WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Elizabeth Pedro Taggart

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: November 2, 2012

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is November 2, 2012. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Elizabeth Taggart in Greensboro, North Carolina to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Elizabeth, could you state your name the way that you would like it to read on your collection?

EPT: Yes. I'd like it to say Elizabeth Pedro Taggart.

TS: Okay. Okay, Elizabeth, why don't we start out by having you tell me when and where you were born?

EPT: Okay. I was born in Suwon, South Korea, May 29, 1962.

TS: Okay, and did you have any brothers or sisters?

EPT: Yes, I have one brother and one sister, but they are much younger.

TS: Are they?

EPT: Yes, they are from a second marriage.

TS: Where did you grow up?

EPT: I grew up in a place called Incheon, which is a suburb right outside of Seoul, because my father was in the army and he was in the Incheon army base at the time, and I was about—I grew up there until I was about five.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: That's when we came to the United States, because I remember having my fifth birthday in San Francisco.

TS: Is that right?

EPT: Yes, because we first came to San Francisco and we were there, kind of—and he was at the Presidio, if you recall, before it closed.

TS: The Presidio of San Francisco?

EPT: Yes, because it was a[*sic*] army property at the time. And then we moved to Monterey, California for a tour of duty there.

TS: Oh.

EPT: So, that was a really nice town at the time.

TS: What did he do in Monterey?

EPT: He is a communications specialist, and so it was called Fort—I believe it was called Fort—

TS: Fort Ord?

EPT: —Ord. Yeah, before it closed. Yeah.

TS: Right.

EPT: I was young; things are a little fuzzy there. I remember going to first grade, and we left there as I was finishing up second grade.

TS: It was very beautiful.

EPT: It was. It was. I remember going dune buggy riding on the beach, and I remember the town being really quiet, generally speaking. We lived on the base. You know, on base housing and—but we would go into town to go, you know—go to a restaurant or something like that. Years later when we went back it was not like that at all. [chuckles] It was very—

TS: Much more bustling.

EPT: Very crowded, yeah, and still beautiful though.

TS: Yeah.

EPT: Still beautiful, so that was—that was good memories.

TS: So, after—after Monterey where did you go?

EPT: We went to Augusta, Georgia.

TS: Big change.

EPT: Very different. Big change. Apparently—exciting for me, but apparently very, you know, trying for my mom because that's when he—my dad went to Vietnam, and he was with a Green Beret unit at the time—

TS: Oh, goodness.

EPT: —and—as a communicate—one of the people that lay the wires in the forward end, you know? Kind of like—very much like what you see in the movie *Green Beret*.

TS: Okay.

EPT: He brought back home movies that looked just like that years before I actually saw the movie, and I said, "Hey, that looks just like your camp you—"

He says, "Yes, that's the way it really looked."

TS: That's what we did.

EPT: "That how we did it." You know, with all the drapings and the gate and the—so, of course, you know, he didn't show me all the potential dangerous stuff, only the life that's happened in the little compound. Anyhow, so—

TS: When was he in Vietnam?

EPT: He was in Vietnam in the late sixties.

TS: Okay.

EPT: He went for two tours, yeah. He came back—he was in there for two years and then came back for a while and then he went back—he came back. And when he came back he was wounded so he couldn't go back.

TS: I see.

EPT: Yeah, so. Anyhow, he—so, it was—yeah, went to Augusta, Georgia. Again, Augusta back in the late sixties was not the golf capital of the world that it is now. [chuckles]

TS: What was it like then?

EPT: It was small; very small. We lived in a very small community, and it was the first time we really lived in an integrated community. And so, that was kind of tough for my mother, I think, you know? She did not know how to drive, and so she had to learn how to drive really quickly before he left to go to Vietnam. So, I was maybe about eight, maybe nine, because I remember third grade—yeah, right around that age my brother and my sister was just born—my brother was, like, two and my sister was just born. They were like Irish twins, you know. [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

EPT: Fourteen months apart.

TS: Sure.

EPT: And then he had—he left to go to Vietnam, and like I said, it was, I think, a rude awakening for her because, you know, living in Korea she was able to get a lot of domestic help. You know, her culture, her language. And even in San Francisco and in Monterey we had family nearby. Like when my brother was born, you know, they came down from San Francisco to help her, and there was just a lot more of the mixture of the Asian population in California back then.

