WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT**

**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: Gail S. Horn

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: April 11, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer, today is April 11th, 2011, I'm in Jacksonville, North Carolina with Gail Horn. This is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and Gail, how would you like your name to read on the collection?

GH: I guess Master Gunnery Sergeant Gail Horn would be fine.

TS: Very good. [recording paused]

GH: Great, no problem.

TS: So that's what that is all about. Well, Gail, why don't you start out by telling me when and where you were born?

GH: Okay, I was born in New Ulm, Minnesota, sister city to Ulm, Germany, that was its big claim to fame. Very German community, didn't actually live there, because I grew up on a dairy farm in Minnesota. So my family was farmers and that type of thing.

TS: So you lived out in the country on a farm?

GH: Yes.

TS: How—what—how many siblings did you have?

GH: Four sisters and a brother, so there were six of us, six kids.

TS: Where do you fall in that hierarchy of kids?

GH: Does the oldest of the middle sound decent?

TS: The oldest of the middle?

GH: The oldest of the middle. I have two sisters that are older than me, one's ten years older, one's eight years older. And then there's a gap, and then there's me, my brother, my sister, we're all about two years apart.

TS: I see.

GH: And then I have another sister that's ten years younger than me. So it's like, almost three little groups.

TS: I see, that's interesting, so the oldest of the middle group, then.

GH: The oldest of the middle, that's why I refer to it that way. You know, because you really are kind of like the oldest child, but you're not.

TS: For your—of your little cohort group, right?

GH: Right.

TS: So what was it like growing up on a dairy farm?

GH: Well, you learned the value of honest labor at a very young age, you know. I guess that's about the way to say it, you know, because it was very much a family-oriented farm, you know. We learned to [walk?] beans, learned to bale hay, but then again we also had the ponies, so we got to go out there in the afternoon, hang out, and you know, ride the horses and things like that. So that was cool. I think it taught me a lot of intrinsent [sic, intrinsic] values.

TS: Like what?

GH: Well, like a work ethic. Responsibility at a very young age.

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

GH: Well, just, you know, helping milk the cows, helping—ensuring they got fed, ensuring the calves—if Mom and Dad were at the, out shopping, or running to town to get something fixed, you know, piece of equipment fixed or something, we got home from school, we'd sit down, [have a lunch?], you know, get off the bus at three thirty, if by four thirty they weren't home, we knew we needed to get up and get out in the barn and get things started. [chuckles] Not—

TS: Not wait, right?

GH: It wasn't going to wait, no.

TS: Milking can't wait either, right.

GH: No, the cows don't like that.

TS: So did you—did you do a lot outside, and also inside the house too, as—for your responsibilities, like for the chores that you had?

GH: To be honest with you, inside the house, probably not.

TS: No?

GH: Probably not. I mean, you help fold laundry here and there, help do some baking, cooking every once in a while, but predominantly, our responsibilities were mostly outside.

TS: Yeah. Did your mom work outside the house?

GH: Well—

TS: Besides at the farm, I mean.

GH: I was going to say, outside the house, not off the farm until she turned about fifty-five. And by that time they'd gotten rid of the cows and during the '70s, as was typical of many family farms, went through some really, really tough times, and so she started working outside the farm, yeah.

TS: So what was it like? Did you enjoy growing up on a farm?

GH: I guess I did. You know, was there jealousy of "Oh, wow, my friends that are in town, get to go walk down to the this and that,"—so, you know, sometimes there was—it wasn't that convenient to go to town, it was a big deal when you did go. But you know, it's just like anything else, that's what you know. You know, when you're—you're either going to be predisposed to be miserable or predisposed to be happy. And I'm not good at being miserable.

TS: I'm sure some of your friends were thinking "Oh, I wish I lived out on the farm, rather [than] in town," you know.

GH: Or else they said "Man, I can't believe you do all that."

TS: Oh, yeah. [chuckles]

GH: "I wouldn't." And I'm like, like there's any choice?

TS: Well, what kind of things did you do for fun?

GH: For fun?

TS: Yeah.

GH: Well, like I said, we used to go down to the pony pen, ride the horses—because you're on the farm, you know? There were some raspberry bushes I remember, we used to raid periodically, when they were in season. Lot of pretend around the farm, of course, every summer we had our 4-H calves that you worked with, and took to the fair, and getting the dresses ready for the dress review, things like that, projects. 4-H was a big part of my life growing up, though, as an organization. Because it was geared toward the rural families.

TS: Right. So you always had the fair to look forward to.

GH: Yes.

TS: Yeah, that's neat. And then what about school, how did you like school?

GH: Very good. Yeah, I was very academic.

TS: Yeah. Did you have a favorite subject or teacher, like maybe in elementary school, moving on up to high school?

GH: Probably more in high school, let's see. I always liked, like, things that would tax my brain a little bit more. I think, you know, physics taxed my brain a lot, but because of that I kind of enjoyed it. Because, you know, English was never one of my better subjects, I was more math, mechanically oriented.

TS: Math and science? Yeah. Did you like science, too?

GH: Oh, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

GH: You know, biology, chemistry, like I said, physics, which was just applied mathematics, but.

TS: Did you have a sense, like as a young girl, like what you thought you could do or what you wanted to be when you grew up? I mean, did you ever have "Oh, I wish I could be this or that"?

GH: Oh, yeah, but you know, I never saw it in the military at that stage.

TS: What would you have wanted to be?

GH: I thought I—I was like, if I could do anything, I would probably grow up to be veterinarian, because I enjoyed taking care of the animals and things like that.

TS: Yeah.

GH: And with that background, it was a natural. But it didn't happen that way.

TS: Well, in school, did you—since you were on the farm, you had a lot of responsibilities. Were you able to do other extracurricular activities, any sports or other things like that?

GH: Well, actually, women's sports were not that big when I was in high school. They started when I was about junior high school, getting involved in them, at our school. We were rural. I was in band, I was in choir, my junior and senior year I was also dance line. So, did do a lot, I guess pretty athletic type.

TS: How big of a high school did you go to?

GH: Graduating class was sixty-two. So not big, but not itsy-bitsy either.

TS: Right. But you pretty much probably knew everybody.

GH: Oh, yes, you did. And you knew way more about people than you really should have. [laughter]

TS: Maybe so, maybe so. So, what—did you have any favorite teachers?

GH: Gosh. Oh, there were so many of them, that—I liked most of my teachers, and I can't think of a couple of them that I really disliked. Good gosh, what was her name, Mrs. Muller? Miller? Was it Miller or Muller? I think Mueller, Miller. But she was about four-ten and the guys used to—she was the geography teacher. She should have retired many years before she did. And so in that, it was kind of comical, but the guys used to harass her, because she was like four-eight, and they were six-three, and they would go and stand on top of her and just look down at her. And I would be going, I can't believe they let this happen. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. So what did you do after high school then?

GH: Well, after high school—well, during high school, I met my husband—started dating, got serious the senior year, so that kind of changed a whole lot of plans. He went to boot camp, Marine Corps boot camp, on the day of my senior prom. Mm. Things I'll never forget.

TS: Good timing [mild sarcasm].

GH: But, actually no, I take that back. He was supposed to ship on the day of my senior prom, because he came home and he goes this is when I ship—I signed up for the Marine Corps, this is my ship date. I said "Wow, that's the date of my senior prom." So he wound up shipping early, like about two weeks early or something like that.

So I went to senior prom, prom with girlfriends and still had a good time. I almost didn't go, and it was like—"No, this is your senior prom," my mom said "You've got to go." And I'm glad I did. But after high school, then, went to Hutchison Area Vocational Technical Institute, getting a degree that I thought was going to be useful in a situation where I might have to move around a little bit, that type of thing. Engineering, secretarial. Applied the, you know, mechanical aptitude, or numeric aptitude that I had, with a little bit of drafting, and stuff like—and as well as all the clerical things. By the end of the year, I discovered that I really didn't like the clerical, but you know, I could do it. Got a job after that, working in a parts department. Which I loved, it was great, the inventory control clerk.

TS: Right.

GH: You know, it was cool. At a manufacturing firm in New Ulm. Worked there for about a year, got married, moved to North Carolina! Home of Camp Lejeune, was a military spouse. So I was a spouse for five years before I went active duty.

TS: How was that?

GH: It was good, you know, but you know, we were there a while, trying to find a job in Jacksonville, North Carolina, in the early '80s, or I guess late '70s.

TS: What year did you graduate from high school?

GH: I graduated in '76, I was a bicentennial graduate. [laughs]

TS: Oh, okay.

GH: Our little claim to fame!

TS: That's right, okay.

GH: So, got married in '78, moved to North Carolina.

TS: So yeah, we had the recession in those years, with the—

GH: Yeah, that's why I was talking about the farms in the '70s and early '80s, it was very rough. But let's see, let me see, let me see. Let's stop my train of thought here. Okay, moved down to North Carolina, was there for a few months, found out that finding jobs

down there as a dependent even with skill sets, you know. Just as bad as it does now, so I have a lot of empathy, because now I work at the employment office, and so—

TS: Oh, do you?

GH: So I have a lot of empathy for these poor people, because I was like, yeah, I vaguely remember, it was a long time ago, but I still know how awful it was. You know, the value of the working force here is not valued the way it should be. So anyhow. He got orders to Kansas City, to the Marine Corps finance center, because he was a disburser. So we packed everything up, moved to Kansas City. I got a decent job, I was working at a great company, enjoyed it, Black and Beech Consulting Engineers, I was a scheduling clerk, you know, once again that more numeric-type aptitude, being computer friendly came into play. And that was all well, fun and good, then I got a job—transferred from that down to their computer department, as a database liaison. So I was basically a go-between, between the programmers and the people who were using the program.

TS: So this is the early years of the PC, too, right?

GH: Not even really PC.

TS: Commodore 64 and—

GH: Well, little bit—pre- Vic 20 [the Vic 20 is an 8-bit home computer which was sold by Commodore Business Machines] and Commodore 64. Because the computer—we had a huge computer department, we also had a huge computer room. You know, the computer probably filled this entire, you know, suite.

TS: Right.

GH: You know, it was its own entity. It wasn't a little server stacked in the corner, it was the entire building—room. [laughing] But because of that, yeah, it had a lot more maintenance. And the programmers and things like that. Well, anyhow, I was there for like five years, at Black and Beech. Well, he's going to get orders pretty soon. And there was also this certain amount of—I was seeing where he was progressing, and I was just kind of stagnated. Why, because I didn't have a degree. You know, in the civilian world, even back then, that degree was also important. I was going to school off and on at night, it just seemed like—draining. So, I made the choice to enter the Marine Corps. [car alarm beeps]

TS: Because?

GH: Well, basically, because I was tired of every time he was going to transfer, I was going to start out at the bottom of the totem pole again.

TS: At a new job somewhere else?

GH: Yup, new job, new career, find a new niche. So I decided, he's going to stay in long enough, I might as well progress right along with him.

TS: What did he think about that?

GH: [pause] He was actually pretty good with it. He was actually pretty good with it. In fact he had even kind of sort of recommended it. You know, several years before when we were still dating "Well, you could do this, and we could go to—"

And I was like "No, no, no." Because at that point, I couldn't see myself as a military person, because I hadn't seen what the lifestyle was really like. You know?

TS: Right. Did you have anybody in your family that had been in the military?

GH: Apparently, I have an uncle that served in the navy in World War II, but I never met him.

TS: So, not your father—

GH: Always thought—no. Nope, oh, no, very—they flipped out when I said I was going to join. [chuckling]

TS: That was my next question, how did your family react? Do you mean your mother and your father?

GH: They flipped out. My mom—yeah. My mom was a little more, well, if that's what you really want to do, because I mean. She kind of understood that I was seeing—I was next to it all the time, it wasn't like it was unknown, you know, because they didn't really like me marrying a Marine to begin with. [laughs] So becoming one was a whole other animal, you know, whole other category. I don't think my dad really enjoyed it. He probably still doesn't. But, you know.

TS: [chuckles] Did he say anything to you about it?

GH: [pause, sighs] Not really. But you know, it was weird because once I moved away from home, I called home, I might say five words to Dad, just because he didn't talk a whole lot. Then you just talked to Mom on the phone, when I'd call home. Or we'd go home or whatever. You know, Mom was always the—Mom was the one that everybody appreciated and loved, and still. You know, Dad was just the hard one that held everything together and stuff. He was like, always supposed to be the tough guy, the typical stereotype.

TS: Well, there's the nurturer and the [unclear], backbone.

GH: Yes. The backbone, the disciplinarian, yeah.

TS: What about your siblings, what did they think? They have any—

GH: Honestly, I don't know, I think they were all in shock, and then they probably figured out "Oh, well, I guess she's there anyhow, she might as well. She was always pretty athletic." You know.

TS: Something like that, yeah. So what was it like, then? So you had been in the culture of the Marines, and the military.

GH: Yeah, you know, and I thought I knew a lot more about it than I did. [laughter]

TS: Okay, well, tell me what surprised you.

GH: Oh, it was—yeah, I knew I was going to have to do the physical fitness, things like that.

TS: And this is in '84, when you joined.

GH: Yes, '84. So it was '83 when I actually signed the delayed entry program. And so I started running, started, you know, doing push-ups and sit-ups and everything, getting in shape. And that was all great. January '84 came, I shipped—talk about culture shock. Somebody who's used to having a mortgage, paying bills on time, having a job, getting up, going to work, taking care of yourself, taking care of everybody else, everything else. Suddenly, you have no control, you know. You're being told when to get up, what to do, put on your left boot now, put on your right boot now, take off your left book, take off your right boot, put on your trousers, you know. Now put your left boot on, now put your right boot on, lace them up, [blouse?] them. You know, that type of thing. It was getting dressed by the numbers, doing everything by the numbers, and so it took a long time for me to really get into that swing. Just one day at a time.

TS: Did you ever think about "Oh, forget this,"?

GH: [pause] No, because I'd made the commitment.

TS: And you would have been probably one of the oldest ones in your—

GH: One of, I don't think I was the oldest.

TS: So you were like twenty—

GH: I was twenty-six when I went to boot camp, I was twenty-five when I signed up. I was older than a couple of my drill instructors.

TS: How was that, when you saw like the other young women that were there? I mean, did you get that motherly instinct or, you know?

GH: Mm, I think, I don't know, because I was kind of scrambling, see. I got really airsick going down there. I had flown many times before, and since, never gotten airsick before, but boy, I got sick that time. I couldn't keep crap down.

TS: Really.

GH: And then when I got down there, for about the first twenty-four hours, I still had that nausea. I don't know if it was part of the shock, or what. But it took me three or four days to get myself regulated and right, just like that, and then, you know, by the time we hit training, okay, couple weeks into it, yeah, I'm getting things going. But it wasn't really, I swear, until probably the sixth or seventh week of training, of boot camp for females, at that point, was only like nine weeks long. Because we didn't have—we had a few days of BWT.

TS: What's BWT?

GH: BW—Basic Warrior Training.

TS: Okay.

GH: Because we went in January, middle of January, and graduated in March. I guess it still was—yeah, it's two months, as opposed to the three months they do now.

TS: Was it physically difficult?

GH: Not really, because I had trained. You know, you start out running, you know—well, back then, the PFT [physical fitness test] was only a mile and a half. You started out running three quarters of a mile, or half a mile, and then a mile, and then a mile and a half. So you know, it wasn't as much. I was actually—was I a sergeant or a staff sergeant? I think it was a staff sergeant when it became three miles.

TS: Yeah?

GH: So it wasn't—and like I'd said, I'd been training and I'd been pretty physically agile and stuff when I was—coordinated when I was in high school and stuff. So it, physically it wasn't that much, it was more the mental, mental challenge, of getting that all [niche?]. And they do throw a lot of information at you in a very short period of time, you know, because you've got to learn uniform regs, you've got to learn history, you've got to learn their jargon, you've got to learn, learn, learn. Same thing, you know, when I was a drill instructor. Teaching them everything. [snapping fingers] You don't waste a minute, because there's too much to learn.

TS: So did you feel that—so mentally, did you like, get to a point where you thought, okay, I've got to do this to be able to cope with, you know, the issues of somebody saying

"This is what you have to do," like with your boots? Or did—how long did that take you, I guess, to—

GH: Learn how to shine boots? [laughter] I don't know, you eventually get it all together.

TS: Yeah.

