WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Linda Cates Lacy

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: April 12, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer. Today is April 12th, 2011, I am in Stella, North Carolina, at a horse farm—is that right? This is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, I'm here with Linda Lacy. Linda, how would you like your name to read on the collection?

LL: Linda Cates Lacy.

TS: Okay.

LL: Cates is my maiden name.

TS: Okay. [both laugh] All right, Linda, well, we're going to start. Why don't we start off by having you—

LL: I have to hold this. [sound of papers rustling]

TS: She has printed out her own questions. [chuckles] So I—you know, I should see that, so I know which ones not to ask you. But why don't we start off by you just telling me, you know, when and where you were born?

LL: I was born on June the 2nd, 1944, in Dearborn, Michigan, which is a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. I lived there for six years, and then we moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and I stayed there for twenty-two years until I joined the Marine Corps.

TS: When you were—do you remember anything about growing up in Dearborn?

LL: Yes, I remember the snow and the cold winters and bobsledding. And learning how to ice skate.

TS: Is that right?

LL: Fabulous times.

TS: Can you still ice skate?

LL: I haven't—no. [laughter]

TS: Well, you never know. Now, do you have any brothers or sisters?

LL: Yes ma'am. I have a sister, Maxine. She lives in Wytheville, Virginia, and she also has a horse, and her major at the University of Kentucky was journalism. And she wrote a horse book.

TS: Oh, did she, okay. Well, we should probably introduce Sadie, who's out in the field here, right? [chuckles]

LL: Yes.

TS: There we go. And now, what did your father do for a living?

LL: My daddy worked for Courier Journal, Louisville Times, in Louisville, Kentucky, as an electroplater.

TS: Oh, okay. And did your mother work, too, outside the home?

LL: Yes ma'am, she was a registered nurse, and so she was in uniform for thirty-some years, and what's unique about my mother is, back then—this is like 1935 that she graduated from nursing school, and she actually was the—in the first nursing school to—class to have graduated from John Carroll University in Youngstown, Ohio.

TS: Is that right? So she has her claim to fame, too.

LL: Yes. [chuckles]

TS: So it was just you and your sister, growing up, then?

LL: Yes.

TS: And when you got to Kentucky—so, you did most of your—you did your schooling in Kentucky, in Louisville, right?

LL: Yes.

TS: So, what—did you live in a rural area, the city, what kind of place?

LL: We lived in a rural area. Back then, you just had like a pharmacy that had also a little place where you could have your snacks or your ice cream sodas, at a little drugstore, and it was pretty small, and then later on, you saw it being built up with, you know, shopping centers and then malls. Things started moving from the big city of Louisville out to the country.

TS: Do you remember that kind of growing up around you?

LL: Yes, I sure do.

TS: Even at the time?

LL: Yes.

TS: What did you and your sister like to do for fun?

LL: Well, one time—we used to ride our bicycles a lot, and we'd swim, and we'd have to take the bus in to go swimming. And then we'd go exploring to some of the caves that they had, and we found a bunch of arrowheads.

TS: Really?

LL: And—which now buildings are on top of it. That's progress.

TS: [chuckles] They're up on all the—the grounds where you went traipsing around, right, as a kid. So that's—you started swimming at an early age, because you'd told me when I came in that you had—you swim every morning.

LL: Yes, yes. And I still keep on swimming.

TS: Now, how about school? Did you enjoy school, growing up?

LL: Yes, I would ride my bicycle to school, or take a bus if it was rainy.

TS: Yeah, you could do—was it very far away?

LL: A mile.

TS: Did you have a favorite subject or teacher, anything like that?

LL: Yes, in high school I did, I had a favorite teacher. Georgia Carson. And I ran into her later on in life at the University of Louisville, at night school, when I was attending night school. And that was fun. And she was a business education teacher, and I guess I would—I patterned my life after her. I thought the world of her, she was a very nice lady.

TS: What was it that struck you about her, that you liked so much? What stood out?

LL: Really no one thing. Just, she was a lady and she—and the students seemed to like her, and she was very interested in motivating us to enjoy our subjects, and I majored in business education because of her.

TS: Neat. Now, and that was in high school?

LL: Yes.

TS: And did you have any sense, at that time, like what your future held for you? Did you have any aspirations?

LL: No! [both chuckle] Absolutely not. I wasn't one of those people that decided early what I wanted to be. I was still searching.

TS: Well, you grew up then in like the 1950s, right?

LL: I graduated from high school in 1962.

TS: But as a young girl, you know, you're in the '50s, and—

LL: Elvis Presley and that era.

TS: Yeah, so—do you remember anything about, you know, that—and that, like the things you did for fun in high school? Went to, what, the little sock hop parties?

LL: Yeah, we had the sock hop and the dances, the local dances, we'd go as a group to those, and dance the jitterbug.

TS: Did you have the skirts that were—

LL: Yes, we sure did, yes. The full skirts and the hula hoop—we did those, and the—what else did we do? It's been a long time. Movies, every Sunday we'd go and see a double feature.

TS: What did—who did—did you have a favorite actor, actress, or anything like that?

LL: Back then? Probably not. We saw a lot of westerns, I enjoyed those. And on television, we'd watch Fury, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry. We had only three stations at that time.

TS: And did you have any—so, you mentioned Elvis Presley, did you like Elvis Presley, or?

LL: Yes, and actually, I went to school with his—it'd be his—grand—not his granddaughter, but his grandmother, she was related to the grandmother.

And she was dirt poor, from Kentucky, and she knew that—and nobody—and I befriended her, nobody else would, because of her poverty, and she and I became friends, and she knew that I enjoyed listening to Elvis Presley's records, and she said "Well, you know I'm related to him."

I said "No," [laughing] "I didn't know that." And so she set up a time that I could go and meet him. But my mother was very strict, and she said, no, I couldn't. Because, you know, at that time, celebrities had a bad name. But he was still a gentleman back at that time. I couldn't convince my mother of that.

TS: [laughs] So you didn't get to meet him?

LL: No. [laughs]

TS: Well, you didn't sneak off or anything, either, so you were—

LL: Maybe if I would have gotten together with my sister, we could have found a way.

TS: Oh, if you had? So you did try to plot, somewhat? [laughing]

LL: Yes.

TS: That's neat. Well, is there—was your mother working as a nurse at this time?

LL: Yes, she sure was. She worked as a nurse during the daytime, and back then, we didn't have that much money and she would make our clothes that we could wear to school. Our Sunday outfits.

TS: Yeah. Now, let's see, we had President Eisenhower then. Do you remember anything about him, as a child growing up, or anything going on—were you ever interested in what was happening in the world outside of Louisville, Kentucky?

LL: No. No.

TS: Just in your own little community, those kind of things?

LL: Yes.

TS: So after high school—or, do you remember, have anything else from high school that you remember that you want to add?

LL: I can remember being serious enough at that time about business education that I ran for president of Future Business Leaders of America. And I enjoyed, you know, that—and I got closer to Georgia Carson because of it, too.

TS: Because you were in that, kind of, that leadership role?

LL: Yes.

TS: Well, that's neat. So did she—did you start to think about whether you were going to go to college or what your future held for you?

LL: Yes, I wanted to go to college.

TS: Why did you want to go?

LL: Well, I had to secure a National Defense Loan, and then I worked at Kauffman's Department Store as a payroll clerk, and then at Liberty National Bank as a secretary receptionist while I was going to night school. And that's where I saw Georgia Carson again, and went on from there, and then entered the program during the daytime, and graduated from University of Louisville in 1969.

TS: So what year did you graduate from high school?

LL: I graduated from high school in 1962.

TS: Nineteen sixty-two.

LL: Yes.

TS: So, 1962. So then, do you remember President Kennedy and like, the Cuban Missile Crisis or anything?

LL: Yes, I certainly do.

TS: What do you remember about that?

LL: My father brought home the Parade Magazine that had the story and his pictures on it. Oh, it was very sad. The country just came to a stop.

TS: Oh, you mean when he was assassinated.

LL: When he was assassinated, we were just devastated.

TS: Do you remember hearing about it, hearing about—

LL: Or reading about it, and hearing about it on the radio, television.