TS: On the Pacific coast and—

EPT: On the Pacific coast in general. Then the coming out to the—Georgia, you know, in the late sixties, it wasn't like that. Like I said, I was somewhat oblivious because—

TS: Were you?

EPT: Yeah, I was a kid, but I think my mom, for her it was not oblivious. I think she must have gone through some—some trying times, you know, so.

TS: Did she work outside the home?

EPT: No. She was—well, with the three of us, no. [chuckles]

TS: She kept pretty busy.

EPT: Yeah, she kept pretty busy. But luckily she—we did meet a couple of good neighbors who, kind of, adopted us. You know, an elderly couple who was—who had a deep southern accent, and when we learned English—when my mom learned English—English is like my first language, but when my mom learned English in Korea she learned the Queen's English, you know.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You go to Georgia and they're not speaking the Queen's English. [both chuckle] So, I do remember our next door neighbor; called the Smalls. Turns out that they're the parents of a guy named John Small who was the fullback for the Atlanta Falcons back then.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: It was a big deal—

TS: Sure.

EPT: —but not—we had no idea. [chuckles]

TS: But you didn't know, right.

EPT: We didn't know, because when my dad came back from—and he's a big football fan. Not a Falcons fan, but a big football fan, you know—he was really into the Vikings actually; Minnesota Vikings. It was kind of great for him. He got to go to a couple of pro football games with the Smalls, which was nice.

TS: Sure.

EPT: But the whole time he was gone the Smalls, kind of, looked out for us on things that—when, like, a storm came and things happened to the house, or one night we had, kind of, an emergency with our—with my brother who tends to get croup [a breathing difficulty due to swelling of the vocal chords]—

TS: Okay.

EPT: —and he was just really suffering and my mom didn't know what to do. She was crying and upset, and so I ran next door to the Smalls, you know, and knocked on their door, and they came rushing over in their bathrobe and slippers, which was great. I thought, "Oh, great. The Smalls are finally here." Well, the first thing they did was they dropped to their knees and started praying. [chuckles]

So, then finally my mom said, "Okay, we're not getting anywhere here." This is before 911 and all that other stuff.

TS: Okay.

EPT: So, when everybody calmed down they put Ed, my brother, into the bathroom with the steam, and they sat there and he calmed down and everybody else calmed down and things got okay. [chuckles] But I still remember that because I was so scared because my mom was crying, you know.

TS: Sure.

EPT: And my sister who was an infant, she was crying but she couldn't do anything for her because it was my brother; she was holding him and he was—he couldn't breathe and so she was trying to get, I think, some orange juice or something. So, I don't know what to do so I just ran over next door.

TS: Well, sounds like it was a good idea.

EPT: Yes, right.

TS: Well, now—so did you live off base then? Off post?

EPT: Yes, yes. We lived off base. Far as I know, Fort Gordon was what it was called; it closed also. I only—I don't remember Fort Gordon at all, or going in there very much at all. I presume it was very small.

TS: Okay.

EPT: My mother would go there, you know, probably once or twice a month to go to the commissary to go shopping. Then she'd come back with all these grocery bags and then I usually stayed next door with the Smalls, or, you know—or she did it during the day. But she would—back then, I think, you don't take babies to places like that so she'd have to find a place to have both my brother and sister, you know, so.

TS: Right, or maybe she wanted a break from you. [chuckles]

EPT: Maybe, I don't know, you know, so.

TS: Who knows?

EPT: Yes, right.

TS: How long did you stay in—

EPT: Georgia?

TS: —in Georgia?

EPT: I think we were there like three years.

TS: Okay. So, you're still a little girl, then.

EPT: Yes, because by the time I got to—the next duty station was Fort Huachuca, Arizona. That was fifth grade. We arrived there right around fifth grade. Then—yeah, and so—and then we stayed there for a long time. That's where my father retired from; is in Fort

Huachuca. So, he retired there. So, fifth grade. So we bought a home off base again, but you know, we—it was an army town; Fort Huachuca was fairly large, and Sierra Vista, which is a town right next to it, is pretty small, especially back then. And it's kind of in the middle of nowhere. It's near Bisbee, near Tombstone, but both those places are more like tourist towns. Not really places that are metropolises. The biggest town is Tucson and that's seventy miles away.

TS: Okay.