GH: I had a pretty cool bunkie, we got along pretty good, so that helped. I think, you know it really was the wow, I can do this, I'm good, is—it was the week before Senior Sunday. We had all these inspections coming up, and so nobody signed up to go to church. Senior drill sergeant came out, talked to us, and there was about five of us that [unclear] on a guilt trip went and signed up for church, you know, we all went together that next morning, and cried my eyes out. Absolutely bawled my eyes out. I think I needed that emotional drain, because I had been wound up so tight for so long, and after that I felt like I could accomplish—attack anything and make it. Because I'd had that release.

TS: Right.

GH: Traumatizing, but it worked. [laughs]

TS: So what was it like to graduate from boot camp?

GH: I graduated third in my platoon, which kind of shocked a lot of people, because I'd never really been a billet holder [billets are temporary leadership positions during training] or anything like that, I'd just kind of stayed in the background. But once again, like I said, I was fairly athletic, very good academic, you know, so the numbers, I was able to compete.

TS: How'd that feel?

GH: Kind of surprised me. [laughs]

TS: Did it really?

GH: Yeah. I knew, you know, academically, I could—I was doing okay. But when they said "You're third", I was like, wow. Surprise, surprise.

TS: Yeah. [unclear] how'd that feel?

GH: It was cool. Because, you know, Staff Sergeant Allan, I think, was one of my favorite drill instructors, because she was kind of quiet, she was more lady-like than the others, you know. Yeah, I guess lady-like is a good way to say that. And she's the one that pinned my chevrons on me, which I was kind of cool about. It's pretty interesting, because my senior drill instructor was selected for gunny, and while we—I think she was meritoriously selected for gunny [gunnery sergeant], during our platoon, and we were

also her last platoon, I think. Because I remember her saying something about going back to the fleet, supply, something like that. She was supply. The next time, I ran into her, Gunny Horn was an enlisted career counselor, and was talking to counseling a Marine that had gotten passed over and was told to call by his sergeant major.

And I said, "Well, who's your sergeant major?"

He goes "Sergeant Major Skinner."

And I said "Skinner. Sheila Skinner?"

And he goes "Why, you know her?"

And I said "She was my senior drill instructor." Ten minutes later, I got a phone call. [laughter]

She goes "You know you've been in too long when your recruits are gunnies." But she kind of fast-tracked up to sergeant major, so, you know.

TS: Well, that's terrific. So did you know when you went in, did you like select a career or did—at the time, did you sign up for it, I guess?

GH: When I enlisted, I was guaranteed aviation electronics, of some type.

TS: Was that what you wanted?

GH: Yeah, I'm not sure if it's what I wanted, or with my ex-husband, who was on recruiting duty at the time, said "Oh, no, this is what you want to do! You want to do avionics, because you get all these big bonuses, you can learn all these electronics and stuff like that."

And I'm like "Okay, cool." I was very malleable at that point. Something I think from growing up on the farm. I've had to, yeah, make a few personality changes during my life.

TS: Became less malleable?

GH: Yes. You get ornery[?], as you get older. [both chuckling]

TS: Well, how—so then, you went to—so you would have gone to training, then, after basic.

GH: Right.

TS: Where did you go for that?

GH: To Millington, Tennessee. Now, they go to NAS Pensacola. But we were at Millington, Tennessee, that's where all the aviation MOSs [Military Occupational Specialty] wound up going to school. Structural people, avionics people, ordinance people, the whole nine yards.

TS: Were there a lot of women in avionics?

GH: Several, I won't say huge population, but, you know, I won't say it was an absolute rarity or I was the only one, not by any chance. We had several women that were in aviation electronics. Matter of fact, we had a—they put all the females, all the female Marines, in the same barracks, which made it easier for, I guess, policing purposes. You know, we had [unclear] duties on every floor, nobody goes past here, if your boyfriend wants to see you, you're going to leave, and you're going to see him out there, because he's not coming in here.

TS: And that's how it was in the tech school too, your training school?

GH: Yes. Yup.

TS: So you had like strict supervision there as well?

GH: Very much. Even when I went, after I finished Millington, the general aviation electronics. And I was there for eleven months, because I went through [B-double E-AVA?] and then advanced first term avionics. You know, basic electricity, aviation electronics, and then like I said, advanced electronics. I was there for eleven months, then I went to like a month of training at Cherry Point. Even at Cherry Point, we were in the women's barracks. Which was quite comical, because it had an eight-foot tall hurricane fence around it. [chuckling] Razor wire on the top.

TS: Really, around the barracks?

GH: Yes. [laughs]

TS: Why?

GH: Um, to protect us. You know, there was one opening in the hurricane gate, and it was about that wide. [laughs]

TS: Okay. She's showing a space that I could not fit through. [laughter]

GH: Okay, maybe it was three feet wide, but it wasn't any wider than that, I can guarantee you. The width of the sidewalk, basically. That was the only door. I think there was one in the back that had a lock on it for fire purposes if they had to have it, but.

TS: What did you think of your training, that you were having, as you were going through it?

GH: I always thought it was kind of cool, you know. I mean, I never had any real traumatizing issues with school, every once in a while I'd, you know, go through a test. Let's see. I—you know, once again, like I said, I was pretty academic, I did pretty well in most of my classes. AFTA, I was second in the class. Which shocked a lot of people, me included. And—

TS: Well, I'm thinking with avionics, okay, so what—what kind of stuff did you have to learn to do?

GH: What did we learn? Basic electricity, you know, current flow, Ohm's Law—

TS: So you're going to be repairing—

GH: Electronic equipment.

TS: On?

GH: Aircraft.

TS: On aircraft.

GH: Going through advanced aviation electronics training pretty much guaranteed me that I was going to be an intermediate-level maintenance person. Organizational level maintenance actually works on the aircraft, intermediate level—the O-level people figure out which black box is broken, then they send it to the intermediate level maintenance, which was where I was at, and we fix the black box, send it back to supply so that it can be recirculated through the system.

TS: I see, so it's like, they can't quite do—they can't do it while it's on the plane, has to come off the plane, and so.

GH: Yeah. They troubleshoot the system, you know, the entire—like, oh, the ALE-39's [AN/ALE 39 Counter Measure Dispenser System, on an aircraft, dispenses decoys when an approaching missile is detected] actually composed of several different system, people, pieces of gear. So they'll figure out which actual box is bad, remove and replace that box, and then send that box back to the intermediate-level maintenance for repair.

TS: Okay. I really didn't have a really good understanding of what it is that you do.

GH: Understand—and it's too bad they can't see the hand gyrations.

TS: Yes, I know, the hands are good, especially the reaching up here.

GH: [laughs]

TS: Well, because you're in the—it's in the '80s, mid-'80s. There's not a lot of women in the military. They're starting to creep up, but not [unclear] as a percentage there's not that many.

GH: Not really, no. We did qualify with a weapon.

TS: Oh, you didn't when you went through basic training?

GH: No, I carried it around in sling-arms for six weeks, we fired it one day, cleaned it for another two weeks and turned it in. [laughs]

TS: So you never had to qualify?

GH: We never—I did not qualify 'til I'd been in the Marine Corps like two and a half years. Came in in '84, I think it was '87 the first time I qualified with my weapon, it was a bad experience.

TS: For you, or for?

GH: Well, I guess for me, because, you know, the overachiever here. The eye-hand coordination thing, plus I really didn't get—in the air wing—okay, the ground side takes marksmanship a lot more seriously than the air wing does. So they go through their solid week of [grass?], and their solid week of [unclear], and stuff like that. We had one day. And pretty much the first time I went to the rifle range, I got sent straight to the two hundred yard line. Issued live rounds, no less! And told, put on your sling—gave me a good tight sling, give me three rounds, triangle[unclear]. Now fire.

"So, how do I fix my sling?"

And they go "What?"

And I said "I've never done this before. How do I put my sling on?"

You know, how do you—take it off of here, put the loop on it, and all this good stuff. Because we didn't do that. And—uh-oh. And it was a pretty miserable week for all of us. Coaches were pretty—they tried, you know, so then, somebody said "All right, maybe we need to rethink this. Send her to some grass, get her some extra training, and so eventually, you know—I've actually, by the time I got, you know, started getting pretty good at it, but it took a lot of extra effort on my part, because I had a lot of ground to make up.

TS: Well, you hadn't had any training, to prepare you for it.

GH: Well, yeah, like I said.

TS: That's interesting, though.

GH: Yeah, I didn't drill with a weapon until I went to DI-School.

TS: And what year was that?

GH: Ninety-one. Yeah, three dash '91.

TS: I've got your thing here, I can help you with that.

GH: April ’91 is when we went, graduated in June of ’91.

TS: So, are you feeling, like, comfortable—I mean, I know your husband is in the Marines, and now you’re in training school and you have this long period of training, so are you seeing each other, or?

GH: Well, the schools were kind of mixed in between. Plus, when I was in Memphis, he was only eight hours away.

TS: Only eight hours away.

GH: Only eight hours away. Which doesn’t sound like—you know, when I was twenty, that was no big deal. You just jumped in the car and you took off. In fact, there was a lot of kids—there was probably half a dozen of us that were from Kansas City, so it was usually—it wasn’t hard to find two or three people that were going to go home any weekend. So then you carpooled, you know, that made it a lot easier. So you’d jump in the car Friday about three o’ clock when you got out of school, get home about midnight, one, something like that. Spend the weekend at home, and Sunday at noon, you get back in the car and go back. So it was not ideal, but it was tolerable.

TS: Okay. So where was your first duty assignment?

GH: New River. [Marine Corps Air Station New River, in Jacksonville, North Carolina]

TS: And how was that?

GH: [Hamswaina??], it was actually really good. As a matter of fact, my NCOIC [non-commissioned officer in charge] was Gunnery Sergeant Larry Scott, he and I to this day are excellent friends. [laughs]

TS: Now, did you—did your husband move with you there, or?

GH: Well, he was—actually, after—while I was in DI—in all this training, like I said, when I was in Millington, we used to go home all the time, but then, when I was going through C1 school towards the end, he came to the end of his tour in Kansas City and went overseas for a year.

TS: That’s not eight hour drive anymore.

GH: No, it wasn’t. So, he came down, and he flew out of Memphis instead of flying out of Kansas City. So we spent a few days together, he took off, and then by the time I got through with all my training and everything, I got to New River, did about five months of separation, that last five months. In the end, he had orders back to Lejeune. So we were pretty much co-located from there on. We were actually pretty fortunate, with the

exception of occasional deployments and things like that, we never had too much trouble getting co-located.

TS: Yeah. So were you finding that you were enjoying the Marines?

GH: Oh, yeah. You know, Marines are a great bunch of people, they really truly are. [laughs] You keep hearing this—they work hard, they play hard. They're not all crazy. One cool thing about aviation electronics is, you had to have a minimum GT[?], so the education—not the education, but the academic level is a little higher. And I hate to be all snotty about that, but you know.

TS: The level of intelligence might have been—

GH: Con—the level of conversation or the quick wit was always pretty cool. Even to this day, I love talking to—you know, I really enjoyed my Marines, that's probably the thing I miss the most about being out.

TS: Well, how were you accepted as a woman in a field that's really non-traditional for women?

GH: [chuckles] Depends on where I was at, you know. When I got to my first duty station, there was[sic] already two women in my shop. So, you know. The ground was already broken. My next duty station, when I went to instructor duty, was a whole different story. There was a picture there with me holding a pie and standing next to a gentleman. That was my NCOIC. He'd only had one other woman work for him. The day I checked in, I got the Pandora's Box lecture.

TS: And what is that lecture?

GH: The Pandora's Box lecture—at least, that's what I lovingly referred to it, because he told me—apparently, the only other female that had ever worked for him, because he was—you know, I talked about the two different levels of maintenance, in the Marine Corps? Well, there's very few women at the O level, apparently he had had one female, and she was just a little ho. So that was his vision of women in the military. The only women in the military were all hoes, and I was pretty much told that if I became a problem, it was easier to get rid of—for him to get rid of one female than to get rid of all of those males, or to correct all of those males. So that was my Pandora's Box lecture. Apparently, everybody else knew what it was too. But it was just, I was like "I haven't even been here twenty-four hours. Give me at least a break, or a chance to prove what I am." Two weeks later, we had a PFT [physical fitness test]. He had told me I didn't have to run it, because I had my thirty days acclimation, and I said "I PCAd [permanent change of assignment] fifty miles. Fifty miles hardly is climate change." [laughs] You know, from Jacksonville to Havelock. [Marine Corps Air Base Cherry Point, in Havelock, North Carolina.] So I went ahead and I ran it, I ran like a two seventy or something like that, and he just thought that was amazing, that he had a female that could

PT [physical training]. Because he was a big-time PT, PT runner. And apparently, that—I was now in his good graces, and could do no wrong, but it was—

TS: So how did you get—so, this is DI School, that you're talking about?

GH: That was actually on instructor duty.

TS: Instructor duty, okay.

GH: At—[pause] from '87 to '91, and it was—let me see, not [unclear], but it was three thousand one.

TS: Yeah, I see that. Yeah. N-A-M-T-G-D 3001? [Naval Air Mobile Training Group (NAMTG) or Naval Air Mobile Training Detachment (NAMTD)]

GH: Yup.

TS: Okay. And so, how—did you get selected for that, or?

GH: Well, they were actually—they came—the monitor came down, asked for names. He says, I need sergeants to go to teach deceptive electronic counter measures repair, which was my MOS [Military Occupational Speciality] at Cherry Point. "I'll go!"

TS: You volunteered?

GH: Yup! I loved instructor duty, it was great. Picked up master training specialist at the end of it, and it was a great tour. I probably—I unfortunately never got the opportunity to do it again, but.

TS: What did you enjoy about it?

GH: Oh, I always kind of liked the teaching thing. It's amazing how many times you kind of weld[?] into that position. But it was just—it was good, because it was a small group of people, small class, so you really got to know the people. Short training sessions, though. But I enjoyed teaching the MOS, I enjoyed keeping up the curriculum and things like that. I don't know if it was just the standing up front and being the expert, but there's a certain amount of that. Plus, it was a good group of people. It's a good group of people. I and Pete Tovaras[?], we're prime teaching partners, and we've kept in touch to this day.

TS: Did you—at this point, you'd been in six years-ish, somewhere around there?

GH: Yes, something like that.

TS: Or maybe four and a half, five? Are you thinking, okay, I think this is going to stick, I want to stay in?

GH: I was—you know, at that point—

TS: How long had you enlisted for, I guess?

GH: At that point, I enlisted for six years, when I re-enlisted the first time. Which I probably never recommend doing anyway, because it's just too long.

TS: When you enlisted, you enlisted for six?

GH: When I re-enlisted the first time.

TS: I see, okay. But when you first signed up, did you sign up for—how many years?

GH: Four.

TS: Okay, four.

GH: Yeah. And then I re-enlisted for six more. So by the time that was over, truthfully, I was at the end of not that tour but the next tour.

TS: I see.

GH: Which was a drill field.

TS: And how was that?

GH: That was rough.

TS: Why?

GH: Well, for the same reasons—you know, it's just a challenging environment, it's [a] totally different type of culture, the air wing, the ground side, like I said, I didn't learn to drill with a weapon until DI school. So I had that to catch up on. It's just a very demanding schedule. Especially for the females, because there was not a lot of female drill instructors. To be honest with you, this is kind of hateful, but they'd just had a major witch hunt right before I got orders. So they'd fired like eleven drill instructors.

TS: What kind of witch hunt?

GH: [pause] They broke up a ring of lesbians. Which at that point, the Marine Corps wasn't very tolerant of.

TS: I don't think any of the military was.

GH: No, they weren't.

TS: Wasn't just the Marine Corps, I don't think. Was in the '80s, right?

GH: [laughs] Yeah, mid to late—it was like '86 when this happened—or no, probably '88, '89 when that happened, and I got my orders in '90.

TS: So was there like a stigma of women, then, when you got there, do you think? Did that make it tougher, you know, saying, there's a bunch of lesbians that were just kicked out, and here you—no?

GH: I don't think so.

TS: I don't mean for you, but I mean, like, the perception.

GH: No, it was just challenging anyhow. You know, like DI school, for example, seventy-three started, thirty-six graduated.

TS: That's a big drop-out.

GH: That's a pretty high attrition rate. [laughs] So, and they do that for a purpose, because they know it's a demanding—you know, people break, because it's very physically demanding, it's academically tough, because there's so much being crammed into a short period of time, so some people would—if you wanted to get out at DI school bad enough, you could figure out a way to either get injured, or start failing tests, and not fail them so badly that it became obvious, but you know, those that really wanted to get out figured out a way. Granted, I didn't want to be there, but.