TS: Yeah. So, people say they remember where they were and what they were doing. Do you have that memory at all?

LL: I was at home.

TS: Yeah. Did you hear it on the radio, maybe?

LL: Yes.

TS: And so then, so then you worked and you went to college at the same time?

LL: Yes.

TS: So, that was a tough schedule to keep.

LL: Kept me busy and out of trouble. [chuckles]

TS: What was your motivation to go to college?

LL: I was already, you know, working menial jobs and not getting anywhere, and that was my motivation to go to college.

TS: What do you mean by "not getting anywhere"?

LL: Well, so many fields were closed to women, like my mother—she had the intelligence where she could have been a nurse, or on further, you know, maybe a doctor, you know. But she was stopped in her field because they said "You're going to get pregnant and have children and we don't want you, it's a waste of money." I tried, at a job fair one time, at the University of Louisville, I was interested in banking because I had worked as a secretary receptionist, and I walked in and I wanted to apply for the managerial program, and they—right away, he said "We don't take women."

And so I walked out and told Dr. Drummond, who was my instructor and the head of the department and my advisor, about it, and she said "Well, I was in the Marine Corps during World War II, as a Marine Corps exchange officer," and she said "You might be interested in that, you could actually be head of a PX and some stores." And so that's when I got my interest in—

TS: And who was the person that got you interested in that?

LL: Dr. Kathleen Drummond.

TS: And she was in World War II.

LL: Yes, yes.

TS: So she—so you did the same job as her, then, is that—

LL: Yes. She's still alive, and she's in the Women Marines Association, and I see her every couple of years.

TS: Is that right?

LL: And we email or we call each other every so often.

TS: So she planted that seed for you.

LL: Yes.

TS: Had you thought about the military prior to that?

LL: No, no.

TS: Had anybody you'd known, or in your family—

LL: No.

TS: No one had been in the military?

LL: My father was in during World War II, in the Seabees.

TS: I see.

LL: And he had a—he brought back and album of his—of his history, and it was—and pictures, and he was very proud of his war experience.

TS: Did he talk about it very much?

LL: No, just a very little bit, and he was really happy with President Harry S. Truman dropping the atomic bomb. He said "I wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for him."

TS: Because he was over in the Pacific?

LL: Yes ma'am, he was in Okinawa, they were getting ready to go. Seabees were builders, but they were going to use his skills otherwise.

TS: So after you talked to the—I'm sorry, I didn't write her name down, the doctor, did you go and talk to a recruiter right away, or is that something that just was kind of fermenting in your mind?

LL: Yes, it was back of my mind.

TS: Yeah. So you continued to go to night school and work, and—at what point, then, did you decide you were going to check out the military?

LL: Well, I was a substitute teacher, and then I actually received a position at the same high school that I graduated from, and so I went back to the same high school and started teaching full time.

TS: Oh, what were you teaching?

LL: Business education. And I stayed there for about four years, and I still had that behind my mind, and I went into the recruiter's office and I didn't know if I could pass the test or not. My sister had tried to take it in college, and I didn't know that until later, that she told me that, and she didn't pass it. And I'm thinking "Oh, how hard is this going to be?" [laughs] But I was able to pass it, and I got a waiver for my eyes, and went on.

TS: Well, when you—when you're teaching, and so you're on kind of a career path, right, as a teacher, what made you decide to change and go check out the military?

LL: It kind of mirrored itself. As a teacher, I felt like I was in a glass bubble, I didn't really know what was going on in the business world, and here I'm up there in front of my students, and I needed to be able to experience it to teach them. And that's what really opened my mind to it, and later in life I came back to teaching.

TS: Oh, so you, at that time, thought "Well, I have all this book knowledge, I just don't have any practical experience."?

LL: Yes ma'am.

TS: Okay. And then, did you keep in—did you feel that your advancement, or—was there anything about the military that was a draw besides that, you know, this particular job that you could maybe do?

LL: Oh, absolutely. The uniforms were beautiful, the—I wanted to serve my country. I used to—when we were watching those war movies on television, I would get goosebumps. I was just—you know, I couldn't think of anything better to do in life.

TS: Now, how did you pick the Marines?

LL: Because of Dr. Drummond.

TS: Yeah. You didn't consider any of the other services?

LL: No, I never applied to any other service.

TS: No? You just went right into the Marine Corps recruiter. And so, what was that like, when you went in? You took the test.

LL: Then I went into an Officer Candidate Course, and I don't remember how long that was, I think six, eight weeks. And then from there, we went to basic school, and I graduated from that in 1973. We started out with a large class, I guess about half of us made it through. Some of them just didn't like the—being in the strict service discipline and taking orders and whatever. I was older, I was twenty-seven, and I wasn't really fond of it either. To be re-made again. [both chuckling] And being told what to do and being bussed everywhere and having to be drilled, to march to breakfast, march to lunch, march to dinner. And then ironing our uniforms and taking all these courses. It was—and then we had the PT training, the three hundred yards, I think it was, and then later on they moved it up to a mile and a half, and then of course, today they have combat training that the women are in. And then we had hang, where we hung with our chins above the pole for seventy seconds, and we had—pull-ups? No, push-ups, to do. And I did it, you know, usually very well, on the PFTs [physical fitness tests].

TS: Well, did you—when you decided to go join the Marines, what did your family think?

LL: My father was very proud of me, because he was in during World War II. And mother had worn a uniform all of her life, so, you know.

TS: Oh, as a nurse, right.

LL: Yeah, and it kind of mirrored what I was doing, you know, the business training and being able to be in charge of the PX and then later on, director of club systems. So they were happy about that.

TS: And your sister?

LL: My sister was already out of the house by then, she was—I think she was in Tennessee as a reporter.

TS: Is that right? Now, this is during Vietnam, when you joined.

LL: My sister?

TS: You.

LL: Oh. Oh. Say again?

TS: You joined during Vietnam.

LL: Yes, yes. And that was the end of Vietnam, when I joined. And there was a stigma attached to Vietnam. It was always on—in the newspapers, always on television. And I

do have a story to tell about that. I was so proud—my mother was so proud of my uniform, when I graduated from basic school, and she asked me to wear it coming home on the plane. And I couldn't land at Louisville, Kentucky, at the time, because there was an incident with the police below, some gunman was shooting up the place. And my—so what they did was, they landed us in Lexington, Kentucky, which is a small town. Now, we were sitting around waiting to be bussed back to Louisville, Kentucky, and the civilians there started making comments about the Marines being baby-killers and all this stuff about Vietnam, that we shouldn't be there and the two pilots, they heard all this and they came over to rescue me, and said "Come on, you can come in this room with us."

TS: So you were sitting there by—you were the only one in uniform at that time?

LL: Yes.

TS: So they were talking directly to you?

LL: Yes. And then the other incident, my mother was proud of me, wanted me to wear my uniform to church. And this is a church that I used to even teach Sunday school. And I got a very cold reception.

TS: Huh. In what way, what happened?

LL: Oh, when we sat down in the pew, nobody would even sit with us. And then later on, we were shaking hands with the minister, he wouldn't speak to me.

TS: The minister?

LL: Yes. There was that much antagonism against us being over—we've come a long way since then. People now, you know, honor the service-people for serving their country, it's not their decision to be where they are. Our government decides for them. But we've come a long way since then. But it was—it was hard on the service-people, and big cities, when I went to school at the Navy Refit—Retail Systems school in New York City, they wouldn't let us wear our uniforms. Because they've had incidents where people would throw things at you, you know, eggs, or hit you and this sort of thing. And when I first arrived, I didn't know this, and they, instead of letting me ride the subway back, they literally took me in their cars over to 45th and Broadway where I stayed at the hotel.

TS: Hmm. Well, what were your thoughts about Vietnam before you went in? Just you as a—

LL: I had no thoughts about it. I mean, you know, we'd fought wars all over. Korea, World War II, now Vietnam.

TS: So, because I guess the anti-war protests would have been pretty strong during your—you know, when you were attending college.

LL: College, yes.

TS: And it didn't affect you one way or the other?

LL: No, women, you know, didn't serve over there. What I mean is, they didn't serve in combat, and that was the first time, actually, that Women Marines were over there, overseas during any type of war, was during Vietnam. We had a small contingent of maybe, I think it was around thirty-two.