EPT: But also sixty miles north of Nogales, which is Mexico, you know? And so—and the base is probably the biggest thing going, and so we went there a lot for recreation, like, the base had the movie theater, the base had the bowling alley, the base had—they even had stables, you know, for horses. Because Fort Huachuca used to be what they call the buffalo soldier territory.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: You know? And so, we used to go there a lot and all the kids from town. I mean, they're army brats, you know, practically. We had residents who had lived there for a long time and folks that ran alfalfa farms and places like that, but majority of the people there were army brats. The base had an elementary school and I did go there for one year. That's right, when we first got there we lived on base housing and then we moved out, because then for middle school and for high school I went to the public high school there in Sierra Vista.

TS: Where did you go; what's the name of the high school?

EPT: The high school was called Buena High [School].

TS: Buena High?

EPT: B-U-E-N-A, and then the junior high was just called Sierra Vista Junior High [School]; SVJH.

TS: Did you like school?

EPT: I did. I loved school.

TS: Yes?

EPT: I always loved school. Even when we were in Korea I went to—I went to the DOD [DoDDS - Department of Defense Dependent Schools] school there. You know, the kindergarten.

TS: Right.

EPT: And I remember, you know, as a five year old having to take [a] big old army bus. These are the double decker green buses.

TS: Right.

EPT: So that the people, both army and navy, could put their big seabags overhead, right? Well, they would send one of those buses for, like, about five kids, you know, to take them over to the—there was one DOD school in Seoul, a place called Yongsan, which was very large. So, any kid, any dependent within fifty miles radius would come there. Apparently, I didn't know this at the time, but all the other kids got their assignments by radio; ham radio.

TS: Oh, really?

EPT: Yes. I mean, they got their books shipped to them, but they have to get any kind of instruction or any kind of—any additional help—

TS: Right.

EPT: —by radio.

TS: Did you get—so you didn't have that?

EPT: I did not. I think it was, as the crow flies, about twenty-eight miles, but it seemed like it took hours to get there every morning. Because I left when it was dark, and then—and then got there, and you know, it was kindergarten so we left right after lunch so it was a short day. But then by the time I'd get home I'd be, like, exhausted. [chuckles]

TS: I bet you were.

EPT: Exhausted, you know? And so—but every morning, you know, like, we'd have to catch the bus right in front of the gate at the base; at the army base, and that was maybe about four or five miles away from where we lived; we were living out in the economy. So, we'd take a taxi to the front; we share a taxi, you know?

TS: Okay.

EPT: We'd go to the front gate because it was very—it was not—too far to walk, especially that early in the morning, and we'd all wait there. Then we'd get on the bus, then they'd take us, we'd get off, then we'd walk to the bus station from Yongsan—and then go all the way back. And then do the same—repeat all over again. So, I'm looking back now I'm thinking [unclear] we used to run around on the buses; no seat belts back then, you know.

TS: Still, not a lot of seat belts.

EPT: Exactly. Used to go back and forth and drive the bus driver crazy. So—but we had fun, I mean, you know, we'd—sometimes some of us wouldn't eat breakfast, so the moms would literally give us a box of cereal to—pass, you know—just eat it dry.

TS: Have something in your stomach.

EPT: Right, right. Exactly.

TS: Well, neat.

EPT: So, it was—it was fun, I thought, you know.

TS: Sure.

EPT: Yes.

TS: As you're growing up what kind of—you said you liked school. What kind of parts about school did you like best? Did you have a favorite teacher?

EPT: Oh, I always had a favorite teacher. When I was at the 8th army school, the DOD school, there was a lady, her name was Miss Morris. I think she was an unmarried lady. She was an ex-army major. She had retired apparently and she was teaching; she was our kindergarten teacher. In some cases some of the kids who were in kindergarten, they were, you know, obviously like us, products of mixed marriages, so they'd speak Korean in the home and English here so there'd be all this confusion going on so she'd take extra time with them to make sure that they got the English part right, you know? She'd bring us—I remember her bringing us treats and walking us to the bus stop. And, I mean, we were a little afraid of her because she was this very tall—seeming to me very tall, curly-haired American lady. Somewhat stern, it seems like, you know, but very, I think looking back now, warm-hearted.

TS: Yeah?

EPT: Yeah. So—And took good care of us.

TS: Very nice.