TS: Well, now, so you have a job, you're in aviation. Now, why are you—why are you a drill instructor? What's up with that?

GH: Because I'm a female. No, I'm kidding. [laughs] I used to jokingly say I was a female, I had two and a half years left on current duty station, and I could pass a PFT and they were desperately short of females at that point in time. Like I said, because they had this—

TS: Oh, because they had kicked out a bunch.

GH: They had had this high attrition.

TS: I see.

GH: But no, just about every—there's a good potential during your military career, those that [unclear] make it a career, they're going to have to do some kind of special duty assignment. Be it drill instructor duty, recruiting duty, embassy duty—and I used to

counsel my young Marines, when they talk about wanting to do this, that, or the other, I say "Well, you know what I'm going to tell you, I'm going to tell you, pick your poison before it picks you." [laughs]

TS: Is this a lesson learned? [laughs]

GH: A lesson learned, yeah, because I was like, they won't send me. Well, they did. But pick your poison before it picks you. If the drill instructor—if DI duty is what you want to do, MSG's[?] what you want to do, put in for it, because, you know, those opportunities come few and far between. Did I learn a lot on the drill field, did I grow a lot on the drill field? Oh, most definitely. It is probably one of the most challenging things I've ever done, not so much academically or physically, but just the schedule was grueling. The demands on you are—on you personally and socially and physically, and just all combined, you really learn what kind of mettle you're made out of. And that's probably the best way to say it.

TS: So when you came out of it, what'd you think? When you're on the other side of it, I mean?

GH: I'm glad it's done, and you know, probably the worst part of it, I found out I was pregnant three weeks after I graduate DI school.

TS: How much longer did you have?

GH: So that turned a two year tour into a three year tour. I think I just got pregnant, I mean, do the math, I graduated DI school in June, Beth was born in March—[laughs]

TS: So it made your tour longer?

GH: Yes, because women were using getting pregnant as a way to either get their tours curtailed, or to shorten—they would, you know shorten the number of platoons, because it's a two-year tour, you could spend a year and a half of it pregnant and recovering. So [clears throat] excuse me, sorry about that.

TS: Do you want some water? Here, I can—

GH: No, I think I'm okay.

TS: Okay.

GH: It's just the allergy frog. Shortly before I got there, they started a new program, and it's a good policy and I think they've still got it today. Basically, because it was only a two-year tour, once you were no longer able to work troops, you came off platform, or your tour clock stopped. And you worked in operations in some way, shape, or form. I spent my time in S3 doing training. Coordinating training exercises and things like that.

And then once you've had your child and you can pass a PFT, you can regain a training company and finish your tour. So, I still did six platoons, I just spent an extra year there. [chuckles]

TS: I see, okay. So after you—did you know where you were going to go after that?

GH: Well, that was one of the luxuries of being on drill instructor duty, you got choice of duty station when you were done. [laughing]

TS: Oh, you did? Okay. So where'd you go?

GH: Of course, my choice of duty station turned out to be the opportunity to go back to Millington, Tennessee, and get C1 school, which was another advanced level aviation electronics. Was actually like a pre-engineering-type school. So it was a lot of fun.

TS: And you chose that because you wanted to get that training?

GH: Yes, it was a good opportunity to get that training. And those seats can be hard to get. And I was there for about nine months, eight, nine months, and it was a longer ways back to Beaufort, but my—now, during this time, my husband, shortly after I got orders to DI school, or shortly after I graduated DI school, got orders down to the disbursing office at Parris Island. So we were co-located that whole time.

TS: I see. And you said before, I think, we started the tape, I think, that when you were in DI school, that's when the first Gulf War happened, is that correct? Is that the right timing for that?

GH: Just afterwards.

TS: Just afterwards.

GH: Because I was supposed to go to DI school in January of '09, by April, the next class—or, not January '09.

TS: Ninety one?

GH: January of '91. And by April, when I went, this huge Gulf War had pretty much dwindled out. [chuckles]

TS: Was there a different environment when that was going on, do you remember anything different about, like, even for training the troops or anything?

GH: Well, you were thinking more realistically, we were pushing more students through, trying to beef up and make sure that we had enough people on hand to do the things that were necessary, certainly. A lot of people, and once again they were pushing more people

through DI school, too, for the thought that we're going to have this attrition rate. But it just never really came to frutation[sic, fruition].

TS: Because the war happened so quickly.

GH: Because the war happened so quickly! [chuckles]

TS: Right. That's interesting. So you got your next level of training.

GH: Yes.

TS: And then—

GH: Came back to South Carolina and was stationed at MCAS [Marine Corps Air Station] Beaufort, which is my only tour with a fixed wing, otherwise I was always a helicopter person.

TS: Oh, okay. How was that?

GH: It was good, I mean, because at that point, I had picked up staff sergeant, and like I said, certain MOSs melded, and so I was able to go to a fixed wing command. Communications and navigation shop, excellent, excellent tour, worked in production control there. [sneezes] Sorry. Which, production control was a good tour. Learned a lot about the overall workings of squadrons, because you wound up interfacing with the other squadrons, and how everything tied together. So it was a good tour.

TS: So you get the bigger picture.

GH: You're get a bigger picture, because you're working, managing different work centers, workloads, where the priorities are, where are the—we called them x-reps, there's actually a hole in the aircraft that this piece of gear that you're working on is going to fill. So it's a direct, it's not the "It's already full, this is going back on the supply shelf to wait for the next call—need for it."

TS: I meant to ask you, and I'm going to go back, being drill instructor, [GH coughs] did you train just women, or men and women, or how was that training at that time?

GH: In the Marine Corps, women only train women. You know, I know in the army, there's more co-ed type training, the only time our women had any male instructors was either academics, like Marine Corps history, customs and courtesies, things like that, or out at basic warrior training. We had a male PMI [Primary Marksmanship Instructor], we went to the drill field—or, the rifle range, we used to have a blast out at the rifle range. Because you get away from garrison, and you have to kind of back off on the girls a little bit, because they've got to focus, and they can't be so up-tight, up-tight, up-tight, because

they need to be able to shoot. And so, they bloom a little bit more, too, out there. Once they start hitting the target, it's really wonderful to watch the confidence grow.

TS: And you probably had some connection with that, knowing that, you know [unclear]

GH: Especially as a senior, yeah, you know, because you're the one that sits down and talks to them, when you're the senior drill instructor. The green belts [assistant drill instructors] just push 'em, push 'em, push 'em, push 'em. The senior's the one that they talk to. And I'm going to take you up on that water.

TS: Okay, here, let me pause it just a sec. [recording paused] You ready?

GH: Okay!

TS: Okay, we're done with that little break. So you were talking about, as a senior, helping the women on the range and letting them talk to you?

GH: Oh, yeah, you'd be surprised, especially out at the rifle range. I mean, I had duty one night—oh yeah, senior drill instructor duty night's always interesting. Because the recruits know they can talk to the senior. They have to be able to talk to the senior, and I was a far better senior drill instructor than I was a green belt. Green belt was miserable. But I guess I was a good mom. Maybe it's that oldest of the middle group type thing coming trough. I was a pretty good mom to them. But [sighs] there was one girl, we were out at the rifle range, and she has duty that night. And the recruits are saying "You need to talk to her, you need to tell her, you need to ask her, she can help you!"

TS: You can hear them saying this? Yeah.

GH: And I go "Ask me what?"

TS: Right.

GH: Ask the squad bay, they know. Ask the recruits, they know. And they go "Talk to her." So I'm like.

"Yes ma'am, she needs to talk to you."

[snaps fingers] "Get in my office." Go back in the DI hut.

Her question to me is "Do I have—" Okay. The rifle range is second phase, they've made it through first phase, they're all starting to feel like "I think I might make it, I think I might make it." You know? And like I said, plus the drill instructors are backing off a little bit, because they need to focus on shooting. We still train them, but we need to focus on shooting. Everything's about shooting, about building confidence. And esteem, you know. Because if you don't have confidence in what you're doing, and in yourself, you can't shoot.

So she goes "You know, everybody's talking about when they go home, when they go on boot camp leave and they graduate, about going home and seeing their families, and seeing their boyfriends. Do I have to go home?"

And I'm like "No, you don't have to go home, it's your ten days leave, you can do whatever you want to it. You can go to Disney World if you want to, it's your ten days," said "If you don't want to take leave at all, you can go straight to your next duty station and check in."

And she's like "Oh, good."

And I was like "Okay, so, why? Talk to me. Why?"

And she goes "Well, I just—you know, I was raised by—" Apparently, something happened to her parents, so she was raised by her grandmother, her and her brother. As the story opens up, the reason is because she was Puerto Rican, nothing wrong with that, except very—grandma, in that era, the male was very much the dominant person in the family, so this young male could, you know, have whatever rights he wanted. Which included molesting his sister.

And I said "Did your grandmother know?"

Yes, she thought it was okay, it's acceptable.

I'm going "Okay, I'm not going to say anything about your culture, because I don't know." I said, "But no, you don't have to go back to that. You have—you know, when you graduate Marine Corps boot camp, you've started on a new life." There were so many females, so many females, I can honestly tell you, that were leaving somebody or something, running away from something, when they joined Marine Corps boot camp. We actually had a thing that they started when I was a senior, and I don't know if they still do it or not, but it was like a little counseling group. It was perfect, all voluntary, like the third day of recruit training, anybody that felt like they were going to have issues getting through boot camp, there may be some old scars that might get ripped open while you're going through training, because it is very mentally stressful. You know, the stress and the—everything going on at once can really tear you down. And if you don't have that self-esteem, if you've got scar tissue, it can really rip you apart. And it can cause people to do things like slash their wrists, and all sorts of really bad things. So we started having counselings, and out of a platoon of fifty, I would probably have fifteen go. Which is actually a pretty strong percentage.

TS: I'm thinking it is, yeah.

GH: [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. And do you think that was a help, then, to do that release even like you were talking about—

GH: Well, you know, and I think it did. I don't know if it was so much of a release, as that they identified each other, so if they needed a crutch, they had a common bond. You know, the old lean on me and I'll lean on you when you need me. But like I said, when she came in and she was talking about this, it was like, oh, gosh. You know, your heart just goes out. Because you're like, that, that—nobody should have to live with that.

TS: No. Is that one of the harder things that you had to deal with?

GH: Well, you know what, after we sat and talked, she was just so happy to have it off her chest and to be relieved, and she was able to re-focus and—you know, because she hadn't been shooting that good, she really started to improve. She did manage to qualify that week, too, just barely, but you know, it was just like—a huge relief to her. The other one that I had that was really along these same lines, was—I shouldn't say the name, but it was Private Howe, I have not been able to catch up with her, but I always wondered.

But she came in, and she—during first phase, and she goes "I don't belong here, I need to go home."

And as a senior drill instructor, you know, it's my job to keep them. Green belts are going "Good, get out, pack!" [both laugh]

TS: Good riddance, right?

GH: "One less to train!"

TS: So you've got to change the direction, there.

GH: So, I have to change their hearts. So I had to stop and say "Okay, so why do you need to go home?" So we're talking and we're talking. Somehow or other it slips out that her husband's gone, but she knows she can't wait for him. And the first thing that clicks into my brain is that her husband's some lance corporal over in Okinawa for a year, and she's not going to wait for him, and I'm about to like go ballistic on her. And I said "So, why can't you wait for him?"

"Well, because he's in prison for eight years."

[pause] "All right. You do not have to answer this, but I have to ask. Why?"

"Second-degree manslaughter."

And as things evolved, she was another one that had been—she had very low self-esteem, I knew that anyhow. She'd been another one that had been sexually molested by an uncle and a brother—or an uncle and his brother—yeah, an uncle and a brother-in-law or something like that. And I'm going, all right, and you want to go back to all of this? "You have a chance to start over, to put that all behind you, to erase all of that and to build a new life. You know, why do you want to go back to that?"

And eventually I got her to stay. Third phase, she was probably one of the most pumped-up recruits I had, you know, but it was an ordeal. But you see, these kids, like I said, just watching them bloom is amazing.

TS: So even though this drill instructor phase, for you, was difficult, it was—

GH: It was—

TS: It was rewarding in this sense?

GH: Yeah, I just wouldn't recommend doing it with a brand-new baby. [laughs]

TS: Well, that's true, you had that too, I actually had forgotten about that, yeah.

GH: You know, yes, like I said, I grew a lot, I learned a lot about who I was, developed some unique insights.

TS: Did you—and this is just something I'm thinking about, as—with these talks that you had with these young women, during this time, and then as you went on with your career, did you ever, like, see someone differently then, I mean, because you don't really know their story, right? Did you look at them—

GH: Well, you recognize, yeah.

TS: Maybe you recognize—

GH: You, you recognize—not so much recognize. Yeah, you always learn to stop and listen. You know, the—because there's all these unique scenarios. It, you don't—

TS: Don't make as many assumptions, perhaps?

GH: Yes.

TS: Interesting, yeah.

GH: Stop and listen. Because everybody's got a story, and if the story is all smoke, you know, it will come out. [laughs] It will happen, you'll find out.

TS: Interesting. So, then, now, I forget where we went.

GH: I don't know, we kind of skipped back to the drill field. I'm sorry.

TS: I'm glad we went back there, because that was a really interesting lesson, actually. And so we went forward to your training.

GH: Went to—yeah.

TS: Oh, I know one thing I was going to ask you, too. So, you've been in at least ten years now, I think.

GH: About nine and a half, ten years, yeah, when I came to drill field. Yeah.

TS: Close. [chuckles]

GH: Yeah. Nine and a half! I remember that [pervously?] yeah? At the drill field, I was just about at the halfway mark. [laughing] Marriage was starting to fall apart, you know, which is typical of drill field.

TS: Is that right? So.

GH: There's a high percentage of divorces that go on during special duty assignments. Drill field, recruiting, mostly. Just because of the stress, because of the hours, because of the demands of the environment. I'm not unique.

TS: No. But what I was going to ask you, though, is—so at your almost ten year point here. Did you see any cultural change going on within the Marine Corps for women, as—and now there's more and more coming in.

GH: I—yeah. At this point, yes, because what I see are women being recognized to do more things. Like while I was on the drill field, we had the—Warrant Officer Luke. Man, that woman was amazing. She was like on the Olympic pistol team. And she happened to be a range officer, so we had her come down and talk to the recruits, to prove to them "Yeah, women can shoot too." She seemed more—you saw more really phenomenal examples. Because women were being allowed to do more things. When I was on the drill field, I think we had the first woman out there as a BWT instructor, basic warrior training. That was something that was new. Like I said, women didn't shoot—qualify on the weapon until '87. Women were starting to compete, we had our first regimental drill master as a female while I was out there. These were, you know, milestones.

TS: Because the perception was, and I would say in many ways still is, that the Marine Corps is combat, you know, combat—the branch of all the military services.

GH: Yes.

TS: So, the rule for women, the perception is, there's less opportunities for them within the Marine Corps, to some extent.

GH: Well, for a while, women were not allowed to be pilots of certain aircraft. They could only be pilots of C130s, because those were cargo transports, H46s because those were passenger transports, you know, transport vehicles. They weren't allowed to be Cobra pilots [probably refers to AH-1 Cobra, an attack helicopter], but yet, when I went to Iraq, we took two women as Cobra pilots with us. And those are attack aircraft.

TS: We're still back in the '90s, though. [laughter]

GH: Yeah, I know, we haven't gotten to the 2004 yet.

TS: But yeah, I mean—

GH: But yeah, that was—it was, there was a wakening up, like I said, when you send a woman out to be a BWT instructor, I think the last platoon that we had, they—we—the recruits got to do the pogo sticks[?]. You know, combat training.

TS: Okay.

GH: You know, they learned line training, because they were still—because that's considered defensive. You know.

TS: So, it's changing, like maybe in increments, and—

GH: Slowly, slowly. But still, women were in defensive roles. Women were not going forward into combat, they were in support roles, they were in supply, they were in mechanic, you know. These weren't things that were front line operations. And that's still—of course, now there's only eleven MOSs that females can't be in.

TS: Is that right? Eleven? That's in the Marine Corps? [pause] And how are you feeling about, like, your promotion opportunities, and things like that?

GH: You know, that was one of the reasons why I joined the military, was because there was—you know, even the civilian world, granted, I was in an engineering firm, which is a male-dominated society in its own right too. [chuckling] So, from one male-dominated society to another. You would see men with less aptitude, maybe—

TS: Than you, you mean?