TS: What about the—

LL: Administrative.

TS: And do you remember Kent State?

LL: Yes. A little bit about it. The shooting, yes.

TS: Right, in Ohio. And, I mean, because at this time, when you—when you're going in and when you graduated from college, before you started teaching, it was a pretty volatile time in our—you know, 1968 and 1969.

LL: Yes, it was. But you've got to remember, I was older. I really feel sorry for the Marines that were seventeen, eighteen years old. You know, it did have an effect on them. Hard enough to see their buddies get killed, let alone come back to a country that was ungrateful.

TS: Yes. But we also had, let's see, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Do you remember that?

LL: That's right, yes, certainly.

TS: And then we had—there were some riots in some of the cities.

LL: Riots, yes.

TS: Was there anything happening in the area that you were in, for civil rights or any of that?

LL: Yes, in the big city, Louisville, certain parts of it, I think they had the burnings of buildings, civil rights protest. [There were riots in Louisville in May of 1968, partially related to the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., and partially related to more local racial tensions.]

TS: So, is that anything that, you know—even though, I mean, you're still fairly young [chuckles], you know, even though you're not eighteen, you were still fairly young. You didn't have any kind of thoughts about that at the time, that you recall, about what was

going on in the country? Because, you know, there was a counter culture, you know, the hippies, and you know, there's a lot going on.

LL: I know, the hippie group—I wasn't part of the hippie group, I was still—you know, I was still living at home, and even when I was teaching high school I was still living at home.

TS: Yeah.

LL: You know, it was distant from me, that part, until I joined the Marine Corps and became part of it. [laughing]

TS: Yeah, is that right, in the Marine Corps, you became part of it? Okay. So, then you said, about when you went through the basic training, that you weren't so crazy about the "being remade" part. Was it physically or emotionally tough in any way?

LL: Physically, no, not—I was a runner even before I entered the Marine Corps. I was involved in sports, just for fun. Emotionally, it was difficult, you know, because I was—I had—I was a responsible person before I entered the service, and you know, I had students under me. And it was tough to change.

TS: Did you have any thoughts of, like, "I don't know if this is for me or not"?

LL: Yes, absolutely.

TS: Yeah. What kept you going?

LL: You mean, the thoughts of "I wanna go home"? Yes.

TS: Yeah. [laughs] So what kept you in? Why did you stay in, if you kept—

LL: [laughs] Well, when I went—when I actually went to my platoon commander, Carol Mutter, who was actually the first lieutenant general that we have, today, she talked me into staying in. But I really did want to go home.

TS: Why?

LL: I was happy being a teacher. [both laugh]

TS: So you weren't so sure what you'd gotten yourself into, is that—

LL: That's about it?

TS: That's kinda it?

LL: Yes.

TS: When they—

LL: I knew I had always had something to fall back on. I was happy at home.

TS: Yeah. But you made it through.

LL: Yes, yes. I stuck to it.

TS: [laughs] Now, did you know what you—

LL: I'm not a quitter.

TS: Okay. Did you know what field you were going to get into when you actually got your, you know, your globe and?

LL: Oh, yes, I wanted to—4130, I wanted to be a Marine Corps Exchange officer. We didn't have any specialized training schools for that, it was on the job training. And that was a field where the enlisted actually could become LDOs, so there was a resentment toward a woman being in the field, but the director of the Marine Corps Exchange wanted us there. You've got a thing there where, here I have the education and the potential, and they've got the experience.

TS: What's an LDO?

LL: Limited Duty Officer. They're able to go from, you know, whatever rank they are, sergeant, to becoming a second lieutenant.

TS: And you say that women were discouraged to do that, or what?

LL: They're not wel—they were not welcome in the field. Because that was a stepping stone for the guys.

TS: I see. So they felt like it was taking a male slot?

LL: Absolutely.

TS: Did you see that—so, when you went through your basic training and your officer's training, was it with all women, at that time?

LL: Yes, at that time we had women companies. And this is the early '70s, and we still had a director of Women Marines, the last one was Colonel Brewer, Margaret Brewer, and she was actually our first general, brigadier general. And the '70s saw a lot of changes. When I was in there, they did away with the women companies, and they started—they became part of the FMF, some of the billets in that. And they were allowed to—was it Colonel

Wallace? Wallish? What was her name? Wallace, Colonel Wallace, she and her husband both were colonels, and she was actually my commanding officer at the time in OCS, and she was the first woman that they allowed to stay in and have a child. Before that, you weren't allowed to. It was on a petition kind of a thing, each person had to petition to see if they could do it, and then they were fighting the battle in the courts, and they finally won. But this is a big change.

TS: Did you see the connection with the women's movement?

LL: Oh, absolutely. What was happening on the outside was the same, we were just mirrored on the inside. The same—and then when the different laws, you know, were passed, then we were able to—you know, with President Johnson, we were able to continue, and advance more. They were being accepted now into medical school, you know, and to being generals in the Marine Corps, which was wonderful.

TS: Did you see the—because the idea of calling yourself a feminist and a soldier, sometimes there's like a disconnect between those two.

LL: I will always be a feminist, I will be a female first.

TS: [laughs]

LL: There's just no changing it. [both chuckle]

TS: Why is that?

LL: But I will continue to do my job. Well, I guess, you know, you are a female first. I don't know how else to say it.

TS: Can't take that away from you, I guess.

LL: But that was also one of the changes that has happened, you know, instead of being called a Woman Marine, they dropped that, and you actually earn the title of Marine, which was wonderful. [The term Woman Marine was discontinued in 1975.]

TS: Yes. And that was during this era, as well.

LL: It was, the late '70s, yes. We had a lot of changes in the '70s.

TS: And did you see that going on at the time—I mean, did you recognize it at the time, Linda, or is this like a reflection?

LL: Oh, no, I was recognizing it as I was going along with it. And—let's see, what else do they have. Our uniforms started changing, you know, it was—and too, you know, we were more of decorations at that time, and—

TS: What do you mean by that, what do you mean by "more of decorations"?

LL: Because, you know, the thing about wearing makeup, going to classes on that during your training, wearing skirts, this sort of thing. And then, later on, we were allowed to wear the same type of uniforms that the guys wore—the utilities—and then later on, camouflage uniforms where you could be more comfortable doing jobs. Yeah. We weren't allowed to fire weapons at that time, and then later on in the '70s, they started allowing them to fire weapons.

TS: How'd you like that?

LL: I never got a chance to.

TS: No? You didn't? [laughter]

LL: No.

TS: There's something that—before we started the tape, you were showing me some of these—these pictures, like this picture here, and you were saying how women got a lot of press, in some ways, or?

LL: I did, because you know, I was a Marine Corps Exchange Officer. And I had like, you know, three hundred people underneath me, both civilians and military, I might have had ten military. Usually, the military were in charge of, or managers of the stores. Package stores—no, I'm sorry, that was director of club systems, they were—the pizza parlor was under them, the service stations, seven day store. Did I answer your question?

TS: Well—yeah, you answered my question.

LL: We were having sales, once a year we had a big—and they still do to this day, have a Marine—big Marine Corps Exchange sale.

TS: And so you're just kind of, like, promoting it, is that?

LL: Yes, the base newspaper is always looking for something to write about, and they would always come over and see what we were up to. And take our pictures.

TS: I see. [laughs] Okay. Well, when you finished with your basic and you went to your first assignment, let's see. Where was your basic school in?

LL: Quantico, Virginia. And my first assignment was here at New River Air Station [North Carolina].

TS: Well, tell me about that, tell me about when you first got to your first duty station, were you nervous?

LL: Yes, but I was very happy to be out of training.

TS: [laughs] Okay.

LL: And I did have a car at that time, so I drove on down to North Carolina, and I kept driving and driving and on both sides of the road I didn't see anything. And I kept—farms, and then the ocean. It was really beautiful. I really—and the smell was different than what I was used to. It was more of a South Carolina kind of a smell, swamp, I guess you would say. And it was a small station, air station, and everybody was very friendly. I really enjoyed it, and I was adopted by the exchange officer at that time, who was Captain Johnson, and his wife, Betty Johnson, and they made me feel very welcome. And I spent a lot of time over there, so I had another family. And then I started dating a pilot, and he also had a motorcycle, which was fun to ride on the back of. And we had Onslow Beach, and every chance I got, I'd go over there and look for shark's teeth.