EPT: I liked that and I liked, you know, all the stuff that we did in school and the homework that she gave us. And so—And then after that I did well in school so, you know, you get that kind of attention, and so I liked pretty much everything about it. By the time we got to high school and junior high I was a cheerleader and was in all the different clubs and stuff, so there was a good social aspects of it too.

TS: What kind of clubs were you in?

EPT: I was in everything. [chuckles] I—

TS: What did you like best though?

EPT: Best? Let's see. I'd have to say that cheerleading was first and foremost because, you know, this—in our high school was—even though it was a small town it was a feeder school for all the other small towns, so it was very large. So, we were like, I think, Quad-A football, so football was it. It was like *Friday Night Lights* [an American sports drama television series], you know?

TS: Okay.

EPT: The booster's club was bigger than the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] type of thing, okay? The entire town would have caravans; sixty cars, to the next—you know? So, cheerleading was a big deal, so you'd have to really dedicate yourself to it. And so I liked cheerleading. I was the captain of my cheerleading squad, so you'd have all these additional responsibilities that you felt important about. I was in student government and I was president of a couple of clubs, like Kiwanis Club; there was a student version of that.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And I was one of those—you know how they have the Elks Club and Kiwanis "Teenager of the Month" type of thing, and so we'd go to their breakfasts in the morning. And so, they were talking about starting—they had a Key Club for—which is a high school version of—of the Kiwanis, and they sponsor that. So—But it turns out that the Key Club was only for men, or it was only for boys back then. It was an all-male thing just like Kiwanis is all male. So, I questioned that because I felt like I was coming to Kiwanis Club breakfasts and, you know, I was adding to that conversation and I'd been going on a regular basis, because I was like the Kiwanis "Teenager of the Year," or something like that, but I couldn't join the Key Club. [chuckles]

TS: What happened? What came out of that? Anything?

EPT: Yes. Yes. I started a—well, first I started out as a Keydets, you know, which, like, looked the female vision of it. I didn't like that either. I did that for one year, but then we did get—then we went to convention with the Key Club and we were the biggest group there; all the girls. You know, my side of—there was the Key Club and the Keydets. The whole deck thing, kind of, bothered me, too, like, you know. And so, finally they did change the charter, and so there was one Key Club, both male and female, and I was the president [chuckles] of that, so—and it became a huge club because it's a service organization.

TS: Right.

EPT: You know? And the idea was to—and also I think it became a huge club because it became co-ed, because it's more fun when you have boys and girls in the same club, you know? As opposed to, well, boys go off and do whatever and girls go off and do something else. At first there was a little bit of contention, I thought, you know, because there was a—the—in fact, a good friend of mine was a president of the Key Club side, then I was the president of the Keydet side and we were supposed to work together. And we did, but they wanted to do certain things their way, and we wanted to do certain things our way, and you know, I don't know if it's the nature of the development, but in general I think it's true that girls at that age, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, are probably a little more mature than boys that same age. I think—I mean, you don't want to generalize, but I saw that. And so, the girls that were responsible for club—committees, for anything that you assigned them to do, they got it done. Whereas the boys, you know, they were—they spend a lot of time joking around and, you know, and so I remember at this one meeting we just felt like we had to have a coup. [both chuckle]

TS: The girls had a coup?

EPT: Well, first of all, we were having a joint meeting and hardly any guy was there, whereas the classroom was full of the girls.

TS: I see.

EPT: We were doing a pretty big project, at least in our mind, and that was—Sierra Vista had a—you know how on of those entryways when you first say "Welcome to Sierra Vista" and it was just like a little cinder block thing with—you know, this is the desert so it was like a little rock garden.

TS: So, as you go into the town?

EPT: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so, we wanted to renovate that and, you know, at the time it seemed like a big deal; you have to get truck full loads of rock and cactus. You know, we do the lettering and all that other stuff, and so it was a work party and it's also, sort of, out of town. So it's not like you can just run to McDonalds and get something to eat, so you have to plan, you know, food and all that stuff. And I really, I guess at the time—it's amazing I can remember this so clearly. You can tell I was incensed by it. [laughs] When I took roll, and I was—I have to tell you, also, for a fifteen, sixteen year old kid I was pretty wrapped tight.

TS: Were you?