GH: Getting better raises. Of course, you really didn't know, because salary is one of those hush-hush things. I think that I might have actually done better than some of my male counterparts, because I was female and because I could present a good image, because I did—you know, like my senior drill instructor, Skinner, used to tell us "You need to be twenty percent better just to be considered even, because you are a minority, and you're either going to be a thorn in their side or you're going to be their pride."

TS: That's the only two options, right?

GH: Yup, there's only two kinds of—oh god [laughs]—Lance Corporal Horn heard a couple of staff, female staff NCOs talking. And she said—and they said "Yup, there's only two kinds of women—" goes "Male Marines think there's only two kinds of women in the Marine Corps." This was, you know, the '80s. "Witches, bitches, and whores, so when they call me a bitch, I say 'thank you'—"

TS: That's three.

GH: Okay, there's three. Witches, bitches, or whores. So, "When they call me a bitch, I say thank you, because that means I'm doing my job." [end of audio file 1, beginning of audio file 2]

TS: Doing the [teas?] all along?

GH: I never really had—yeah, you know, because—like I said, the only time I really felt like "What are you—you're kidding me, right?" was when I checked into that instructor duty that I talked to you about.

TS: The Pandora's Box.

GH: The Pandora's Box lecture.

TS: Okay.

GH: But after a few weeks, when you prove yourself, it's okay.

TS: Now, did you feel that when you were looking, like when you were—were out working in the regular field, outside of the drill instructor world, and there's somebody that you're working with, and she's a female, and they're not pulling their weight, how—did you—how did you feel about that? Because I'm sure that happened.

GH: Depends if she worked for me or not. Or even if she didn't work for me, it wouldn't be a surprise to pull her aside and say "You know, only, what six to eight percent of the Marine Corps is females? So every one of us makes a lasting impression."

TS: Now, what if you saw a man not pulling his weight?

GH: Tell him he's a jerk, and you know, you line him up. Just like you would—it becomes more personal if it's another female. But at the same point in time, that doesn't mean you're not going to treat them all the same—treat them all pretty much the same.

TS: Well, there's a little tension there, though, right?

GH: Yeah, like I say—well, when you're a male—you're chewing out the lance corporal that's a male, it's like—you're just chewing them out. But when it's a female, it's like "You realize—"

TS: You have that extra little card that you can play.

GH: Yes.

TS: Like you have to live up to a certain—or even the twenty percent rate thing. Yeah.

GH: Yeah.

TS: That's interesting. So, did you ever get—looks like you might have gone overseas, here.

GH: I did do a UDP when I was in Iwakuni [Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni], it was a blast.

TS: What's it called?

GH: Iwakuni, Japan? UDP, Unit—um, Unit Deployment.

TS: Okay.

GH: Accompanied the Silver Eagles as a MAWs [Marine Air Wing] augment. So, as a MAWs augment, that's aviation logistics squadrons, so I was going from MAWs 31 at Beaufort with 260—no, excuse me, not 263. With the Silver Eagles, can't remember what the number was, to Iwakuni, Japan, and then I attached to the MAWs there to provide the additional support for the aircraft that the Silver Eagles brought over. Augments.

TS: Now, how long were you there?

GH: Six months.

TS: What was that like?

GH: Wonderful. Now granted, it was traumatic, because this was exactly when I was going through my divorce. I mean, literally, I signed my legal separation papers on a Friday, left on Monday—the following Monday. [sighs] Or was it Tuesday? Anyhow.

TS: Close enough. Yeah.

GH: So it was pretty traumatic. I cried the whole way over there, because I missed my daughter terribly. First time, you know—the whole draining thing. Once I got there, said "Wow, this is a beautiful area." Because it was beautiful, the mountains and the whole nine yards, it was gorgeous. But honestly, it was probably the best thing that could have happened to me, because after going through all the drill field and then going through all the ugliness of the divorce and all that trauma and everything, signed the paperwork and having to close that out, and then having that time to focus on just me was probably very healing. Now, it had its downside in that I was separated from my kid, but it gave me a chance to focus on just me for a while.

TS: How old was your daughter then?

GH: Well, she—two and a half? Three, I think, three, because she was four when we went to Okinawa, and I went to Okinawa virtually right after I got back, nine months later.

TS: So when you're on a deployment like that, how do you have to make arrangements for your daughter?

GH: Well, at that point I was still married, so you know, Keith was very good about still taking care of her, so she stayed with him, and his girlfriend who became his new wife, which was its own little ugly episode, but that's not for here. Like I said, it was just ugly, it was an ugly year before this, so like I said, getting away and being able to pack all that away and just focus on me for a while and kind of heal and live again was probably really good, you know.

And my CO, she goes "I understand you left under some pretty bad terms," when I came back.

I said "You know, you're right, but in hindsight, it's probably the best thing that could have happened for me, right then and there." To get away and just being able to focus on me and to heal and move forward.

TS: Yes. That makes sense. It does make sense. And so you just—you really focused, like, on the job you had to do, and—

GH: The job, and I was able to get involved with a—some hash runners [hash running is a non-competitive running and often drinking club sport] that would go every weekend on a run with the mainland Japan nationals, and so we really embraced a lot of what was going on in mainland Japan, had a chance to visit, because Iwakuni was just a thirty-minute train ride from Hiroshima. So, Hiroshima Peace Park is beautiful, by the way. Got to embrace a lot of that, got to go to a Japanese baseball game. I got a little—because I was missing my daughter, I joined the Big Sisters foundation, and I had a single mom that used to drop her daughter off one night a week for me, or we would do something together one weekend—once a week, either on the weekend or some kind of thing, for about two, three hours at a time. So it wasn't a huge commitment, but it meant the world to this kid. It was just wonderful, and it gave mom a chance to kind of breathe, too.

TS: That's really neat. How did you get hooked up with that?

GH: You hear about a lot of things in the squadron, lot of different programs. And you're just thinking of, you know what, I need to do something to fill my time. Got a second job, you know, something to make the money go—well, second job brought in a little extra money, paid off a couple bills. Plus it filled time, to make the time go faster, to fill that, because it's—when you go to a UDP—in Iwakuni, it was peacetime, it wasn't a, you know, combat scenario or anything like that, so you had a regular schedule.

TS: Well, I was going to ask, because we hadn't really talked too much about what you did on your off time.

GH: [chuckles] Now you know!

TS: So you did—you had a second job? Did you do that very often, or was it just here?

GH: About two or three nights a week, I'd work at the movie theatre, in the snack bar. It was a, you know, minimum wage-type job, but it was more just the—you know.

TS: Time filler, sort of?

GH: A time filler, and like I said, paid off a couple of bills. When you're going through a divorce, there's always extra bills. And it enabled me to, like, send a few extra things home to Beth and stuff like that. So it was—and then, oh, I taught English classes, too. English as a second language, for a little while. Basically, I substituted for a guy that went home on leave for thirty days, so I got to do it for about five weeks for him. And they loved having me there, because it was a whole different thing to have a female there, I was the only female. And so, at the end, then we went to their—the Japanese invited us to their Christmas party for this English class, and we had a blast.

TS: That's pretty neat.

GH: Yeah, but that was the wonderful thing about Iwakuni, is as soon as you stepped outside the base, you were in this aura of mainland Japan. Very neat little houses, you know, the perfect postage stamp botanical gardens, everybody's yards were perfect. [coughs] Sorry about that.

TS: No, that's okay. So, what did you think of the culture there, then, while you were there?

GH: Like I said, the Japanese people embraced us. They loved—when I say we teach English classes, they learn English in school. What they want to learn from us is conversational English. And so it was—they were very excited about an exchange of cultures. The hash runs, did they really care if they ran or not? No, they wanted to hang out with the Americans and learn how the Americans talk.

TS: What's a hash run?

GH: A hash run is basically a group of people that get together, and there is a hare. The hare is the one that—it's kind of like the hounds and the hares, is where the historical stuff goes back to it. So there's one person that goes out first and sets the trail. And they'll set the trail by marking it with chalk, putting—and of course there's beer drinking, goes on with the hash run. So there's signs that point which way you're supposed to go, and then there's signs that say "Near Beer, Beer Here", you know. [chuckling] And most of the time, we would keep the runs to—because it was more of a cultural exchange than a big run—the runs would be about three, maybe four miles long at the longest. And it wasn't so much a speeding event as it was to finish it, and then afterwards, we'd sit down, and we'd grill some burgers, hot dogs, hamburgers, that type of thing afterward, and have kind of an exchange and just kind of hang out.

TS: So you did it with the Japanese as well as the—

GH: Yup, Japanese would run with us.

TS: Well, that's kind of neat, I had not heard of that before.

GH: [laughs]

TS: I was thinking hash—there's another thing that popped into my head when you said "hash run", so. [chuckles]

GH: Yeah. No, it actually kind of goes with the hounds and the hare, and how it got "hash" I'm not sure, but that's what they would call them.

TS: Yeah. Now, at this point—well, you know, you had described to me, when—before we turned the tape on, there was an elephant that you had been talking about. But I—you can get to that later, but what I wanted to ask you, though, is—military humor is an interesting animal sometimes.

GH: Yes. [laughing]

TS: Do you have any more stories about that, you know, anything particularly humorous that you could share?

GH: Oh. Well, you know, in Iwakuni, since we were there, at Christmastime, my girlfriend—well, girlfriend—yeah, she turned out to be a very tight, tight, tight friend, but that was—they put both the female staff NCOs in 610. Val was already running 610, and I think they thought that the two of us could actually feed each other, because she was going through some healing herself. And we did become real tight, so—and we both love to decorate for Christmas.

TS: Okay.

GH: So, we're sitting there, we're going "We're going to decorate the [unclear]."

And Val goes "I talked, and we got permission to decorate the van."

And so we're buying some lights, we're buying some stuff, and all of a sudden, I pick up these two little red boots, and I'm going—I'm just feeling something, I don't know what it is. And she goes "Well, what do you think?"

I said "I don't know, but I'm just feeling something." [clears throat] So we start brainstorming, and what we wound up with was, we went to the thrift store, and we found this set of—go figure. Two-x velour red sweatpants. [laughs]

TS: Christmas, right?

GH: Christmas. Red velour sweatpants. Two Xs, they were huge. We got a pair of old boots and these red sweatpants, and we managed to find, at the exchange, some brick cardboard, you know, the corrugated stuff? So we put a chimney on top of our mobile facilities, and we had Santa's legs sticking out of it, and his boots on, and then we took, and—the Christmas lights got all tangled up in his feet and around—[laughing] you don't know how many phone calls we got.

TS: [laughing]

GH: They thought it was hysterical, people loved it. And there was one guy that called and said "Help, I'm stuck in your roof!" [both laugh]

TS: That's cute.

GH: They had fun with it. But yes, we did some horrible things. Not so much there, not so much there.

TS: Oh, you can talk about anywhere, it's fine.

GH: You know, I mean, there's a lot of things that go on, like you know, duct taping people to the chair, and then hoisting them with a crane from the ceiling. But usually you let them down after just a few minutes. [chuckles]

TS: And what would lead to the duct taping and the hoisting with a crane, what sort of—

GH: Oh, I don't know, don't fall asleep in your chair. [laughs] That could be enough.

TS: Okay. What about promotions or anything—you ever done?

GH: Promotions were usually a good thing. No, I—you know, as far as really far out things, let's see. I never did anything too rambunctious. You heard of people getting reenlisted or getting promoted, scuba diving. The coolest thing I did was, like I said, at Iwakuni, Japan, I reenlisted in my cocktail dress on New Year's Eve, but that's okay. Some people go [gasps], but it was cool. We had fun.

TS: Yeah, that's a nice picture of that. Yeah, that black cocktail dress.

GH: Yep. Little sparkly dress that I happened to get at the exchange.

TS: And how many years did you reenlist for there?

GH: Four.

TS: Four?

GH: Four. Came back, after I—okay, actually, while I was over there, I met the monitor, and couldn't get orders to Iwakuni, because I did love it, I thought my daughter would just love this culture and the way the nationals embraced, I thought it would be a wonderful experience for her. But we went to Okinawa.

TS: When you said you "met the monitor" is that what you said?

GH: Well, the monitors, the headquarters Marine Corps team, travels, so that you get a chance to have some face time with them. And so I talked to him when he was there.

TS: I see, okay. So then you went to Okinawa.

GH: So I went to Okinawa, which is an island off of mainland Japan. Totally different culture, but equally as good. We had some great times in Okinawa. And the good thing about it is, I got to take her with me, and she got to embrace it, you know, because when she went to like kindergarten, first grade, second grade there, they had Japanese culture classes. Learned a little bit of speech of Japanese, customs, courtesies—which came out real handy, because she would tell Mom "You're doing that wrong! Don't do that like that!"

TS: This is like five?

GH: Well, seven.

TS: Seven, okay.

GH: But yeah, you got the general drift. [chuckles]

TS: So how many years were you in Okinawa?

GH: Three.

TS: Three years, okay.

GH: Yes. Good tour.

TS: Yeah. What did you like best about it?

GH: [sighs] There's so much different to experience. I did a lot of time in QA [quality assurance?], so, went around inspecting people, but to me, it was never an inspection so much as going through a checklist and if something was screwed up, my thought is, if I find a discrepancy, and you don't know how to fix it when I leave, I haven't done my job. You know? Because my job as a staff NCO is to give you the knowledge to do it right. And so that was always my analogy. And it was a good experience. Spent a lot of time, I spent like two of the three years I was there, and then I ran 64 Charlie, and you saw some pictures of where I took the whole shop out to White Beach one weekend, that was

[whispers] pretty wild. That was pretty cool, because one of the corporals decided "We have to have a fire." Of course, there was a huge fire pit right up next to the water. So "We have to have a fire." Okay, cool. There was a little bit of wood in there, you know, construction lumber and—he went and found a dead tree and drug [sic, dragged] it out of the woods. It was not a very little tree. It was a good-sized tree.

TS: Didn't probably fit in that pit.

GH: With a little help, yeah. [laughing] With some small modifications, it did pit—it did fit. Oh, and then they found a tire. So they threw that—so we had this huge fire that night. It was so cool. But they were having—you know, we had a really good time. It was insane. Did a lot of fun things out there. Hung around with some really great people, lot of first time experiences, like the dragon boat races. My daughter still talks about those.

TS: Can you describe that?

GH: Well, the dragon boat race was, you get together teams of, what is it, eighteen? Nine on each side, and it's rowing. And of course, just like other rowing competitions, it's important that you are, you know, all in synch and everything. So, there's twenty people on the boat. Eighteen are rowing. One is beating the drum to keep you all in cadence. The other one is the, you know, handling the rudder, steering. The boat is not just a canoe, it's actually a dragon boat, so it's, you know, sort of like a long, shallow boat with a dragon at each end. Or a dragon head at this end and the tail at this end.

TS: Right.

GH: So they're very ornate. Lot of historical culture, lot of tremendous detail on these boats. They're hundreds of years old, you know, so really cool. And once again, it's a thing where the community and the base kind of work together, because the military would bring out their teams and you have the nationals bringing out their teams, and it was very serious—it was big—Japanese are very competitive people. [laughs] But at the same point in time, they're very competitive in that they love to win, but they're wonderful losers, too. You know, they like it just for somebody to win. If that makes any sense at all.

TS: Who won?

GH: We came this close to winning our heat, unfortunately, in the ladies competition, but the males did win that year. And then there was other years and stuff like that, but it was just a lot of fun, it always was.

TS: So did you enjoy that mixing in with the nationals, as you called them, and the culture, in the community?

GH: We enjoyed it, probably more so in Iwakuni than I did in Okinawa. In Okinawa, it was just—I don't know, maybe because I had my daughter there, and I was more involved in family activities. Didn't—we still participated, we'd go to beaches out there in the community, we'd go shopping every once in a while. But not as interactive as when I was in Iwakuni.

TS: Did you find that the PXs were something that you used more when you were overseas, at all?

GH: I think I started using them more. I think I continued, as a result, but certainly, you know, you went out in mainland Japan or even Okinawa, tried to do some shopping, you were going to go broke fast. Yeah, their economy is—

TS: Very expensive?

GH: Very expensive, yes.

TS: So is that a good need, then, to have those kinds of services for military?

GH: Oh, definitely. Definitely, definitely.

TS: So is that the same for the gas stations, did you have those?

GH: Oh, goodness gracious, yes. In fact, like when we did the Naniyana[?] River Race, in—the first year I was in—or, when I was in Iwakuni. My friend Brian [unclear] goes "You've got to do it, it's so much fun!"