TS: Did you find very many?

LL: Yes. [both chuckle] And we were just a small group, there was always somebody to do something with, and we really—I really liked my base. The duties I had, you know, I was an exchange officer, we had a small PX, service stations, and roach mobile, we had that too, that would—that's what the troops would call it, and it would have hamburgers, hot dogs, sodas, that would go around to find the troops wherever they were training. We had—I used to run a lot, on base. We'd stand duty once a month.

TS: Did you have formation every day or anything like that?

LL: We'd have inspections every once in a while, maybe—

TS: Not every day, necessarily?

LL: No, maybe once a week, or—headquarters and headquarters squadron.

TS: So what kind of—like, what was a typical day for you, here at this assignment?

LL: A typical day would be, you'd always go in and check to see what the commanding officer had on the agenda for you, your training schedules for your people, make sure that they attended those. Any problems that you might have, with—you know, that the managers may have, or have had while you were sleeping. That's—and we would—and I had some extra duties, I think I was—I did inventory over at the base. Second lieutenant always has a lot of extra duties.

TS: Yes.

LL: Base chapel, they assigned me up one time for this mess night, because—charge of that. What else—and we stood duty once a month. And what you do on duty, you go to the comm [communication] center, and you check all the messages. And it was difficult to read messages.

TS: Why?

LL: They're in its own language. And we would check the armory, we'd check—sometimes the gym, the base theater.

TS: You would go around and check it, you mean? Physically check it?

LL: Yes. And then if there was any problems on base, you know, you would be contacted by the MPs, and then first thing in the morning, you'd be relieved and turn it over to the next—I guess, commanding officer, and then the duty officer would resume it again.

TS: So how are you feeling about the Marine Corps at this time, when you're at your first base?

LL: Oh, I was enjoying it, because they kept me busy. Yes.

TS: And did you have—in the positions for your responsibility, did you supervise other people at this early stage?

LL: Yes, I certainly did.

TS: How was that?

LL: Whatever jobs, you know, duties that we had, of each person, the manager was responsible for certain duties, and I would just ensure that they accomplished those, and I'd go around—sometimes I'd spot-check the facilities, to make sure everything was going all right. Maybe the vaults, or the safes, I would check to see if there was any personal checks in there, they'd borrowed some money for the weekend, or something like that. [chuckling]

TS: Okay.

LL: You know, just see that everything was going all right. And there was, you know.

TS: Did you have any, like, personnel issues that you had to deal with, with any of your subordinates?

LL: Well, usually, you had—you know, you have a buyer, and they're responsible for buying, and of course you always check with them, and then you have a personnel officer, and they deal with the personnel problems. Your problems would be more with your military managers, to make sure that everything is going all right.

TS: More along the job itself, rather than the personnel issues?

LL: Yes.

TS: I see. Okay. And how long were you here at this assignment?

LL: I was here about a year, and then—or it might have been a year and a half. And then I was transferred to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I became the exchange officer at the supply activity.

TS: And how was that assignment?

LL: At that particular time, we had—it was a small exchange. We had a big main store, barber shop, and actually, they were phasing out the supply activity and moving it to Albany, Georgia, and so I was able to acquire additional warehouse spacing, so I just included that in my store, sort of my store group, and made huge profits.

TS: [chuckles]

LL: And there was a large retiree community in Philadelphia, and they were interested in large boxes of Tide or this sort of thing.

TS: Kind of like a Costco today? [laughs]

LL: Yes, right, and that's what we did. We put them on pallets, and I told them to stack 'em up high, and we had a whole warehouse thing, and then they wanted these big booming—what do you call them, music boxes, and that sort of thing. And we got that for them, you know. And they were just—I got—they never had any bushel baskets, I got those for them so they could haul their stuff out to the—to the streets of Philadelphia and take them home. But we made a lot of money, and what was gratifying about that is, six—at that time, sixty percent of the profits went to the troops, in the form of special services.

TS: Was it at that particular base, that they went to, or? When—

LL: That was Marine Corps-wide.

TS: I see.

LL: We had a Marine Corps Exchange manual that we went by, and Congress was the one that more or less wrote it. And at that time, we all did—if you were able to do it, and I was able to do it. So they could have theatre tickets, to see the latest movies, or football tickets. We had enough money to get that.

TS: So it was like a separate fund that went for the troops, and then the local commanders or whatever decided what they wanted to do with that money?

LL: No, Special Services.

TS: Special Services did.

LL: I gave it to Special Services and Special Services decided—they had a board, and I was on the board too.

TS: Oh, okay. Well, that's interesting. So you were making money for the Marine Corps. [chuckles]

LL: Yes.

TS: And are you enjoying your job, too?

LL: Oh, absolutely.

TS: Yeah.

LL: Yes, yes.

TS: Was it what you expected, at this—

LL: And that's where I met my future husband.

TS: Oh, okay. In Pennsylvania?

LL: Yes.

TS: How'd you meet him?

LL: We didn't date there, he was the adjutant and personnel officer. But we just were friends, and then when I was transferred to Hawaii, he followed me there.

TS: So he was in the Marine Corps?

LL: Yes.

TS: So he followed—when did you get married, at what point did you get married?

LL: We got married in—19—I guess 1978.

TS: So, after you went to Hawaii.

LL: Yes, I was there for a while until he was transferred.

TS: Oh, I see. So you have a couple short assignments, actually, right? So you're not very long in—

LL: Yes, it seems like as soon as I made rank, I was transferred to a larger job.

TS: So you got transferred kind of quickly.

LL: Yes.

TS: Now, did you put in for these, or did they just say "Oh, Linda, you're going to go—"

LL: We had a director of the Marine Corps exchange system, and he [unclear] decided, you know, on our ability and our rank, where we would go. And as you could tell, when I became the exchange officer, it was a smaller exchange, and then Hawaii was a bigger exchange, so I was assistant exchange officer. Then they transferred me to the club systems, where I was assistant director and then assumed the director of club systems as my last assignment.

TS: Where—oh, after Hawaii? So—so what did you think about going to Hawaii?

LL: I said "Thank you, God!" [laughter]

TS: So you were very excited.

LL: Yes, I was very excited.

TS: And—well, tell me—go ahead.

LL: And it certainly was paradise.

TS: Was it? How long were you there?

LL: I was there 'til I retired out of the Marine Corps. Well, I should say I went into the Marine Corps MTU, the Marine Training Unit.

TS: From Hawaii?

LL: Which was a reserve unit. Yes.

TS: So—

LL: I was there until 1979, I think it was. Yeah, 1979. [sound of papers shuffling]

TS: Going to pause this for just a second. [recording paused] Okay. Okay, sorry, we took a short little break there. Well, one thing I forgot to ask you about is, in your first two assignments, where did you live? Where were your housing accommodations?

LL: My first assignment, I lived in town, in an apartment.

TS: You didn't have to live in the barracks or in—

LL: I did in Hawaii. I lived in BOQ [Bachelor Officer Quarters] in Hawaii. It was very expensive.

TS: But before Hawaii, though, did you—was there no quarters for you?

LL: No, not at the New River Air Station, there wasn't.

TS: Is that why you—

LL: Yes.

TS: So you got BOQ—

LL: Yes.

TS: And how about for—did you go to the chow hall very often or anything like that, or just—

LL: No, we—officers' club, you know, we would eat there. They had Mongolian barbecue night, they had fish night, you know, it was very well—it was a beautiful club.

TS: And which—where is that one at? The New River?

LL: The New River Air Station.

TS: And so you went there—

LL: It's right on the water, the New River.

TS: Okay. And so you're riding around on a motorcycle. [both laugh] And—

LL: Well, back then, Jacksonville, North Carolina was not that developed, and you could ride in the country a lot, you had a lot of country roads, it was really beautiful.

TS: Yeah.

LL: He was very safe.