EPT: I was. I mean, I think I had fun, but when I go back to the—to reunions and stuff like that, people tell me, "Oh yeah. You just—you were just so," you know, "exacting—"

TS: Pretty intense?

EPT: —Pretty intense; so serious; so "had to have it right now; got to do it this way." And yes, I guess I was that way.

TS: Where do you think you got it from?

EPT: [laughs] Probably from—probably from both my parents, really.

TS: Yes?

EPT: You know, my mom is considered pretty laid back for an Asian lady.

TS: I don't even know what that means. [phone rings]

EPT: Yes. Excuse me.

TS: Sure. I'll put it on pause here.

[Recording Paused]

EPT: Okay.

TS: Here, let me—I'm going to go back on and ask you a question. Okay, had to take a short pause there. Let me ask you, when you say, like, "Most Asian women; she's more laid back." I don't know what that means.

EPT: Okay. Well, culturally, especially at the time, and I think even so now to a certain extent, Asian moms tend to be, compared to American moms, more strict—

TS: Okay.

EPT: —because culturally the expectations of behavior and just, sort of, everything, you know, is considered high—higher in terms of their standards.

TS: Okay.

EPT: It was particularly true, I think, when I was growing up. Even now—I don't know if you heard that book called *Tiger Mom* [*Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua]?

TS: I have heard of that.

EPT: Yes. That whole thing comes from—because Amy—

TS: You can explain that to people that are maybe reading this—maybe listening on this tape they don't know.

EPT: Oh, yes. The whole tiger mom concept—the gal who wrote it, you know, she grew up in the generation I grew up. She's a little younger than me, but these are folks that are immigrants from China or Japan or Korea, you know, who come to the United States. They bring their children here for all the opportunities. But they don't necessarily like some of the freedoms that the kids get; they think it's too much.

TS: Okay.

EPT: They think it's too liberal. They think it somehow reduces their sense of responsibility and opportunities. And so, growing up, you know, for me to go to a prom was a big deal. For me to—

TS: To get permission to go, you mean?

EPT: Yes, to get permission to go. To—For me to go to be a cheerleader was a big deal.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: If I wasn't getting perfect grades, the chances of me doing that would have been—would have been low. And by the way, this was coming from father and not from my mother which was—but, you know, he grew up in that generation and I think he—I was his daughter, so he wanted—he just kind of wanted to keep me close to home, you know; not get into any trouble.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—but I was allowed to actually do all those things, and my—my mom actually got some criticism from the Korean community for allowing me to do that.

TS: Oh, really?

EPT: Yes, she did, you know. Yes, she did.

TS: You know how she handled that?

EPT: Yes, she handled it passive-aggressively, [both chuckle] which is the only appropriate way in her culture. She would say, "Yes, you're right. Thank you very much for saying that," and just ignore it [laughs] because, you know, she grew up the youngest daughter

of older brothers, and so she was even—she grew up even more strictly, and a lot of it is out of love; it's out of caring; out of making sure that you don't get yourself into these bad situations, but it limits you. It's the opposite of empowering, you know?

So, she told me that she wanted to raise me as an American; whatever that meant to her, and I think what it meant means to have more freedom; to have more empowerment as a female; have more, you know, decisions that I could make.

TS: Choices and opportunities?

EPT: Choices, absolutely, and if—and for instance, in her family she did not get to get the level of education that her brothers got because that wasn't considered important for girls.

TS: Right.

EPT: Yeah, so.

TS: Well, we talked before the tape started a little bit about the era in which you were growing up.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Do you think that had an influence, too, when we talk about—well, in the late sixties, early seventies, social changes?

EPT: Right.

TS: The cultural revolution really going on.

EPT: Right. It's a little bit past the sixties.

TS: Women's—

EPT: It was the aftermath, yes. It's like that when—you look back now, you talk about the latchkey kids and all the women going back to work, and you know, which is so totally different than the fifties and sixties.

TS: Right.

EPT: That's sort of like when it all started, yes.

TS: But the women's movement was really strong at the time.

EPT: Yes, it was. Yes, it was. I remember Gloria Steinem, and NOW [National Organization for Women] was big back then, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: So—but yes, I kind of lost a little train of thought here, but—so, she—that's what I meant by "an Asian lady."

TS: Right.

EPT: She was considered not very strict. She was considered permissive with me, you know.

TS: I see. And you didn't feel that way?