So, "Okay, we'll do it!" Well, you know, we rented a bus, or a large van, because we were taking like twelve of us. And we drive out there. Well, we also bring three big five-gallon cans of gas, because it's too expensive to buy it on the economy. So you bring spare with you. [laughter] All right, does that answer your question?

TS: Yes it does, yes, it does. And in these years, I think, when you were there—

GH: That was back in '96, when I was in Iwakuni. And yeah, it's even worse.

TS: Yeah, that's what I was going to add, it's even worse. So where did you go after Okinawa?

GH: After—did three years in Okinawa, I emailed my monitor and I said "Okay, you know, Okinawa's been great, but I don't think I want to stay here and, you know, extend my tour. So, what's next?"

And he says "You know what? How about—because I've looked through your records, you've got a good career, you've done a lot of things, you've done the special duty assignment, got a diverse background, how would you feel about going up to headquarters for Marine Corps and being an enlisted career counselor?"

And I'm like "Wow." Because I didn't think I'd done anything spectacular. I found out later on I really had. But I said "That sounds awesome." I thought about it a little bit, you know, because I was like, where would I be—and it would just be cool. And truthfully, it was probably my favorite tour in the Marine Corps. My favorite tour, going up to Headquarters for Marine Corps and being an enlisted career counselor, because it was all about giving the Marines the tools to take care of themselves. Not so much taking care of Marines, but teaching them how to look at their records, talking to them about their records, maybe giving them an honest evaluation for the first time in their life. Because you saw so many records, you could kind of tell them where they stacked.

TS: How—could you explain—do you see them face to face or are you just looking at records, how?

GH: All of the above.

TS: Okay. And where is this at?

GH: This is when I was at Headquarters Marine Corps at Manpower.

TS: Manpower. Where's that at?

GH: Quantico, Virginia.

TS: Thank you.

GH: And you get—what you do is, people will either, over the phone, call you and we'd set up an appointment, or you just look at it cold, right then and there. And you go through their record—because we had access, because of the nature of our job, to be able to go into the Manpower database and pull that Marine's record forward. And therefore, we could look at their fitness reports, look at their master brief sheets and things like that, and constructive criticism. All right, perhaps the reason you haven't gotten promoted is because you're not breaking out above average, anywhere, and there is no such thing as an average Marine. They're either all outstanding, or—[laughs] you know, just—

TS: Or that thorn in your side you were saying earlier.

GH: That thorn in the side, yeah, there you go. Good, or—you know, all Marines are outstanding. Just look at the fitness reports, they're all—we recognize that that's inflated, but because everybody's inflated, if you aren't outstanding, it's like, you know.

TS: Sticks out if you're not.

GH: Yes, it really sticks out.

TS: I see.

GH: So they went to a new fitness report system in ’98, which is right before I got up there, so we’re starting to adjust all the rankings to what’s average, you know, where is that average, outstanding Marine.

TS: I see.

GH: And we would give presentations, about two hours long, at the academies, talking to them overall about how to read their fitness reports, how to evaluate careers, what promotion boards look at when they’re looking at their records. So, these are the things that are going to stand out, these are the things you need to make sure you check.

TS: And about what level in their career are they? I’m sure at all levels, but what—when is this going to start, like, for—

GH: Sergeant.

TS: Sergeant, okay.

GH: Sergeant, usually. We would talk to the sergeants, we would talk to the staff sergeants, we would talk to the gunnies, sometimes we’d talk to the E897Rs[?], but my favorites, once again, were the sergeants. You know, and I’d tell them that, I’d say “You guys are my favorite group, because the gunnies, you know, they’ve done it or they hadn’t, it’s too late. Y’all are at that point where you can build a path, where if you’re dreaming big you can dream a path to get there.” You know, we can build one. Staff sergeants are kind of in that middle, where you can go either way, but like I said, by the time they pick up gunny, either they’ve built that path, or it’s too late. [laughs]

TS: Well, do you think that there’s—the idea of mentors.

GH: And that’s kind of like—I wouldn’t call us so much a mentor.

TS: Well, I don’t mean in the role that you’re in, but I mean the mentors within the units that they’re in. Is there—do you find that sometimes people excel because they have a mentor?

GH: Oh, certainly, certainly, because—and that’s one of the things that I was able to bring back when I left that tour. Or even before I went, because you see this person doing this, and they’re exceling, and that’s where you want to be, so you follow that. Or else, they sit you down, you know, like—we couldn’t really mentor, because I’d see you one time. I might sit down with you for thirty minutes, even an hour, one time—

TS: It’s advising.

GH: —and pull it apart and look at it. But this other person is the one that's going to be in your shop all the time, making sure you get the right opportunities, making sure even though you don't want to go to PME[professional military education] school, that you get to PME school, so that you can learn what you need to learn. The one that makes sure you get all these different collateral duties. Collateral duties are things like safety NCO, training NCO, embark[embarkation] NCO. Why do you need all these extra training things? Because someday, you're going to be the shop supervisor, and you're going to have to teach somebody how to do it. And if you've never been in that seat, you can't teach somebody.

TS: Yes. Well, did you have a mentor or mentors that you feel that helped you along the way?

GH: Oh, probably.

TS: Anybody that sticks out?

GH: Well, like I said, my first NCOIC, Larry Scott, was fantastic. Goodness gracious. Randy Brown was phenomenal, I enjoyed—learned a lot from Val, too, she was pretty sharp. Just everybody, you know, I can't really—I have been so fortunate, my entire career, to have so many people that were just phenomenal. When I was on instructor duty, Staff Sergeant Gibson was amazing.

TS: What kind of things did they do that were so—

GH: He was very technically savvy, as well as just being good people and willing to share, you know. Some people—

TS: Sure, contrast them with people who are not good mentors. You don't have to say their names.

GH: Well, you know, like I said, willing to share what they learned, or willing to give you a chance to screw up, not to the point of not being able to fix it, but enough to learn. Say, all right, far enough, come here. [chuckles] Before we get too far off.

TS: Like a learning—like a teaching moment, kind of thing?

GH: Even when I went to the squadron as a master sergeant, after I left 260—left Headquarters Marine Corps, I went to 263. Gunner Gelsinger, Captain Gelsinger, I think he's Major Gelsinger now, was phenomenal, because it was my first time at the organizational level. So it was a whole different world.

Between him—now, and he'd pull me aside, he'd say "Listen, this is what we've got to do, trust me, they know how to do it, you take care of this, this, and this." If I hadn't had him there for guidance, if I hadn't had the master gunny there for guidance, the maintenance chief, even my gunny, because he had twenty years—fifteen years' experience on that aircraft. I had been with that aircraft for two months! You know? I

could teach—I taught him a lot of things about people, because of where I had been. He taught me a lot of things about, this is how we do maintenance on this aircraft. You know? So it was an exchange. But you know, it was very mutual, and like I said, the gunner—gosh, I've had some incredible avionics officers during my career. Patruci[?] was always phenomenal. Chris Salo[?], gosh. Like I said, I've truly been blessed with quality people that I've had the opportunity to be with, to serve with. Like when I was going through my divorce, I really contemplated getting out. That was a Gunny Miller and a Master Sergeant Linda Fox, that probably are the reason I stayed in.

TS: Why?

GH: Well, they said "Trust me, you're going to regret it." And then they also were there for me, to kind of, you know, lean on, to talk things through with, because they'd both been there before and they knew. You know, and I see now, as a veteran's employment consultant, I see so many people that go "God, I wish I had stayed in." Because I really reap the benefits now.

TS: So you enjoyed the time as an enlisted career counselor.

GH: Oh, I truly—

TS: How long were you there?

GH: Three years, just over three. Three years and a couple months. Yeah, it was a great tour, because one, I got to travel the world, that's when I went to Iwo Jima.

TS: How'd you get to travel?

GH: Well, because, like I said, Manpower goes to meet the Marines, wherever that might be.

TS: Oh, okay.

GH: So I did the East Coast tour one time, which was up and down the East Coast. North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, swoop down to Georgia, Florida.

TS: And you said you went to Iwo Jima?

GH: The West Pac [Pacific?] tour. I took the West Pac tour, we hit Hawaii, did like two, three days in Hawaii, where we gave the presentations, and then—you give a presentation in the morning, and then you spend the remainder of the day, one-on-ones.

TS: Okay. Like, do they set up appointments to kind of [unclear]?

GH: We usually have them set up appointments, or—we let them know we're coming, you know, message traffic goes out, they get plenty of advance notice, either let me know you

want to see me, or come see me with your OMPF [Official Military Personnel File] in hand, bring your record, because I may not be able to download. So they would usually preorder their CDs—their career planners would, you know, coordinate with us. And after the three days in Okinawa, we did a day at Wake Island, which is kind of a kick-around day, but some interesting history at Wake Island. Little dinky, dinky island, I think the perimeter is like three miles [actually 12 miles]. But it's got some interesting—interesting World War II, or—yeah, World War II history. And then from there, we hopped over to Iwo Jima, spend a half a day there, down on the beach and going through a couple of the tunnels and where the flag raising happened and things like that, Mount Suribachi.

TS: How was that?

GH: Pretty incredible. Especially—didn't feel it so much up on the mountain when we were looking around, because they've got monuments built, and you know, so it's kind of—I don't want to use the word commercial, but when you went down to that beach and you sat there—stood there on that black sand and put your hands in it to bring home your own little bit of Iwo Jima—[pause] and you look out over the water and you see—oh my god, these guys landed on this beach and there's nothing to protect them. Nothing. And then you thought about all the blood. You know, because before we went, we knew we were stopping at Iwo Jima, so we did a battle study. Which was cool, because it kind of brought everything to the surface. Then we did a quick battle study, little PME down there on the beach. Something I think every Marine should get an opportunity to do. Yeah, it was definitely humbling.

TS: How was it in those tunnels, too?

GH: Oh, gosh. Well, because you go down in the tunnels, and you can see where the Japanese had really built into the mountain, there. They had, you know, tunnels that went into little rooms with storage cabinets here and there, and so it was very interesting. When they say they built, they had dug in—

TS: They were dug in?

GH: They were dug in, yeah. They could completely, you know, come out, shoot, and disappear. And then come out a different hole, like rabbits. [laughs]

TS: Hmm. So that was an emotional kind of tour, perhaps?

GH: Yeah, that was an emotional trip, you know. And then the next day we hit Okinawa, and of course I had just left Okinawa, so I still had friends there, so it was kind of a little reunion-type thing. We spent a good portion of the time there, because there's a lot of Marines there. Different bases. Utima[?], Kampanza[?], saw them, zipped over to Iwakuni for a day. And took care of the Marines over there. Came back and—but it was a good tour, it was a good—little West Pac cruise. And we would do that periodically.

TS: Throughout—sounds like it would be a good thing.

GH: And that's—also got to go to Germany for a week, got to go to England for a week, I was there, so I got to do some BIP[?] trips.

TS: So did you do most of your travel during that time?

GH: Yes, I really did. I was blessed with a wonderful babysitter that said "You know, she can stay with me, that's no problem." [chuckles]

TS: And I'm trying to see on here where—what—about what year is this happening?

GH: I was there from 2000 to 2003.

TS: As the enlisted career officer?

GH: As an enlisted career counselor, yep.

TS: Well, that's interesting. So you're the enlisted career officer during the time that 9/11 happened.

GH: Yes, I was at Quantico when 9/11 happened. That was very interesting.

TS: Tell me about it.

GH: Well, we were fifty miles south of the Pentagon, but let me tell you, everything shut down. You couldn't even call off base. You know, everybody was thinking "Well, I've got to call my folks and let them know I'm okay, that I'm not there."

TS: Do you remember hearing about it, though, how did that come—how did that come about?

GH: Oh! Well, you know, obviously, we couldn't really physically hear, because we were in a very secluded building, you know, Manpower is a pretty well insulated building, so it's not like you heard the crash.

TS: No, right.

GH: But you actually saw the things, you saw the footage and of course, you know, there's all the phone conversations back and forth. Probably the weirdest thing that happened, though, was, you know, you heard all these stories about things, little stories. Like the fireball—and this I know because my next-door neighbor, because we lived in an apartment complex, was an RP up at the Pentagon.

TS: What's an RP?

GH: Religious—he was navy, a religious assistant.

TS: Okay.

GH: He was a chaplain's assistant. He did not go to work that day. For some strange reason, the chaplain had a meeting that morning in another building, so he said "Don't even bother to come in until afternoon." Well, this happened in the morning. So as soon as I get home, I go next door and I say—you know, because I didn't know he didn't go to work that morning!

TS: Right, right.

GH: And she goes "You know what?" And she told me that he didn't go to work, and it was like—do I believe in divine intervention? Oh, yes, I do. The chaplain was in a different building, the portion of the Pentagon that was hit had just been renovated and reinforced. So the damage was not as bad as it would have been had they hit another side. Because it had just been reinforced, it had just been remodeled, not everybody had moved back into it. And then you hear weird stories, like the fireball that went through the offices. There was this fireball that went wooshing through the offices, and it went through the chaplain's office. Hit all the stuff on top of his desk, did not touch the American flag. And the Bible that was sitting over here had flipped open to Revelations.

TS: That's a story.

GH: That's a little freaky. [both laugh]

TS: That's definitely a little story. Okay.

GH: But it didn't touch the American flag.

TS: Yeah.

GH: There was another one, where there was an American flag sitting right there at the end of the building, and somebody snapped a picture of it, and the American flag and the Marine Corps flag were sitting there. And it wooshed right past 'em. I think it singed the American flag, but didn't touch the Marine Corps flag either. You know, did somebody stage that photo or is that legit? I don't know.

TS: Right.

GH: I did talk to—you know, because we were in the apartment complex and a lot of—we were in Quantico, but a lot of the residents, you know, took the shuttle every day down to the Pentagon. So you're talking to them, and they go, no, that's legit. And I'm like, that's

just pretty—pretty amazing. Anyhow. It's true, you know, a fireball moving through that fast can pick and choose. You know, because it goes through so fast, when the fireball did. But it was pretty crazy. You know, we went down there—for weeks, they were pulling debris out, the—but, you know, I think the amazing thing is, the fatalities were not near what they could have been. Were there fatalities? Certainly, yes, and it was awful. But because of where it hit—it could have been much worse. It could have been much much worse. I had the opportunity, when I was—in 2007, 2008, to go and tour the Pentagon, after it had been all put back together and stuff. And they've got a little memorial in there, with the names of all the people that lost their lives, and there's a little chapel—it's right off the chapel, obviously, very suitably. And there's a little area there where you can leave your little remembrances and things like that. It's very touching. Very nicely done.

TS: Did you see any change in the military?

GH: Oh, heck yeah.

TS: Well, let's talk about that for a little bit.

GH: Well, we had gotten very complacent, I hate to use the word, but yeah, as far as security on and off the base. Went from—to, oh, no, stop, full car searches. Proper ID, you know, people had to allow an extra hour to get to work in the morning, just to get through the front gate checks. And a lot of that has remained. Not to the extreme that we were at right then, but a lot of it has remained. A lot of things have remained in place. Obviously, TSA, Homeland Security, all these things bloomed after 9/11 because we realized how vulnerable we were. How vulnerable we'd allowed ourselves to become. How complacent. And—but, no, it was definitely a transformation. Definitely.

TS: Did it effect anything that you were doing?

GH: Oh, well, a lot of people got orders real quick, yeah, certainly. People were jumping at—one thing that did come up, too, was a lot of—since we were working right next door to separations and retirement, a lot of people with key skill sets were being pulled out of retirement. Either voluntarily or involuntarily.

TS: That had already retired?

GH: That had already been military retired, or maybe transferred to FMCR [Fleet Marine Corps Reserve], but not completely retired. So there was a lot of people that were brought back in, a lot of spooling up, re—yeah, bringing the numbers up, to prepare to go. Because at that point, probably the most wonderful thing that happened out of this tragedy was American patriotism. Red, white, and blue everywhere, you know, because we had become very complacent. Pride in our flag, in ourselves in the fact that we are Americans, and no, you can't do that to us. There was a real coming together of the American—of people. Now, in the military and in the civilian community as well. We

had people—one thing that we did, is—my daughter was with a 4H group there. Like I said, 4H was a big thing when I grew up. We had an outdoor explorers 4H group that used to go camping on weekends—or, like on long weekends. But one thing that they did is they went down to the Salvation Army and help put together these care packages for all the people that were stranded, or for families, because the—with all the rescue organizations and everything, they were being really taxed, and they needed resupply all the time. Because you had a lot of people that were down there doing the rescue operations, clearing away debris, trying to find survivors.