TS: [laughs] Okay. [audio file 1 ends, audio file 2 begins] Well, now, as you're going along through your career progression, are you getting any—you said you did on the job training, to start with, but did you have any specific training that you got to do for education or for—

LL: They sent me to one school, Navy Retail Systems school. And that was in New York City, where all the naval personnel would attend to learn their specialties. And so I got to interact with some really fine officers there. We did schooling there, different subjects about the, you know, exchange field. Procurement, personnel issues.

TS: At what point did you get to go to that? Is that before you went to Hawaii?

LL: Yes. Just before I went to Hawaii. And we actually stayed in town, and I stayed at the Hotel Piccadilly on 45th and Broadway, which is right where the shows are.

And so, they asked me if I would like to attend some shows, they had tickets, and I said "Yes, as many tickets as you can provide me." So I was staying up late at night, going to the shows and then taking toothpicks in my eyes [TS laughs] so I can find the subway and you can grab something to eat, a doughnut or a coffee right there below in the subway station and hop on your subway and take off and go to—across town to Brooklyn, New York, to attend the school.

TS: Now, is this where you said that you were in uniform and you—

LL: We were not allowed to wear a uniform at that time.

TS: Okay.

LL: We had to wear civilian—because of the time it was.

TS: I see. And that was in this area.

LL: Yes.

TS: I was trying to remember where that fit in, because I wasn't sure. Okay. Now, so when you get to Hawaii, and you say it's like a larger commissary system, exchange system, there, and so you were the—second in command, sort of?

LL: Yes.

TS: And how was that different from the places that you were at before?

LL: Oh, much larger. You had many more people that worked under you. And these people had been there for years, civilians, had been there for years. Not as many military worked there, it was pretty well civilianized. Actually, the exchange officer before the current one is the one that had all the plans and the buildings and all the projects that were now materializing, but then the one that I was working for got to take credit for everything. That's usually the way things work, and then you get transferred someplace else. [chuckling] But—

TS: What was it like, working with the civilians, then?

LL: Oh, wonderful. In Hawaii, here I'm coming from Philadelphia, which is a fast-paced city life, and you come to Hawaii and it's very laid back. If you ask for something to be done, you have to be very patient about it, it's going to be tomorrow or the next day. That's how they work. [both chuckling]

TS: Different kind of time-keeping.

LL: Yes, it's on Hawaiian time.

TS: And where is it that you're stationed, here, what's the name of?

LL: Kaneohe Bay.

TS: Okay. So you were enjoying your stay in Hawaii.

LL: Oh yes, certainly.

TS: What kind of things did you do on your off time here?

LL: Hawaii? I ran the beaches every day, and swimming and travelling. I even took a hop from Hawaii to New Zealand and Australia, I really enjoyed that, and then another time, I took another hop over to Hong Kong and Japan. And South Korea.

TS: So you got to do some travelling that way?

LL: Yes. Some shopping trips.

TS: Oh. [laughs]

LL: And exploring. Philadelphia was nice in the historical events that I got to take place in, and the buildings and the Liberty Bell and Tun Tavern, the birthplace of the Marine Corps was there. So it was very interesting, Philadelphia, and Hawaii, you know, you had

your hula—you had your luaus, you had your hula dancers, you had a lot of outside activity in Hawaii.

TS: Now, was the culture of the Marine Corps the same, regardless of where you went?

LL: Yes. No, it was different in Hawaii. You know, they would have those Mongolian barbecue dinners at night, and you wouldn't be wearing a tie, you'd be wearing an aloha shirt [also known as a Hawaiian shirt]. And every Friday was Aloha Day, and we got to wear long dresses, which was a lot of fun.

TS: Oh, at work?

LL: [We still wore our uniforms at work—LL added later.] Dress up, and the shells around our necks, and when anyone got off a plane when they arrived into Hawaii, they were given a lei to wear. And that was beautiful.

TS: So it was a little bit more laid back.

LL: Very laid back.

TS: Yeah. And what did you—are you—you talked a little bit about changes that are happening, maybe for women during this time. Do you see anything happening for women in the culture of the Marine Corps, as time's going by from the '70s, and you're pushing closer to the, you know, the next decade of the '80s, do you see anything?

LL: Yes. I saw that increase, you know, to—I think it was about 6.2 percent, and it was before, when I was in, it was like—if I remember right, it was like 4 percent. And that's still not very many, you know, you're quite outnumbered. But women were now allowed to go—[coughs] Excuse me. To amphibious warfare school, command staff college and the specialized schools, whereas before, you know, they were very limited in going there. They're allowed to achieve rank—they hadn't been pilots yet. Actually, that wasn't until like 1995, that they were allowed to do that [fly—LL clarified later.] And again, the first director of the Women Marines [Colonel Ruth Cheney Streeter], she had petitioned three different times to Ed Cochran, who was in charge of the navy [during World War II—Lacy added later], to allow her to become a pilot. And three times, he told her no. But she was very persistent about it, and that's the way it is on every job, it seems like that you wanted to be in charge of, you had to keep knocking at those doors to get them to be open. And she was actually a commercial pilot. [laughs] But—and our first pilot, some years later, back in 1995—and this was like 1945 for Ruth Streeter, all those years later, she was finally accepted, but again, she had already been a pilot in the civilian world. [The former refers to Sarah Deal Burrow, a Marine who entered naval aviation training in 1993 having previously obtained a civilian pilot's license, and obtained her flight wings in 1995.]. So they wanted to be sure.

TS: So even though, say, certain billets weren't open for women—

LL: Yes.

TS: Women tried to, like, get into those positions through—by petitioning, is that—is that what happened, or?

LL: What the Marine Corps would do was, they would do a trial basis on a woman, and see how they worked out in a specific job. If they did good, then that field was open.

TS: So, it was like an unofficial trial basis, and then?

LL: It was—yes, unofficial.

TS: I see. Well, when—in your particular field, were there—was there a lot of women in this field, or—what was kind of the ratio?

LL: Marine Corps Exchange officers, no, there weren't too many. But the fields back then that were really open to women, mostly, I'd say forty percent were in administrative fields. You know, typing, whatever, the unit diary, this sort of thing. Disbursing field, which would be, you know, pay. The Marine Corps Exchange field was open, and you know, you didn't have that many exchanges. I think back then you might have had maybe twenty-five. So that wasn't a great number. Most of the people were administrative.

TS: So, within your field, you—were there—you—most of your supervisors were, like, men, then, mostly?

LL: Yes, true.

TS: Most of them? And how was your relationship with your superiors, then, at that time? Like, for—you know, for promotions and evaluations, officer rating reports and things?

LL: It was fair. I moved along in rank.

TS: Did you—how about with your—so then you probably had to, like, you were in charge of a lot of men, then, too. How was that, in that particular relationship?

LL: I don't know, you never know what people say behind your back, but they performed their job very well, and of course I gave them the fitness reports, you know, according to how well they did their jobs.

TS: [chuckles] So they couldn't rile you up too much, or they—

LL: I guess because I carried the big stick, they probably couldn't. [laughter]

TS: Yeah. But just in general, I mean, that, you know, day to day, how—you know, because there's a perception, sometimes, that, you know, the men don't want the women in the military.

LL: Well, mine was, you know, I worked with a lot of civilians. So I was not that much, you know, day to day with nothing but military.

TS: True.

LL: And—whereas—I understand that a lot of problems have occurred because there might be one woman amongst nothing but men. And that's understandable.

TS: But you were in—the kind of career field you were in—

LL: Who do you talk to? The guys could talk to each other.

TS: Yeah. Did you have anybody to talk to for yourself?

LL: Yes, yes.

TS: Now, did you—did you get any particular, like, award or certificate that is especially memorable to you?

LL: Well, back then, I got certificates of commendation for the work I was doing. You got to remember, back then I wasn't allowed to fire a weapon or—so I didn't get those, you know, badges and all.

TS: Right.

LL: We didn't have that many opportunities.

TS: So here's a picture of you—

LL: I think that was national defense ribbon. And that's the—one of the certificates that I was awarded by a general for a job well done at the Marine Corps Exchange.

TS: Yeah. And did you—so you felt like you were treated fairly for promotions and everything like that.

LL: Yes.

TS: And—

LL: And the same pay.

TS: And the same pay, yeah. How did you feel about that? Did you think that was going to happen in the civilian world, the same pay?

LL: No. And we still haven't caught up, in the civilian world, from what I understand.

TS: How about the relationships—

LL: And my mother, in nursing, they were very poorly paid until the men came into that field. And what a difference that made.

TS: That made the money go up for the nurses, at that time?

LL: Yes. Double, triple, and on and on. [chuckles]

TS: Did you ever experience any kind of—or know of anyone who experienced any kind of discrimination?

LL: I think that when you're outnumbered like that and there's only 6.2 percent or smaller when I was in, you're going to have, you know, discrimination. Because they like—they're happy to have you as assistants, but they—remember you're still thought of as decoration. Even though you're well qualified. Did I experience it? No, but you know, I was a little different. You know, I was well educated, I was in the field that I wanted to be in, and I was very happy, I enjoyed working with the guys, and I worked with all types of people, because everyone had to come and shop at the store. [laughs]

TS: That's true!

LL: You know, that makes a difference.

TS: Did you have anybody that you looked to for mentoring, you know, male or female, that helped you throughout your career?

LL: Oh, yes. When I first checked into the New River Air Station, my exchange officer there, Danny Johnson, he mentored me all the time.

TS: What—how, in what ways did he do that?

LL: Oh, just you know, down to earth father type, you know, advice, and—which was very helpful, you know, because this was a new world to me. Military-wise and all.

TS: So kind of showed you the ropes.

LL: Yes, showed me the works. And he was a very confident type of individual, and he took everything in his stride, and that was good.

TS: Now, did you ever—were you ever put in a position where, like, they said "Okay, Linda, you need to go and—go out and do this X," whatever X is, and you're thinking to yourself "Well, I don't know if I can do that." [laughs]

LL: Yes. I still get that today. [both laughing] It's—and I'm going to—this Saturday, a huge event is going to take place in my life, and I've been selected for the Julia Hamblet Award.

TS: Oh, well, let's hear about that.

LL: That's a nomination that's given every year, and it's given at the—Quantico, at the museum, National Museum of the Marines, by the National Heritage Foundation. And it's a very big event, the commandant's [General James F. Amos] going to be the—Amos is going to be guest speaker, and there're several [nineteen—LL added later] awards that are going to be given, and this is a very distinguished award [The Colonel Julia E. Hamblet Award], which I have the honor of receiving, plus five hundred dollars, and it's given to the individual or team who has done the most to further the recognition of the history of women who have earned the title Marine.

TS: And I know just from when I first walked into here, into the farm house, you have done a tremendous amount of things for the Marines.

LL: Yes, ma'am. I had a love of history since 1972, for the Marines, and specifically the Women Marines. When I first entered, I couldn't find anything on Women Marines, and so it was like a puzzle, I've just been putting the pieces together all of my life—thirty—I say all of my life. Thirty-nine years, a good part of my life. And it's been fascinating, and I sent out, when I was writing my three books, I sent out four thousand questionnaires all over, to receive stories.

TS: How many did you get back?

LL: [I received about—LL changed later] twenty percent back. And I've kept these stories, and I've used segments of it in writing the book. Some of the stories were very, very long, and fascinating to read, going all the way from them [Marine Corps Women's Reservists—LL clarified later] riding a hot locomotive, steam engine, from wherever they're from in the United States to coming here to Camp Lejeune for their basic training to whatever. [laughs]

TS: Right. And what are the names of the books that you wrote?

LL: *We are Marines* [there are three editions—LL added later], and I chose that title because every one of them said they wanted to be called "Marine". They earned that title.

TS: As opposed to what?

LL: Nicknames.

TS: Like what kind of nicknames would they have?

LL: Well, the "Women Marines", they used to call, or "WM", Women Marine Reserves, or back in World War I, Marionnettes. And the commandants, actually, they backed them, and said that "you are Marines". The other services had nicknames. WAVES for the navy.

TS: WACS.

LL: WACS for the army.

TS: SPARS.

LL: SPARS for the Coast Guard.

TS: And then the WASPS.

LL: And the WASPs for the air.

TS: So, the Women Marines were Marines.

LL: Yes.

TS: And what struck you—so, I know you would prefer to be on the side of asking questions [both laugh] rather than answering them, but you have—since you've collected so many stories, what strikes you the most about these? When you're putting it together, and you're writing your books?

LL: Well, what I thought was interesting, the World War II ladies served a very short period of time, maybe two years or less. And their imagination, their stories, they were so detailed, and they could remember every single thing. And they lived it, when they were telling you their stories. They just, they loved it, and they are the most patriotic group I've ever had the honor to have gotten to know.

TS: Do you think some of that is also because the experience they had for that short—that short amount of time was so—what's the right word, I don't want to say significant, but it had—it was maybe a—life-changing, in some ways.

LL: Certainly. We didn't have industry back then, they actually—most of them came from farms, they had never been away from home, and here they were, out here with—and there was twenty thousand of them in the Marine Corps, women, and here they were with all these guys, freeing a man to fight, that was their motto. And they were actually performing all the jobs that the guys did, they were having to be welders, they were

having to be working the post office, they were working—forty percent of them worked in the air field, on planes, engines. They served in motor t[?], they just did whatever the guys did so that they could go overseas. They actually freed a whole division, which might have led to the winning of World War II in the Pacific Theatre.

TS: Do you ever think about how, then, after World War II, and the experience of the Women Marines, Marines that were women, then the billets that were open to them kind of closed up?

LL: Actually, they got the force down to a thousand, and I read where it even went down to like twenty five, and there was a battle between the different generals about "I need this person, you can't let her go!" They'd become a very integral part, some of them, with the Marine Corps. They didn't want to let them go. That was their secretary, or their assistant. And then we had the force down to a thousand. Korea comes along, and they said "Help, we need women." And they were very—it was very difficult for them at that time to go out and recruit women, because they were—by now, they were already mothers or working in industry somewhere out there. And they were finally able to bring some back, but they were—the women during the Korean era would say that they felt very unwelcome, and unwanted. And it's true, you can tell by history that they weren't given the opportunity to go to schools and be specialized, just whatever they did in civilian life was what they were allowed to do at that period of time.

TS: In the military?

LL: Yes. And they had a struggle. It's funny, it's like they went all the way—they had to go all the way back again, and start over, you know, because during World War II they could do just about anything, and here they come back in Korea, they're not allowed to do anything. And they have to—they didn't actually gain—go forward again until the '70s, I would say the late '70s.

TS: Back when you were talking about like after President Johnson had made some changes to the—

LL: To the laws.

TS: To the laws that allowed women to be promoted.

LL: Both in civilian life and in the military.

TS: Yeah.

LL: But what a waste of talent.

TS: So as you—so what got you started, you said you didn't really see a history of the women in Marines, and that got you curious about collecting?

LL: Yes. [chuckling] I couldn't find anything, and they had some—the history department at Headquarters Marine Corps had a few pamphlets, and I was able to get hold of those and get some history off of that, but I did a lot of research from, you know, gaining things on Ebay, paying for those, and then from the ladies, you know, that I interviewed, I got materials there, and then on the internet, what a source that was, you know, in getting stories. But I would go through maybe two hundred pictures or stories and maybe find one picture and story of a woman. They just weren't out there.

TS: And now how many do you have? [both laugh]

LL: They're good. Gotten much better.

TS: And you also have—you collect a lot of the posters and recruiting material things like that, too?

LL: Oh, yes. Yes.

TS: Well, that's really terrific. Well, we have to go back to your story again. But, so [chuckles], I know you have some things printed up, here.

LL: [laughs]

TS: Trying to ignore that question. So you're in that—you're in Hawaii, you're enjoying it, you're enjoying your job, right?

LL: Yes.

TS: And—yeah, you got married, too, right?

LL: Yes.

TS: And so, at what point, had you decided—had you ever thought about making it a career? I mean, had that—had you thought about making the Marines a career?

LL: No. Behind my mind, I always wanted to go back to teaching, I thoroughly enjoyed teaching, and that's what I eventually did, I went back to teach college, as an instructor at Coastal Carolina Community College, but I still stayed in the reserves.

TS: But at what point did you decide to get out of active duty?

LL: It was eight years I was active duty, and that was in Hawaii. I guess a year after I had gotten married.