TS: It's interesting to hear you talk about it, because everything that you have said has been about the Pentagon.

GH: Because that's where I was at!

TS: I know, I know. But most times, you know, when you hear people talking about 9/11—

GH: They talk about the Twin Towers.

TS: That's right.

GH: But see, the Twin Towers—yes, we saw the Twin Towers hit, we're watching it, we're watching it, we're watching it. And then all of a sudden, it happens here. Thirty miles up the road. So where's my focus?

TS: No, I understand it, it's just—

GH: And like I said, my next-door neighbor was—

TS: Right, could have been—

GH: Yeah, could have—but he didn't have to go to work that day.

TS: Yes. Because I think sometimes, people forget what happened at the Pentagon, sometimes. You know, even the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania, too. Well, forced into the ground.

GH: Yes, the one that hit the ground. Well, they—the martyrs.

TS: So, did you see more—the war prep—you have talked about people getting orders, stopgap, and then what did you think about for you, because your primary job was in avionics, and now you're in this recruiting role, which you love.

GH: Yes.

TS: And did you have any sense like, I should be—

GH: Oh, we were all trying to get back to a fighting unit, yes.

TS: Yeah.

GH: "No, no, no, no, no, we need you guys in place." You know, there were a few people that got a chance to augment back, but as it turned out, you know, I got a chance to go just a few years later. [laughs]

TS: Right, right.

GH: And that happened with a lot of us, you know.

TS: But did you feel that sense of "I should be", well, you did say, yeah.

GH: Yeah, there was a lot of people chomping at the bit "Get me out of here, get me out of here, I need to be back there, I need to go kill—I need to go kill me some ragheads, because they can't do this to us." Like I said, there was a huge—the same type of thing happened after Pearl Harbor.

TS: Well, a lot of anger, too.

GH: A lot of anger, of "No, no, no, no, no, what goes on over there is one thing, but when you come over here? I don't think so." And like I said, there was a huge amount of patriotism. As a matter of fact, I still have, in my rearview mirror—you know how everybody had red, white, and blue streamers from their antennas? Well, my daughter made me one out of the vinyl strings, and I had it on my antenna, on my Blazer, for like five years. Well, I traded my Blazer, I took it off the Blazer, and I put it behind my rearview, and it's still hanging from my rearview mirror. [laughs]

TS: That's ten years, almost.

GH: That's ten years.

TS: Yeah.

GH: It's a little faded. [chuckles]

TS: So what—where did you go, then, after—after this tour?

GH: I went to HMM 263, which was a forty-six squadron down at Newover[?].

TS: Okay.

GH: In 2003. Checked in about September timeframe. And we chopped the twenty-fourth MEU, early 2004.

TS: Could you say that again?

GH: We chopped to the twenty-fourth Marine Expeditionary Unit, MEU.

TS: Okay. [chuckling]

GH: Chopped means—[sighs] all these pieces come into place. The Marine Expeditionary Unit is a composite of a—what is it. A reg—no, it's not a regiment, it's a battalion level, and an ace[?], and then a support section. The ace is a squadron that's been beefed up.

TS: Okay.

GH: You know, because HMM 263 was solely 46s [refers to Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight, a transport helicopter]. Well, they're the corps, then, and then we get our Huey Cobra augment, and our 53 augment and our harrier augment, and then our main function was, at that point, to do a six month cruise on the side pan[?], which was an old boat and it sucked. Anyhow. Fortunately, I only had to do a week on that boat. [laughs] We did one of the workups on that boat, I found out I did not like boats. But I said, I can do this, I can survive. But then our mission changed, and with the war in Iraq going on, they sent the MEU as an additional augment straight to Iraq. So instead of doing six months floating around the ocean, we did six months in Iraq, which—well, seven months. Left in—got there in July, came back in January.

TS: July of '04? To January of '05?

GH: July of '04, January '05, yeah.

TS: There is a lot going on then.

GH: Yeah, there was, because the—we took back Fallujah in November, so it was a pretty active time. Very active time. Lot of IEDs [improvised explosive device, or roadside bomb]—that's probably the craziest thing about being a TQ. When I got to TQ, of course, having never—

TS: What's TQ stand for?

GH: Camp Al-Taqaddum, don't ask me to spell it. [laughs]

TS: TQ sounds good. And that's in Iraq.

GH: Al-Taqaddum—yes. Probably very centrally located. There's a huge lake next to it. Al Asad was where most of the air wing were, because it was an old international airport,

that the military had taken over. So they were able to have fixed wing aircraft there after they cleared off enough garbage. Because we bombed the crap out of it during the first Iraqi war, so now we're having to smooth it all out so that we can use it. [laughing] I know that sounds strange, but it's very true. The people who did our—that went ahead, you know, our preliminary party?

TS: Yes.

GH: Had to bring in loads and loads of gravel and fill in all the holes in the asphalt, in the runway, so that we could park our birds on it. Helicopters don't need runways, but they do need parking pads. [laughs]

TS: Level.

GH: Yeah, they need someplace level they can park.

TS: So, what was it—when you got your orders to go to Iraq, what went through your mind?

GH: Like, oh my god, we're going to combat. The guys were really pretty excited about it, those that had, you know, experienced it before. I—it was something very new for me, so I was pretty—but then again, I also knew that I was going with security in my squadron. Talk about an extended family. Go to combat with somebody for six months. You become tighter with those people than you probably are with your brothers and sisters, because of the things that you experience. Maybe not if you were growing up together, but you know, after you've been separated a while and you've all got your own families and stuff like that. But those people become—well, you depend on each other every day. You laugh together, you cry together, you know what's going on. Lot of, lot of good things. Lot of good things. One of the guys had a pool they got sent over somehow. [laughing]

TS: Somebody sent over a pool?

GH: Yeah, we had to put it up inside a tent, because there's so much blowing sand. [laughing] Anyhow.

TS: Well, what about leaving your daughter behind?

GH: Well, it was actually pretty interesting, because seeing as how I'd been divorced for quite a while at this point, you know, her dad's always been there for her, and in this scenario, he literally quit his job and—

TS: Was he no longer in the Marine Corps?

GH: Yeah, he was retired. So he literally quit his civilian job, moved down to North Carolina, and moved into my house, so that she wouldn't have to switch schools.

TS: Wow.

GH: So he did that—you know, I thank him for that, many, many times over, because it was tough for her—

TS: And how old was she then?

GH: When I went to Iraq, she was in middle school, sixth grade, seventh grade.

TS: Okay. What—was she—how did you talk to her about it?

GH: You know, she—Mom had come and gone, never for that long. She was scared, but she also knew, you know [coughs]. I told her, you know what, Mommy is going with her squadron. Mom is going as the avionics chief. Mom's not going to be at the front lines. Doesn't help with IEDs, but you know, we kind of keep that part to ourselves. Probably a few things she doesn't know yet to this day. [chuckles] Better left unsaid. But yeah, she was pretty scared, but one of the good things is, you know, the war in Iraq had been going on for a while. So we did have phone lines, you know, we could make morale calls a couple times a week. We could have internet access through the squadron, you know, connectivity. As well as, they had internet centers that you could go to. They were all made out of plywood, but that's okay. They were still there. Or—it was either plywood buildings that they had knocked together, or bombed-out buildings that had been kind of restructured, so that they were safe. So there was connectivity, and that was huge, you know. While I was over in Iraq, there was—seventeen women had been on an exercise together, I think they were army. And they were kidnapped, or they were—something happened to them. God, I can't think. I want to say they were taken captive, but I think it was they were hit, the convoy they were on. No, yeah, it was the convoy they were on was hit, and a bunch of them were injured and killed. Obviously, that wasn't us, but I made it a point, because I was a senior female, I said "Listen ladies, call your families. Do not—" because we find out about things two days before you do. Through message traffic and just—I said "Call your families. Don't tell them what happened, because you can't release it."

TS: Just say you're okay?

GH: Just call them and talk to them. All they need to do is hear your voice, and know that they—because when they announce it on the news, they're going to announce when it happened. If your parents know they've talked to you since then, they know it wasn't you.

TS: I see. Right.

GH: [chuckles] Just call them.

TS: So you're saying you were there when this happened, but it wasn't—

GH: Yeah, it wasn't our unit, it was actually army people.

TS: So if it's in the news, they say some women, and—

GH: And everybody freaks out.

TS: I see, I see.

GH: So to alleviate that, call them. Call mom and dad, make sure they hear your voice. It doesn't matter what you talk about, don't talk about that happening. Just make sure that they know that they've heard your voice. And that you're doing okay. IEDs were an interesting thing, because you never knew when they were coming, or where they were coming. I remember the first morning I was—second morning we were there, I think? We had comfort trailers. Wow! Huge! That was awesome.

TS: What are comfort trailers?

GH: Comfort trailers were—we had to live in tents, but at least they had tents with wooden floors that had air conditioners in them. So you can't complain too much, so it could be a lot worse. Like I said, they'd been there a few years. Comfort trailers were little, like, trailers, mobiles, that had bathrooms and showers in them. [chuckles]

TS: There's a huge smile on Gail's face right now, for that. Two thumbs up.

GH: I was like, I can do this. I have a real—I mean, we had port-a-johns everywhere else, or you know, but we did have comfort trailers near the—you know, near where we were billeted. Near the tents that we lived in.

TS: Now, did you have to—did you stay in one place, or did you have to travel around, or what—what was that like?

GH: We pretty much had to—I pretty much stayed in one place. If I did travel, I traveled by air, I didn't convoy. If I needed to go up to Al Asad, we had meetings once a month at the wing level, which was up at Al Asad for all the avionics chiefs. So either I would go or—for avionics, you know, corps, so one month I would go, one month the captain would go. You know, we'd kind of flip back and forth. And you'd take a 46 up one day, take a 46 back the next day. Go to the meeting.

TS: What was that, like flying? In Iraq?

GH: Most of the time, it was, you know, where—between TQ and Al Asad was pretty safe.

TS: Were you nervous?

GH: I was at first, yeah. You know, after a while you kind of "Okay, well, we've been lucky this far, so I guess it's okay." Like I said, that route was pretty safe. That was the "milk run". When I say the milk run, because that was also the route—like when I came back from one of the meetings, I brought a whole bunch of supplies with me. Classified gear that we had had repaired—I would carry classified gear up to get repaired, it would get repaired while I was at the meeting, I'd carry it back.

TS: I see.

GH: And because I had a security clearance, whenever they needed a courier [chuckles].

TS: You got it. I see.

GH: One of several. You know, there's a lot of people that courier [gear?], but if we were going out, yeah, you were bringing some stuff back. But like I said, that was kind of—we called it a milk run, because it was a supply route, too. Because, like I said, Al Asad was the big base. Down at TQ, we just had a few helicopters, like two helicopter squadrons. So action was actually where the MEU headquarters was, and that was at Calsu[?]. That was a pretty wicked little place.

TS: What was happening there?

GH: Well, that was—they had a lot more interaction, they were a lot closer to the front line, and that was actually where the element of the 24th MEU's attack on Fallujah, to regain it from the national—from the Iraqis, took place.

TS: So what was—It's hard to say "what was your experience like" in, you know, a war zone. But when—and it's also probably hard to separate what you felt like then and now reflecting on it after you've come back.

GH: Well, it was weird things, because you know, like—boom, you know, the IEDs go off. Like I said, we were in that comfort trailer, second morning I was there, all of a sudden, boom, ba-boom, boom boom. You know. Rockets are starting to hit us. Not right where we're at, but the girls that had been there for six months and were leaving in two weeks are sitting there brushing their teeth, they're going "Oh shit."

TS: And what are you doing?

GH: I'm going "Oh my god!" You know, "What am I supposed to do, run for cover?"
And they're just going "Ah, shit."
And you're kind of like "Okay, apparently I just need to get a reality check here."

TS: Right.

GH: But at the same point in time, we had aircraft that took a beating. Apparently, was it Habbaniyah. Habbaniyah was full[?] forces. They had a little group there that used to like to set off IEDs, and they were only about a mile, mile and a half away, geographically—or a couple klicks away. Yeah, probably. They would aim for the—because TQ used to be a small air station, or something like that—yeah, used to be a small air station for the Iraqi Reserve or something. Iraqi national guard. So there was an air tower. Well, that was a tall thing that they could target. So our 53s that were next to it—we had one 53 [CH-53 Sea Stallion, transport helicopter] that had four Purple Hearts. Got hit four times. Parked. But one bad thing that happened was it got hit one time right after it touched down. So the pilots had already left, they had walked out, but the air crew was still on board, doing the post-flights. You know, standing it down, closing it up, and they were just about ready to get out when it hit. So we sent a couple guys home with rods in their arms and their legs and things like that. But they went home alive.

TS: [unclear] but it was with your unit?

GH: The ace itself, some of our support people, we lost, but our squadron—we sent a few people home early. We sent a few people home, like right before we left, they hit our flight line, where our 46s were parked. Now, Colonel Osborne was phenomenal, he was pretty sharp. So he got these big old concrete pylons and every two aircraft, we would have like two aircraft parked with pylons on either side of them. So the aircraft were between them. And these are like those big concrete road blocks, they're about four feet high, four and a half feet high. They were for IE—for multi purposes. They prevented shrapnel from going from one spot to another, they also gave air crew that might be out on the flight line working on aircraft a place to hide, should something happen. And about two weeks before we left, we got hit on the flight line. And those pylons saved a lot of people. They also saved a lot of aircraft. [chuckles] Because they isolated blasts. You know.

TS: To whatever area they landed in.

GH: Well, they—yeah, isolated shrapnel, so that large pieces of shrapnel couldn't go over and damage other aircraft, and it isolated the blast area, that type of thing. Because we lost—we had two aircraft that really—well, we did bring them back to the States, we did manage to get them repaired enough in those last two weeks to fly them from TQ to Al Asad so we could put them on a C-17 [Boeing C-17 Globemaster III, large military transport aircraft, fixed-wing] and bring them home with us. But once they got home and they got up to Cherry Point for the P & E teams to work on them, which are the real expert repairs, they said "These ladies are getting retired."

TS: How many did you take with you?

GH: We took all twelve. We took twelve. We only brought like seven aircraft back, because we left some in-country to replace aircraft that other squadrons had lost, because when 263 came back from this tour, this was their last tour as HMM 263. They stood

down—after we chopped back from the MEU, we got back, we stood down as HMM 263 and went into transition, because 263 was the first squadron to stand up as a VMM squadron with the Osprey. [VMM-263 (Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 263) is a United States Marine Corps tiltrotor squadron consisting of MV-22B Osprey transport aircraft] So that's why we left a lot—we left several aircraft in-country and transferred them to other squadrons. Because we weren't going to need them anymore!

TS: Well, tell me about that picture of all the women that are in that—

GH: That was—like I said, there was Okariba[?] and [unclear], tomorrow I can think of her name, but I can't think of it right now.

TS: That's okay. We can fix the transcript.

GH: I mean, I might even be able to look them up in my squadron book. But—

TS: What was that—who—what was it all about, why was that picture taken?

GH: Why was that picture taken? Well, that picture was actually taken because my first avionics officer, Captain Whitehead, long retired, sent me an email while I was in Iraq and asked me to write his aunt. His aunt was in a nursing home and not doing very well, and she was a World War II veteran. And so not only did I write her a letter, I had a couple other girls write her a letter. I sent her an email to—via him, with this picture in it. He printed it off and brought it to her, as well as, you know, then I sent her a letter later on. And she just thought that was the coolest thing in the world. She was eighty-seven years old, she got her first email. [laughs]

TS: And it's—describe the picture, who's in the picture?

GH: Well, the picture is actually of all the women—Marines—that were with 263. Like I said, with the exception of the Cobra pilots, because they were at Calsu[?]. So we had forty-six mechs there, we had fifty-three mechs there, was an air framer in the picture, maintenance admin type, a supply type, as well as myself and a couple of the female pilots, ordinance-men.

TS: So she was pretty pleased to get that?

GH: She was thrilled, she thought that was like way too cool. And it was a wonderful—it was a cool picture. In fact, my sergeant major took it.

TS: Yeah.

GH: You know, so. But it had a neat meaning, and it does have a special meaning, I'm glad you asked about it, because that's why we took that—got everybody together to take that picture to send to her.

TS: So it was for her, you actually didn't tell me that earlier, yeah.

GH: No. It was taken so that we would have it for her, but guess what, we all have it.