TS: Did that influence your decision at all, being married?

LL: My husband retired at the time, and that did influence my decision.

TS: I see. So then he would have to keep following you around if you stayed in.

LL: [chuckles] Yes.

TS: So a way to avoid that would be to go to the reserve?

LL: Yes.

TS: So when you did do that, so you got out in Hawaii, right, and then you went to the reserve. And what—did you see—did you have any difficulty in transitioning to the civilian world?

LL: Not really, because you carry the discipline over—well, maybe yes. You carry the discipline over with you, so, and I still was a runner, and I applied for, you know different teaching positions. I was teaching—even high school, when I first came back, I started teaching at Dixon High School, and they were very happy to have a Marine there, and a teacher, and I got along really well with them, and then I applied for college instructor at Carteret Technical Community College, and Coastal Carolina Community College. Now, Carteret, when I sat in their on their board and they were asking me questions, and they asked me, well, about discipline, "Do you need discipline to be able to teach students?" And of course I said yes, and that was the wrong answer with Carteret Technical Community College. They didn't like that answer. And Coastal Carolina Community College, you know, they were used to Marines and it was no problem, because they wanted the experience and the talent that—what a talented group of individuals, because of the base. I mean, they have some really—you will have thirty people applying for a position [at the college—LL clarified later], that's how talented they are out there. The spouses.

And anyway, so I got turned down at Carteret, and actually Coastal called them to say "Well, do you mind if we hire her?"

And they said "Oh, no, that's fine."

TS: [chuckles] Do you think there, that—because you're in an area where there's a lot of military.

LL: Yes.

TS: And have you always lived in that kind of a community?

LL: I have here, since I retired to this area [Jacksonville, North Carolina.]

TS: Since you retired. Do you think there's any misperception from the civilian perspective of the military, at all?

LL: Yes. It's very comfortable to be with military people, than it is with civilians. I—if I mention something to my sister, or when I go up to the mountains with my horse to ride for six months during the spring and summertime, they really don't understand anything about the military. Her husband does, he served in the army for a couple of years, he didn't like it, but he did [understand—LL clarified later.] And it was during—I think his time was—he's in his seventies, so that might have been during Korea [Vietnam—LL corrected later.] But it's much more comfortable to be around military personnel. You know, when you're talking about military, especially since I spent most of my life, and my husband had thirty-two years in the service. And there's just more of an acceptance of you. You're not so strange. [When you are the only one standing during Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede Parade; when the horses pass carrying the colors, et cetera—LL added later.]

TS: [chuckles] And—go ahead.

LL: Oh, I was just going to say, and that's only because people don't understand what a military person does.

TS: And I think sometimes the idea of you're somebody that just follows orders? Do you think that's a misperception?

LL: Yes, because they need—especially today, they need to see all the schools that these people enter, service schools that these people are attending. They're awesome. We were talking about Colonel Hodges. I think she's got three master's degrees. I mean, these people are super intelligent, and they're thinking for themselves, and I don't imagine they would have a problem getting a job in civilian life. I didn't, I had many offers when I got out. You know, personnel, managing stores, but I wanted to go back into teaching.

TS: I think—it's one of the interviews I did yesterday, that we were talking about the idea of just being given a job to do. And then you just kind of figure out how to get it done. Sometimes you have to—you know, you're given the opportunity to do things maybe in the military that you might not be given the opportunity to do as a civilian, because the military just expects you to get it done. And gives you the tools to—would you say—you're nodding your head. The transcriber can't read the—[laughs] nodding of the head.

LL: Yes, you said it very well. That's very true. The opportunity is there. So many schools—and also civilian life, plus today, even if you're stationed in Afghanistan or Iraq, you're able to get your college education on the computer. It's wonderful.

TS: So it's changed. So let me see which questions you have responded to here.

LL: [laughs] Don't you ask me those questions.

TS: Oh yeah! No, I have to see this one here. [pause]

LL: For tape purposes, she asked me to go online and see the different cases and oral histories that they have done in the past, and it was absolutely fascinating to read all the ladies' beautiful histories, and I picked some twenty-seven questions that they were asking.

TS: Well, I like number twelve here. Where it says "What were your best memories at the base?" I see something here with Lyndon Johnson's name on it, so I was just wondering what that was.

LL: That was the one that we were talking about in the '70s, how things—women were now allowed to become generals. And they're allowed to attend more schools, and they're allowed to stay in with children. Before, they weren't. They just get—more opportunities were open to them. FMFPac [Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific] positions were open. They increased it from that four percent to six percent—6.2 percent. More occupational fields were open, I think it was ninety-two percent of occupational fields were open. Only things that weren't open was[sic] combat fields. But now women—things have changed there, too, women are now serving in combat zones.

TS: What do you think about that?

LL: I thought you might ask me that. I think it—they're not going to be enthusiastic about going into combat, but they're well trained, they've already been to combat schools, and they're doing well in combat training. It's their job, just like the guys. I see no problem with it.

TS: What about—the other controversial thing is, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has just been repealed, although it hasn't been fully implemented. What do you think about that?

LL: I—in both civilian life and military life, it's never been anything—I've never even given it a second—a second thought. A person's religion, their sexual preferences, is up to that individual. We all have rights, and that's one of the reasons that we fight for our country, so that people have the right to believe and say what they want to say.

TS: But isn't it General Amos who said that it's going to be more difficult for the Marines—the culture of the Marines to accept that?

LL: I think I remember reading that.

TS: Might want to ask him about it this weekend. [both laugh]

LL: No way!

TS: "General—"

LL: Don't put that in my head, because I do do things like that.

TS: Oh, well—

LL: I stay in trouble.

TS: Do it after you get the award.

LL: But you never know, people change their way of thinking. You know, look at the women, they didn't think that they could be doing the things that they are today, and you hear commanding officers, commandants saying "I couldn't tell the difference between, you know, my male and my female Marines," they were all doing an outstanding job and they're just as proud of them as they could be.

TS: Yes.

LL: And I think this would be the same thing.

TS: And I don't really need to ask you this question, but I'll ask it to you anyhow. Do you consider yourself an independent person?

LL: Yes. I set my goals, they weren't always easy to achieve. I was never really brilliant or exceptionally smart, but I worked hard. We were poor, like I said, my mother was just a nurse and after twenty-five years of marriage, I had a typical thing in the family where the father, you know, divorced, went to get somebody younger. And my mom and I lived together and struggled together, would eat Campbell's soup and my big treat was, we'd have an ice cream cone on Saturday. But it just—yeah [It made me stronger—LL added later.] And then I was able to achieve my two degrees that I wanted to, and join the Marine Corps, and the Marine Corps helped me to go on and do better things and travel. Oh my gosh, yes.

TS: And you did say that the GI Bill helped you get your—when you went to—did you use your GI Bill at all for education?

LL: Oh, yes. I could draw on my experience, yeah, and you know, because that's what I taught at college, business subjects.

TS: But did you actually use the GI Bill to attain, go further for your education? Because you'd already had your degree.

LL: No.

TS: I see.

LL: I missed out on that. I wish that I had [worked on a doctorate degree—LL added later]—if I had to do it over again, I wish I would have taken more courses when I was in the military [and after—LL added later.]

TS: Now, what kind—you have down here, I see, something about—so when you're—some of the things that you did for activities in the military, what did you do for like your—not work related, but maybe sports, leisure type things?

LL: Everything. We would play volleyball, I did that. I was always a runner, I should say a jogger. I was not very fast, but I just enjoyed being out there There was so much to see. And I got a high from it, I felt good running. Swimming, you know, going to the beach, biking, I love to bike. And then I love this area, because I can do all these things here, and I can ride my horse through, don't have to worry about those harsh winters of Michigan.

TS: [laughs] That's right. Well, what—what kind of—here, I'll give you your thing back for this question. But the [unclear, both talking at once] yeah, your cheat sheet. Well, we talked a little bit about the changes that—for the time that you were in the military, because you were in right just before it went to an all-volunteer force, and also just before the women started to increase in percentage, which you've talked about a couple [times]. So, what more specifically kind of changes did you see?

LL: I wish Congress would change those percentages and allow a higher—I think the highest of all the services average is sixteen percent.

TS: I think the air force is a little higher.

LL: Of the total services.

TS: Oh, for all of them, yeah, it's about sixteen, I think that's right.

LL: Yeah, that's it, that's not many.

TS: But do—is there a set limit? Or is that—

LL: Well, it's combat that's keeping—especially in the Marine Corps, that's keeping our percentage down.

TS: Numbers low.

LL: Yes. [But Commandant Al Gray [Alfred M. Gray, Jr., who was commandant of the Marine Corps from 1987-1991] said "Every Marine will be a rifleman."—LL corrected later.]

TS: Every?

LL: Every Marine will be a rifleman, whether you're male or female. And that's continued on [into more combat training for women—LL clarified later.] The changes that I've seen, you know, we were talking about, you know, having children and changes in uniform, now women don't have to wear the little skirts, they can wear comfortable clothes and pants. The PFTs are about the same as the guys, except we do the hang. The training, they're into combat training now, right here at Camp Geiger. They can achieve the rank all the way up to lieutenant general. End of women's companies, you know, they're now integrated with the male Marines. But now, what's different about women Marines training is that we still are [trained—LL added later] separate, though, [until we come to Camp Geiger, North Carolina, for combat training together—LL added later.]

TS: It's not co-ed training.

LL: Right. It's not co-ed. [Women are trained separately at Parris Island—LL corrected later.] We talked about the Fleet Marine Force openings, we can fire weapons now, and even when the swords were—came out, we weren't allowed to wear swords. Now they can wear swords. When they're—the drill instructors were not allowed to wear the Smokey Bear covers, they're now allowed to do that. We had to work and knock on those doors to achieve every little thing, it seems like. And prove ourselves, and they've done an outstanding—we've all done an outstanding job. The integration of training, we're allowed now to go to amphibious warfare schools and commander staff colleges and all these other higher level classes. The FET training, the Female Engagement Teams, they're allowed to go out into the fields, let's say Afghanistan, and look for the IEDs, as well as go and talk to the people. The women were afraid of male Marines coming to their homes, which is understandable, and now they can communicate with them. Even the male Marines—I mean, male Afghans are also talking to the women, and we can go up there and we can ask "Well, what do you need," or—and there's good communication there. And this is good, we've come a long way in this area. And we couldn't have done it without the female Marines. And the other services are doing the same thing. And of course, changing the name from Women Marine to Marine.

TS: Right.

LL: Means a lot to them. And they've actually—you know, they really proved themselves. During Desert Storm, they performed well in harsh conditions, and that was a turning point there.

TS: Let me ask you, too, about your—when you were—so you were in the reserve 'til '93, is that right?

LL: Yes.

TS: Ninety-three? So, about thirteen—thirteen years? How was that different from the regular active duty Marines?

LL: I was in the individual ready reserve, and we—it was very different, because there wasn't a war, you know, going on at that time. When I was called to go to Desert Storm, you know, though I was in during that period of time, my husband was very sick with emphysema, and I asked if I could stay—he didn't have anybody else, so I asked if I could stay home and help him.

TS: But they did call you?

LL: Yes. I received the orders so I could, you know, help him. I really wanted to go. [laughs]

TS: Right, but if nobody can take care of your husband, what choice do you have, right?

LL: [laughing] That was a hard choice. No, I love him, I did take care of him.

TS: Yeah. Well, that must have been difficult, though, I mean, because of your—you have such a strong connection to the Marines, and.

LL: Yes. I wanted to go.

TS: Yeah. Well, how would your life be different without the Marines?

LL: How would it be different without the Marines?

TS: Yeah.

LL: I would probably still be back in Louisville, Kentucky. I would never have traveled around the world. I would probably still be teaching high school. Maybe if I traveled, it would be during the summer. [chuckles, coughs] I wouldn't have all the friends or be able to meet so many different types of people and have so many different experiences. You do have a lot of experiences in the Marine Corps. Even though if there are things you're hesitant about doing, it's a challenge, you know. You take it and you run with it, and then you say "Hey, I did enjoy this," or "I'm glad I did it." Whereas I wouldn't have done it before.

TS: And the trailblazer question, you know. You've talked about the women in World War II and during the Korean era. But you were in during a time when there weren't that many women in, either. I mean, do you see yourself as a trailblazer in any way, in that sense.

LL: Yes, I see myself as a trailblazer. I hope I was a good trailblazer, for people to follow. But every footstep that we took, it made it easier for the next one to come along, or every door that we were able to open. It helped, and I guess I did on certain things. But my particular field eventually became civilianized. I was a trailblazer in the books that I wrote, my history, you know, throughout my lifetime, I was determined to gather it up and publish it so that we would have a record of it.

TS: Absolutely.

LL: Once these people pass away, it's gone. And what better history than to hear it from the women Marines?

TS: Like yourself! Sitting in front of me here, reluctant to answer any question. And I don't need to—since I know you go and you do talks in front of groups, do you get asked—I mean, do you have young people coming up to you and saying "You know, I'm thinking about joining the Marines," or anything like that? Have you had that happen to you?

LL: Sometimes, but I don't do it that much. Well, let's see, that's not true, because when I joined the Marine Corps, Dr. Drummond asked me to come back to University of Louisville and talk about my Marine Corps experience, and wear my uniform, which I did. And then Western Kentucky University, where I graduated with my—and received my master's degree program, they actually asked me to come back there and work with the track team, they were—some of the students there were interested in joining the Marine Corps. And so I went out—I loved to run, so I went out there and run—and ran with them, on the track team.

TS: How terrific!

LL: And talked, you know, about the Marine Corps. It seems like if you can do what they—and the person—the community or that particular person enjoys, they accept you more.

TS: So what kind of things—so, if someone were—a young person, male or female, were to come to you today and say "You know, I'm thinking about joining the Marine Corps," what would you say?

LL: Go for it! [laughs] Absolutely.

TS: Yeah? Go for it.

LL: There's so many opportunities in the Marine Corps. And the benefits.

TS: Yeah. And if—I also want to ask you about 9/11. Do you remember—I mean, even though you weren't in at that time, what were your thoughts about that, 9/11?

LL: That's—the young Marine today, you'll hear that, time after time, that that's the reason that they joined, was because of 9/11. Right here, the couple next door has two children, a son and a daughter, both of them have joined the Marine Corps, and that's the reason they both joined the Marine Corps, because of 9/11.

TS: And I see they're flying both the Marine Corps flag and the American flag.

LL: Yes. [both chuckle] They're very patriotic. But for parents to support their children, to come all the way from Arizona, I think that's just unbelievable, outstanding.

TS: Well, what does patriotism mean to you?

LL: It—I think it's like they said during World War II. They found out that your country can be attacked, and they said that if it wasn't for everyone getting together, pulling their resources together and coming together, that there would not have been a U.S. of A. And I—

TS: But what does it mean to you?

LL: And I'm parallel with those thoughts, too. You have to be a strong country, even though—and no one wants to fight, but you've got to be strong in order to keep your freedoms, and all the world—and I've traveled around the world, it's not like the United States. You don't have freedom of speech, and this is so important, and freedom of education. There's so much poverty throughout the whole world, and we don't want that, we want education for our kids, we want the freedoms that we have, we want to pass them on, we want a strong country. And you need a strong service. And it's wonderful that we have a volunteer force, we don't have to force our people to join the service, and that helps us to continue to have a good military, by having a volunteer force. They stay in longer, they can go to schools, they receive a lot of experiences whereas if you all of a sudden just drafted somebody out of civilian life that didn't know anything about the military, that's difficult. That's why we're so good today.

TS: Well, is there anything that I haven't asked you that's on this sheet of paper?

LL: Nope! [laughs]

TS: Well, I'll have to grab it again, [unclear]. Very good. So there's nothing else you'd like to add?

LL: I just think—I want to thank you all so much for the wonderful work that you've been doing. And I'm always bragging about you, online.

TS: Well, I'm very happy I was finally able to meet you, Linda. And I think it's terrific what you've done, too, to preserve the—you know, the memories of the Marines, and all these great posters and the talks that you do. It's really terrific and—

LL: Well, thank you.

TS: So thank you for letting me come to your farm house and visit with you today.

LL: Thank you for coming.

[End of Interview]