TS: Yeah, that's right.

GH: We all have it.

TS: And there's that connection.

GH: Yes.

TS: Between the women.

GH: Yup, that World War II veteran that was in a nursing home and not doing well, and she just—that just made her whole day, I guess, when she got it. So that was pretty cool.

TS: So was there anything that was particularly difficult while you were in Iraq?

GH: Visiting the—what do you call it? Oof. See, TQ was a triage—we had—we used to take casevac [casualty evacuation], it was a squadron there specifically whose role was casevac. And we used to give them a maintenance day once or twice a month, even—because our primary mission was to support the Marine—the 24th MEU down at Calsu[?], but we would get—we would give them a break once or twice a month, give them like one or two maintenance days. So that they could stand down, really concentrate on fixing their gear, have a little bit of time off, because when you're on casevac, you have birds ready to turn at any given time, and at least four, ready to go up right now, because two of them have to go. Nobody flies alone in Iraq. You always fly in teams. Usually, what would happen is two aircraft would be standing by, both of them would be turning, that way if one of them had a malfunction that was caught during the preflight, the other one could go. So you always had two turning and ready to go. And they always went with either a Cobra or Huey escort, two aircraft. So this one would go up, the Cobra from another squadron would meet them, and they would go to the casualty evacuations—evacs. And of course, they would bring them back to Calsu, or to TQ for triage. We had one runway that was long enough to get a C-130 up, so if we had to casevac somebody who's severely injured—like I was talking about our gentlemen with the rods in their arms? I went and saw them over at the—darn it, I can't think of what it was called, but basically, our little mini hospital, which, they could do a lot more than you would believe. We have—we had so many Iraqi war veterans now that probably should never have survived, because of speed of casualty evacs, these little triages everyplace, and the capability and dedication of those personnel. Those nurses were fantastic, and those doctors, they were just amazing. I used to go to church with them on Sunday, and we would just—you know, just had the most respect for them we could

possibly have. Plus, like I said, we had a runway right there to send them off to Germany if they really needed something. To stabilize them and then get them moved on.

TS: Right.

GH: And so we've saved—we saved so many people because of that quick turnaround. But, fortunately, I didn't have to make flights like this, but you know, you'd listen to the corpsmen when they'd come back after they had to do a fallen angel flight. And that was pretty catastrophic. They said, you know, everybody you bring back dies on the way back, it's not a good flight. And they had to do some serious decompressing. You know, and the interesting part about it was the ones that had experienced it before, it wasn't their first tour to Iraq, they were the ones that pulled the other ones aside and said "No, sit down, right here, now that it's over, we're going to talk. Because we have to, we have to sort this all out and experience it." And we had, you know, like I said, we were very blessed in the fact that we were relatively—we were extremely fortunate. We had people that got seriously injured but lived to tell the tale, and can still function in—function with some type of a normalcy of life.

TS: Right.

GH: Aches, pains, compressed spines, rods in their arms, but, you know, they still have arms. They still have spines. [sighs] Things you see. So like I said, all in all, we got back to the States right before we de-chopped. We had a memorial service, and especially during Fallujah, the ground forces paid heavily. You know. And that was—well, now General Johnson, Colonel Johnson at the time. You could tell, even though as a colonel you're kind of far removed from your lance corporals, but it still—you could tell it still really hurt him. And to see what those other gentlemen are having to do, face to face, because you're right beside them when it happens. I'm really, really fortunate that I never had to experience that.

TS: You also said that you had a visitor—a couple of visitors. Who was it, Ollie North that came?

GH: Yeah! Well, actually, we'd only been there like a day or two.

TS: Oh, really?

GH: Yeah. We were still setting up shop, and Colonel North came and visited the island. SECNAV [Secretary of the Navy] was there at the same time, ran into Sergeant Major Kent[?], turned out he was a three-MEF [Marine Expeditionary Force] sergeant major. I was like "cool beans!"

TS: So what does that mean?

GH: Well, he was basically the sergeant major for the entire are of operations, because three MEF was in control of it. There's one MEF, two MEF, three MEF, Fleet Marine Forces. [end of audio file 2, beginning of audio file 3. Some audio seems to be missing between these files.]

TS: So you would stay out of the other two ends, and—

GH: Yeah, you know, the witch is just that evil person that just—and then the ho, yeah. Witches, bitches and whores. So the bitch was a compliment.

TS: But, so did you feel like your—you were—had opportunity? [recording error]

GH: So I bumped into Ham, he introduced me to Sergeant Major Estrada, who was Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps at that time. I was like, how cool. And—

TS: You had said earlier, Sergeant Major Kent is—

GH: Became the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps after that time frame. He is currently, is getting ready to step down, but he's just a phenomenal guy.

TS: Describe what you said when you said you—was it in the mess hall, he went to sit down?

GH: No, that was—when I first met him, I was enlisted career counselor, that was right at the end of my tour, my last trip was over to Germany. And he was the sergeant major for MarFor Euro over there. Marine Forces Europe. And—close of the business that day, he said "Everybody come on upstairs, we're going to have a meeting." Basically it was just a get-together. And when he—so, we're all upstairs, and of course, it's the bar upstairs, it's after hours, it's an embassy, you know. [coughs] So—one thing that was funny is there was a sign that said "Import Beer 50 cents". Import beer was Miller Lite. [laughs] Because we were in Germany!

TS: That's right. That's cute.

GH: And German beer is so much better. Wow. I was like, "Wow, I like this, because I don't really like beer." So we're having a beer and just chatting and now, nobody's getting shnockered[sic], just chatting and enjoying company, and Sergeant Major comes up, because he'd had an extra phone call that took a little bit longer. And he comes in, chats with the staff NCOs at the bar, and then he goes and sits down at the tables nearby, and the most amazing thing happened, because he sits down near some troops. Well, suddenly, all the chairs are focused on him. He's in there talking with them and working with—enjoying them, and talking to the sergeants, talking to the NCOs and just really interested in what's going on and interacting with them. And I do mean interacting with them, it's not like they're listening to him, he's really interacting with them.

And I looked at that and I thought "Wow, that is awesome. That is somebody—if his Marines love him that much, he must be something else." And after I got to know him, they were right. He is, he's phenomenal. He's just an exceptional person.

TS: So, in—is there any other, anything else you want to talk about from your experience in Iraq?

GH: No, I think, you know, like I said, we hit the—we talked a lot about it, gosh, I didn't realize there was that much to talk about. Like I said, we had some really neat things go on—

TS: Oh, I do believe there's one question about the sand.

GH: Oh, the sand. [laughs] I was showing you a picture.

TS: That's right.

GH: Of the guys filling sandbags when we first got there, because like I said, we kind of got a piece of real estate, they threw some tents on it and said "Make it safe." So that requires sandbagging around the—around all the buildings, about four feet high. So that any blast—four to five feet high, so that that way, one, you're isolating if something does happen, you're protected—if it happens outside, you've got some protection. If it happens inside, well, uh, you know what, you're toast anyhow, but at least hopefully you're protecting somebody else. So we're filling sandbags, was the duty of the day. Everybody. Especially E5 and below. [chuckles] There were advantages to being a master sergeant. Let's see. And contrary to popular belief, it isn't like beach sand, it's hard as a—the top two inches is very sandy, and blows around. The rest of it is like concrete. And you had to literally take a pickaxe and pick through it and break it up, but it breaks—once you start breaking it up, it crumbles just like pottery would, or like clay would, or something like that, that's dried out. But it—you have to get through that crust. Because what happens is, you get the rainy season, and when it rains—it doesn't rain much in the desert, but when it does, it just torrential downpours, and then it—the sun comes out, and it bakes. And it's like making pottery, literally.

TS: So yeah, that picture that you had the pickaxe.

GH: Pickaxe, going at it. And let me tell you, those guys had some muscles, especially—doggone it, what was his name, because he went from there up to Quantico, and he eventually [unclear] getting out and went back to Minnesota.

Because I remember getting a call from him—from somebody looking to hire him, and they said "Well, would you consider him—would you consider him eligible for re-hire?"

And I said "If I could have him back tomorrow, hell yeah!" [both laugh]

And she goes "Well, I guess that's what I wanted to hear!"

TS: So what'd you do after you came back from Iraq?

GH: Well, after I came back from Iraq, like I said, HMM 263, that was their twilight tour as an HMM squadron. So we went into transition. Got rid of all aircraft, went over to a training squadron and started training on the Osprey aircraft. Going through the schools and getting the organizational things. And shortly thereafter, I got selected for master gunnery sergeant and checked into MAWs 26. And I was there for three and a half years before I retired. Was that a good tour? Oh, definitely.

TS: What made it good?

GH: What made it good? My Marines. I had some of the best staff NCOs, because I was the MAWS avionics chief, so I had seven work centers under me. When 29 went to Iraq and they left all their other people they didn't take with them, I had two hundred and fifty Marines at one time. So that was a little crazy. But because I had such good dash-twos, you know, second in commands, good sergeant, good master sergeants, and my gunnies were phenomenal. And that's where I've got to tell you about Gunny Leach[?].

TS: Okay.

GH: He was actually Staff Sergeant Leach at the time, but Staff Sergeant Leach was one of these guys who was the consummate bachelor. [laughs] He had his Bronco 4X4 and everything else. And his troops, as a gag gift, gave him a purple elephant for Christmas. And they told him about it, this was to keep him warm and happy, that's why it had the little gel pack in it. Well, through the rumor, I found out—because he was getting ready to take this deployment with 365 to go to Afghanistan. And it was like the first time we were in Afghanistan, so it was new. He was the person to send, because he was phenomenal. He's one of those 620 guys, and if you were avionics you would understand that a 620 guy is a special character, because he can work on just—they're extremely resourceful. I don't know why, but they just—

TS: Could do anything?

GH: Just don't ask any questions.

TS: Okay. [both laugh] I see.

GH: Appreciate the results, just don't ask how it got there.

TS: I understand.

GH: Okay. Some of them are good, some of them are a little crazy. [laughing] Just appreciate the results. And—but he was very—he had a lot of special skills, he worked on a whole lot of different things, he'd had a good experience, he was the person to make this trip. So. Anyhow, found out he was taking his purple elephant with him. And I said "Well,

that elephant can't go. He doesn't have any PPE," any protective gear. So I took it home—stole it, okay. Might as well say it, I stole it out of shop. And took it home for the weekend, and I made it a little flak jacket. Because one of my hobbies is, I like to sew, so I made it a little flak jacket, and a little boonie[?] cover, got it some—because we all had to have our Wiley X's, our—sunglasses that has special rubber lining to protect you from the sand. So I got him a set of something that looked like those, and his canteen and his 782 gear [load-carrying gear], got him a little squirt gun, gave him some weapons and things like that. So I got him all outfitted to go. And then Monday, I gave him to the sergeants.

One of the sergeants—I called up 461, the 53 squadron across, and I said "Hey, you know, we need to get him egress trained." So we've got photographs of this pink elephant getting thrown out of the aircraft. And they were all laughing so hard they could hardly throw it. Then the other sergeants got ahold of it and he was the martial arts instructor. And he's got him martial arts qualified. So he's got his black belt in martial arts, you see in one of the later pictures. And anyhow. Staff Sergeant Leach, you know, Gunny Leach, did not even know we stole it until we sent all the photographs of all these training evolutions that this thing was doing to the squadron website. And they got posted. And everybody's saying "Oh my god, look at," because we called him Little Bill, because it's Bill Leach, so this was Little Bill. And so Little Bill got—and then the funny thing is, is we have pictures of him getting qualified on his—the forklift and some other things.

And Bill goes "When did you do all this?"

And I said "Well, you oughta know, you signed off on all the paperwork!" [both laugh]

He goes "What?!"

Because when I finally gave him his elephant back, I gave him back with his CPR card, his forklift quals, his Pettibone quals [Pettibone is a forklift brand], his black belt sign-offs for martial arts training—he went to the rifle range, by the way, too.

TS: How'd he do?

GH: He shot expert, of course.

TS: Okay, just checking. [laughter]

GH: So—and—

TS: That's right, he's an outstanding Marine.

GH: Yes, that's right. Well, you know. And it was just too funny. God, we had so much fun with that. And then later on, Leach did take him to Afghanistan, they—we got pictures back of him doing pull-ups on the bar, you know, going PTing with the guys. Oh, by the way, the day before we gave him back to Leach, we let him have some libo.

TS: What's libo?

GH: Liberty.

TS: Oh, okay, thank you.

GH: Ability to go out in town and kind of hang out.

TS: Oh, the elephant got some.

GH: Yeah. We took him to Hooters. [laughs] We have a picture of him with all the Hooters girls. And the only thing Leach said is "He went to Hooters without me? That's just wrong!"

TS: That's a great story.

GH: But we had fun with that. But yes, he did—then he took him to Afghanistan, and we got pictures back of him playing poker—and of course he won. You know, Little Bill had all the money in front of him. And so, it was kind of funny.

TS: Yeah, it's a great story.

GH: It just turned out to be a big—just too much fun. And those are the little things that everybody in the squadron could appreciate, because when we sent those pictures out—I sent them to S4, and they're laughing through their tears, as they're sending them off—putting them on the internet, they're going "This is so great."

TS: And what does that say about the Marines and the military, that kind of story, what do you think?

GH: You know, I hate to—they always say marines play hard—they work hard, and they play hard. And it's very true, but you know what? The most dangerous thing in the world is two idle sergeants.

TS: [chuckles]

GH: Keep them busy or they will find something to do, and you may not like what they find.

TS: That sounds good. Well, let me say—because I have a couple more formal questions to ask you.

GH: I'm sorry, I can't believe I've been rambling like this.

TS: No, no, you've covered, really, a lot of the questions I haven't had to ask you. But I do need to ask you about discrimination. Did you ever—like, for—not just gender discrimination, you know, or anything like that. But as you're going through—as you've

gone through the years, but you know, any—did you ever, in your positions as a gunny sergeant, did you ever have anybody come up to you and say, you know, I've experienced discrimination, or—of any sort, race, or you know, gender, anything like that.

GH: Okay, shoot. Sometimes, I won't say it doesn't exist, because it does. One thing that you learn very young is, you all bleed red. Because you train side by side. It's—you forget about it. I mean, it's still there, in that—you work side by side with somebody, but you know, we still have our own cultural interests, and that's okay, that's our differences based on our cultures and where we came from and what we did. I still don't like R&B [rhythm and blues music], you know. It's just, I don't like it. [chuckles] But then they probably don't like country, so it's okay. Have I ever had somebody blatantly say some things? Yeah, but it wasn't in a work situation where it had to be dealt with, it was actually a personal situation, we were out Friday night, and one person that had had some, you know—well, I hate to say black individuals, but yeah, black individuals working for him—this was right before he retired from the Marine Corps, too. And I'd never noticed him to have any prejudice towards them professionally.

But when he was drunk that night, and some of the things he said, I was just taken aback totally. I was like "Wow, I just never saw this coming out of you. Because you've had—you've always gone to bat for your sergeants or your staff sergeants that were of color, and so for you to say something about 'and you know, back in my day, when I grew up, you know, yeah, we had a black mammie that did the cooking and the cleaning at the house, but she knew her place'" to have him say that—yeah, he was pretty well schnockered, but it just shocked me, because I hadn't seen that in him professionally, so it just totally blew me away. And I wasn't sure how to deal with it, other than the fact that I knew that by three working days he was going on terminal leave, so it's like—and I'd never seen it happen professionally.

TS: Right.

GH: It's really very shocking. I've seen some more females feeling they've been discriminated against, but half the time, you know, [pause] "Are you being discriminated against, or are you just not pulling your fair share and expecting them to [pause] make an exception because you're female? Because that ain't gonna happen." I don't know. I can't—you know, I know there are instances. More where I would see incidences would be when somebody felt like there was something sexual going on in the preferences.

TS: Oh, you mean like with the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell?"

GH: Well, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," or hanky-panky. You know.

TS: I don't know—what do you mean by "hanky-panky," Gail?

GH: Well, you know, when the sergeant and the corporal are screwing each other, or the gunny's screwing the lance corporal or the corporal or something like that, and the rest of the shop finds out about it, and all of a sudden there's preferential treatment.

TS: So that creates tension within—

GH: Oh, it does. And that's why, you know, there's the rules of engagement. Rule one, must be available—that means not married, not engaged. Rule two, don't play where you work, because it's bad juju. I'm a firm believer in that, don't play where you work. Because while it's going on, everybody else is miserable, after it's over, you're miserable.

TS: Are those the only two rules to that?

GH: Oh, no, there's actually four, but that's okay.

TS: Okay. Not going to go into them?

GH: Oh, you— [laughter]

TS: Yeah, let's—I would like to hear all of them.

GH: Rule one.

TS: All right.

GH: Available, that means not married, not engaged, not living together. And separated means legally, not geographically, which was huge in Okinawa and Iwakuni with all the UDPs. Rule two, don't play where you work. Rule three, must be intelligent enough to maintain your half of the conversation. Notice I didn't pick a topic. [laughs] Rule four was the two-drink rule. If it takes more than two drinks to make him look good, what's he going to look like in the morning with a hangover? And that's where the designated thinker comes in!

TS: Oh, designated thinker, okay.

GH: Yes, yes. You see, every Friday, you have to give your Marines the don't drink and drive, use a designated driver, and I always say, I take that one step farther. You have to have a designated thinker, with—amongst you, too. It's okay for the designated driver to be the designated thinker, but the purpose of the designated thinker is to keep you from doing something or someone that you will truly regret the next day. You know, that's that person to pull you back and say "Oh, no." [laughs]

TS: I like that rule. Everyone should have that rule, that's a good one.

GH: Designated thinker.

TS: I like that.

GH: I'm not sure where I—I think I heard somebody and I coined it and took it to the next level, but yes, you have to have a designated—even my daughter, my nineteen year old daughter knows about the designated thinker.

TS: Well, now I do, so. I feel I've learned something, for sure.

GH: Oh, dear.

TS: Now, did you ever receive any memorable award or anything—decoration or anything like that that you're especially [unclear]

GH: No like, war awards, that type of thing, no, I've never been awarded a Purple Heart or anything like that, but I've got—two, three—navy com—I got my MSM when I retired, my Meritory [sic, Meritorious] Service Medal. I got a—my navy com [Commendation Medal] when I left Headquarters Marine Corps.

TS: But is there anything that you're especially proud of, that you received?

GH: Hmm.

TS: Because when we were looking through this book—what do you call this book down here on the floor?

GH: Oh, my "I love me"[?] book? Yeah. There's lots of little write-ups of things that I've done and things like that. Probably the navy com, because I really—like I said, I really did thoroughly enjoy that tour. And you got a lot of chances to feel like you made a difference.

TS: And where was that one at?

GH: That was at Headquarters Marine Corps as a career counselor. You know, when you're talking to people one on one, you know, I get down to 263, I've been there about six months, and I see somebody through the fence, and he goes "[gasps]", and he goes "Yeah, let me shake your hand," he goes "Thank you so much." The guy's a sergeant major. He says "I would never have made first sergeant, I was passed over for gunny. I talked to you, you told me 'You [remain?] remedial.' I got promoted and now I'm a sergeant major." In fact, now he's a [year station?] sergeant major. You know, just little success stories back and forth.
One guy, I told him "Look, you're going to have to take those—" He did not want to go to instructor duty, or not—he had orders to NMCI, he called, he was [no-oh-three?].
He goes "I don't want to leave the fleet, I don't want to go there, da-da-da-da."

And I said "Dude, you've got orders. Time to take lemons and make lemonade."

He says "Truthfully, this has been one of the best things that could have helped—happened to me, you know, long term. Because it's really structured not just—the difference that I could make by fixing all the things that I saw were wrong, but in where I am now and my after Marine Corps life."

TS: Interesting.

GH: You know, you had so much chance to really talk to people and help them, give them the tools to make themselves better. And I guess that's why I kind of like what I do now.

TS: Right, with the counseling that you're able to do.

GH: As a veteran's employment rep, you know. Help them keep—you know, make a better life for themselves and their families.

TS: When did you start thinking about retiring?

GH: [coughs] My decision to retire was a family choice. Beth's dad, like I said, had been very supportive, last tour of Iraq, but his—third wife, has MS [multiple sclerosis], and he had had some medical setbacks. And so the idea of going to Iraq again and deploying for a full year this time just wasn't a good option. So I had to pick door number three. It turns out it was the right time for me to make that choice. It was a tough decision to make, because once again, you're leaping into the unknown, as well as, you know, this has been my life for the past twenty-five years. And you're like, what next? But everything fell into place, so it was a good thing.

TS: What do you miss the most?

GH: The Marines.

TS: Why? Why—everybody says that, what does that mean?

GH: The camaraderie, the joking, the—there's a certain intrinsic bond, you know, the "once a Marine, always a Marine" is very very true. I tell you stories about, you know, Leach and his Bronco. Cork[or Quirk?]—Cork was—everybody else hated Cork, I loved Cork. You know, all these other NCOIC's couldn't stand him because he was a little bit of a—well, he's very much an extrovert. But he was a little bit of a clown. He was also a little bit of a—maybe didn't do everything the way they wanted him to do it. But I'm kind of the "what's the method behind your madness?" Maybe I learned that on the drill field, we were talking about some of these individuals, you really had to find out what was going on. "Where are you taking this from here? All right, I can deal [with] that. All right, long as I know where you're going, carry on." [chuckles] But—it's, like I said, I was very fortunate, when I left, or when I went to 263, I had some fantastic people teach me how to work at the O level. When I went back to MAWs, and I was able to bring that as well

as going home to the I level, you know, where I understood how things were going. I had the luxury of having some tremendous individuals to help carry that load.

TS: Do you have anybody that you consider a hero or heroine?

GH: Hmm. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. You know, what's a hero, except for a person that's been in the right place and the wrong time? Gee. That I've had direct opportunity to work with? Colonel Osborne would definitely be one, when he took that—he took us to Iraq, his knowledge, his expertise, as well as, you know—and of course Hackett—or, not Hackett, god, what was his—Hackett was the [unclear] guy. Brown, I think it was, Brown. We were there about two weeks, and one of the 46s—like I said, they always went in tandem. And I think they were on one of their milk runs, supply runs, got hit. Soup[?] panel got hit. Soup panel is the electronics panel.

Apparently, angels kept that thing in the air, because [it] got hit by an RPG [rocket-propelled grenade] and it flew past the bad zone, and then the crew chief turns around and says [in very tense voice] "We've got to put this thing down!" Because the entire back was in flames. So they put it down. They were able to roll out of the aircraft, all egress safely. Well, the other aircraft was able to continue—you know, to do suppressive fire, because they do have—they've got door gunners, so they were able to do suppressive fire, called in the mayday. Within twenty minutes, we—it was like a textbook rescue. Within twenty minutes, there was a harrier there, so then the other 46 was able to get down, get the crew on—this was the one gentleman I was talking about, his name starts with a W and I can't think of it, that we had to send home because he had a rod from here to here, you know, as well as his whole shoulder was kind of—getting out of there, because egressing out of the aircraft, he fell on his shoulder and shattered it, as well as his upper arm. Because he virtually got thrown from the bird. But the fact is, all of them got out of there, safely, and back up into the air, and everybody came home. You know, it was like a textbook-type rescue, the way things are supposed to happen, and it did. And the fact that they did that was incredible.

Of course, we went back the next day to clean up the aircraft, once again, you know, we had the area all patrolled off. There was nothing you could salvage, because literally everything had melted. The weapons melted. You know. The M16s that they had in the aircraft had melted, the—you know, obviously we're looking for classified gear. It was just—we brought it back. [both laughing] Here it is, I don't think anybody's going to be pulling any codes out of this one. But that's, you know—to be able to do things—did they plan that? No, they just happened to be in the right spot at the wrong time. Personal heroes, as far as mentors, I've met so many fabulous people, it's amazing.

TS: You've mentioned quite a few.

GH: Yeah.

TS: You've mentioned quite a few people.

GH: Fabulous people, fantastic leaders. Fantastic people.

TS: Now, you have a—your daughter's nineteen, you said, right? And has she thought about going in the military?

GH: Mm, off and on. I don't really think she's the military type. When she finds out she's got to break a sweat, she's not going to—[chuckling] I'm not saying she's not a good worker, but when it comes to actually, you know, like running more than a quarter of a—she did a year and a half in Young Marines.

TS: Wasn't for her?

GH: Not really.

TS: Well, what would you say to a woman, if someone came up to you and—I'm sure you've probably had colleagues or something who've said "Hey, could you talk to my son or daughter," what would you say?

GH: Oh, yeah. You know, you look at that individual and you go "Why do you want to go? If you want to go to serve your country, by all means go. If you want to go to get a college education, by all means, go ahead and do it." Personally, I'm almost getting to the point now where I believe that everybody should have to, in some way, serve their country. Maybe not in the military, but in some kind of a community service or give a year to the Peace Corps, something. To go beyond what's important to you and talk about what's important to somebody else.

TS: And what do you think when you hear people say "Oh, women, they don't belong in combat"? Now the big thing, too, is on the submarines, I think.

GH: [sighs] I think it's going to get there. Submarines is going to be interesting. I got a feeling—because of the logistical space issues. Because there's not a lot of space in a submarine to begin with. When you put women on boats, which happened in '96, the U.S.S. Roosevelt was the first time we put—that we sent women on a boat.

TS: For the Marines?

GH: Yeah. Well, at least air wing. I think we had [unclear]—the navy already had women on boats, but the first time we put a composite squadron together with women. And now suddenly you have to take this entire section of billeting and square it off for women. This entire section of this, this head is now dedicated solely to females. And so that presents some logistical things. A boat is a—you know, an aircraft carrier's a whole lot bigger than a submarine. I can see all sorts of—of unique scenarios. As well as putting that many people in that many close quarters, trust me, stuff will happen.

TS: You mean pregnancies? You mean things like that?

GH: You—unless—you can put the whole squadron—you can put every female on there on birth control, someone's going to wind up pregnant.

TS: Okay. [both chuckling]

GH: It's just the nature—

TS: When you say "stuff" you know, I want to know what that stuff is. But that seems to be the big worry, I guess.

GH: It's going to happen. How are we going to deal with it? You know.

TS: That's the logistical nightmare part.

GH: That's going to be—well, and then you've got to replace that person. Does it happen? Yes. You know, what's the difference—is it that much of a difference between a female getting pregnant and a guy developing a hernia or cracking his shoulder open, he still has to be replaced. The difference is [deep voice] "Well, she could have prevented that." Yeah, but sometimes it happens even when you think you're preventing it.

TS: We do need the vide on you for all of your—[both laugh] We're missing so much more in the facial expressions.

GH: I'm not even Italian, and I do this.

TS: Well, it's not just the hands, it's the face too, it's really great. Well, now, the other, I guess, controversial issue that's going on right now is that the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has been repealed, although it hasn't been fully implemented yet. What are your thoughts on that?

GH: You know what, it's going to be interesting. Like I said, you know, when I talked about way back when, the "witch hunt" that happened down at Parris Island, it wasn't the first one, I don't believe—and it wasn't the last one, and the other women have gotten out, and—I hear mostly women, I don't hear so much men, most—very few gay men sign up, or else they're very, very hush about it, because—[pause] Females are more receptive—are more tolerant of gay females than men are of gay men. Does that make sense? You know, when women find out that somebody's gay, it's like "As long as you don't hit on me, we're all cool." Guys, "He looks at me cross-eyed, I'm going to beat the crap out of him." And they do. So, because of that, you don't—if somebody is gay, they're much quieter about it. Much less likely for everybody else to figure it out. So when we go to this openly gay thing? [sighs] There's going to be some—you talk about prejudice, you talk about stereotypes, you talk about discrimination? It's going to be interesting, it's going to be—I think you're going to find that there's—they could care less what color your skin is, as long as, you know, you're thinking the way they want you to think. And especially in such a macho place like the Marine Corps.

TS: The flip side of that is that some people say, well, especially the Marine Corps is a disciplined force, right? And so, if they're disciplined and used to following rules and orders and things like that, you know, shouldn't they follow—

GH: Be more accepting? [in possibly incredulous tone]

TS: Well, not necessarily be more accepting, but be able to, I guess, deal with it.

GH: I don't know. The discipline is there, but this is one of those things, like I said, you know, you've got the bulldog, you've got that chesty [unclear], you've got that very macho image. And we're not talking the Village People, Macho Macho Man. We're talking, you know, the—you know, baby-ki—well, I hate to use the word "baby-killer", that's not right, but. The very—

TS: Macho culture.

GH: The very macho culture, a very masculine, predominantly male, macho culture. And that's what they're taught, you know. They're trained to—for combat. They're trained to be assertive. How is that going to happen with—how is the military—how is that—I don't know, it's going to be interesting. It's definitely going to be a growth issue. It's going to be something that people are going to have to grow into, and evolve into. Just like, you know, with—well, I don't know if Dolores talked to you about it, I'm sure that Linda will. Mary Sabourin, unfortunately, she—you didn't get a chance to interview her, because she'd been phenomenal—she's a phenomenal lady. You talk about individuals who are milestone-makers? She was one of the first of the thirteen women to be able to wear the rank of sergeant major permanently. And what she saw, what she had to go through, with the conditioning, you know. The reason those women were so good at what they did and worked so hard to be that twenty percent better, is the reason that people like me could be as successful as I was, and to be accepted. And the reason the women now are getting into combat is because, like I said, the first time—when I was on the drill field, was when the girls started using pogo[?] sticks and found they could hit just as hard as some of the guys. When we had the first female that was on the BWT team, basic warrior training, learning how to teach martial arts and stuff like that. So you had these female representatives in these roles, and because they were successful, they did well. With women in combat, it's going to be the same type of thing. What that first one or two do, they're going to be hand-selected, because if they aren't successful, that's it. And like I said, they will be hand-selected because of that.

TS: So they get one shot at it. Or maybe two.

GH: Well, they'll be—they'll be up for it. They will be individuals who have what it takes to be successful. Because they're going to be breaking ground. But as far as the men—I just don't even know, that is one of those things where I'm glad I don't have to deal with it. [laughter]

TS: That's interesting. Well, is there anything in particular that you'd want a civilian to know or understand about what it's like to be in the military that they may not understand or appreciate?

GH: Any one thing, huh?

TS: Well, it can be more than one.

GH: Something for the civilians to know or appreciate about the military. [pause] I don't want to say "remember to say thank you", because that's just selfish. People join the military for a myriad of reasons. Some join to get away, some join to serve their country, some join because they like to shoot. But they all wind up making a sacrifice for their country. That sacrifice may be simply—got a text—or a Facebook this morning from a good friend of mine that's over in Afghanistan right now. He told his son "I hope you have a good time at your prom, I'm going to miss it." You know, there's a lot of sacrifices that these people make. Remember that. There's—and it's not just them that make the sacrifices. Their families do too, you know. When I retired—you know how they usually give the wife the certificate of appreciation and thank her. I said, "Now, give it to my kid. I don't have a spouse, give it to my kid. She deserves it, trust me." Because she's had to suck up a lot.

TS: That's true.

GH: She's had to suck up a lot. And I don't think—I don't think, you know "Wife, toughest job in the Marine Corps". Try being a kid. You don't get any say.

TS: That's an interesting point, yeah. Well, what—

GH: Angle you never thought about, huh? [laughter]

TS: That's right. No, I haven't.

GH: Because they're just—they're starting to. They're starting to.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

GH: Wow, patriotism. Patriotism is the little hairs on the back of your neck starting to stand up as you're standing at attention and the flag is going by on the plane, or you know, the national anthem. Patriotism is probably—wow. Let's talk about colors when you're in a combat zone. We still did mourning colors. That's just a representative. But patriotism is not "the flag", it's not—it's all those people on 9/11 that went up there and volunteered their time and sent money and back labor, pulling the debris out, trying to find these people to take care of those that were there. Patriotism is going beyond yourself for the benefit of the whole. In this case, the USA. You know, what's the greater good?

I—patriotism is not standing up and saluting the flag. That's a symbol of it, but it's what you feel that makes you do it, that's what patriotism is. Okay, and I'm going to stop rambling. [laughs]

TS: Well, we've covered an awful lot.

GH: Yeah, I've left you with way too much information. [laughs] A lot of danger zones there.

TS: I don't think so. Is there—but is there anything that we haven't covered that you may have wanted to add, that I didn't ask you about?

GH: I can't think of anything. That's kind of why I brought the photos, that are probably in a dead battery right now.

TS: Oh, gosh, yeah.

GH: I can plug it in, that's no issue. My car is parked downstairs. It is probably dark out, it is dark out. It's all right. Let me go see this box.

TS: Okay, well, let me—let me put it—I'm going to shut it off for now, and we'll see.

GH: Okay.

TS: Okay. Let's see.

[End of Interview]