EPT: I—I felt—I didn't know what I felt. I felt like I—I got to do—I never felt like I didn't get to do what I wanted to do.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know? I didn't get to do all the things that my friends got to do, but I didn't really miss it because—I mean, when you think about it, I went to school early to—because they had early classes, and I came home from school late because afterschool activities and cheerleading, so where would I have had the time to do anything extra?

One thing I didn't get to do was I didn't get to do too much weekend activities. Once I was home, I was home unless I had something specific to do at school, that is not something—oh, and I didn't date.

TS: No?

EPT: At all.

TS: No dating?

EPT: Not even high school.

TS: No?

EPT: Not till I got to college.

TS: So, how—but you did get to go to a prom you said?

EPT: I got to go to all the important dances. I went to homecoming; I got to go to prom. And occasionally there'd be like Sadie Hawkins dances and things of that nature.

TS: Right.

EPT: So, I got to go to those things but not much else; [chuckles] not much else.

TS: How did you feel about that at the time?

EPT: I felt fine with it.

TS: Did you?

EPT: I felt pretty good that I got to go to those dances, and also remember, as a cheerleader I had—I was out socially, practically, two or three times a night anyways during season, because cheerleading was so big. Of course, football season was big, right? We'd have a home game and an away game in the week. Then there are these scrimmage things that you show up to, and then all the other sports got a little incensed if you didn't show up, so we had to go to everything from wrestling to swim meets to volleyball, you know, just to show up.

TS: Right.

EPT: And then the pep rallies, you know. So, we were exhausted. [chuckles]

TS: Yes, I bet you were.

EPT: I don't know how some of my friends who were—you know, had boyfriends and stuff went out afterwards. But—and also I was really, kind of, a bookworm and, you know, I don't think it was a compliment back then but they used to call me "computer brain" behind my back. [chuckles] Now, I think it's considered a good thing, but back then I don't think it was considered a—so they called me "computer brain." And so, you know, I was—that's what I—that was really my identity; was to be a good student.

TS: Yes. Now, so growing up and in what you've just described and you feel like you had a lot of opportunity, what did you see your future? Did you have an idea of what your future would be like, as a young girl looking forward?

EPT: You know, I remember feeling as though I could do anything, but I didn't really think about what that particular thing was.

TS: No?

EPT: No, and the dynamics of parenting has changed also in that my mom and my dad, they were just so happy that I was going to college. They didn't seem to care what I majored in; what I didn't major in. You know, they never put the pressure on me to major in this, that, or the other. And so, I thought at the time one of the teachers that had a great impact on me, she was our psychology teacher. So, I ended up a psychology major, but that's not what I used in my current work now, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—so, it's interesting, but—so yes, at the time her classes—her AP classes was—had a lot of impact on me; the whole concept of the human brain. She was doing stuff in school back then that wasn't happening, you know, before that. It was beyond the reading and math, and straight biology and other courses.

TS: That gave you greater interest in that?

EPT: Exactly, yes. So, I thought at the time I might consider going into—become a psychologist; clinical psychologist.

TS: I see.

EPT: Because she got a master of psychology and then she started teaching, you know. But I didn't see myself as a teacher like her, and so I thought, "Well, psychology is certainly a very interesting topic for me, so I will go and be—get a psychology—be a psychology major." I didn't even think about grad school or anything like that. I thought college was great in itself because I am the first female in my family to go to college.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know? So.

TS: So, there was that expectation that you would go to college.

EPT: Absolutely.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Absolutely.

TS: There was something I was going to ask you about with—oh, lost my—lost what I was going to ask you, but—

EPT: It'll come back.

TS: Maybe. [both chuckle] It may not. Well, when you say that you weren't sure what it was you were going to do, other than the psychology—

EPT: Right.

TS: —and—but then you went to college, and you're the first woman in your family to go to college, where did the—oh, I know what it was I was going to ask you. Did you have an accel—did you graduate from high school on an accelerated pace, because—

EPT: Yes.

TS: How did you—how were you able to do that?

EPT: You know, looking back now—again, as another army person, because the whole town was full of army people. When I came from Georgia and came to the Arizona public school system, they, you know—my teacher, Mr. Pierce[?], he was the assistant principle of the Carmichael Elementary School, and another stern gentleman; I was a little afraid of him. But he saw something in me, I think, and he started just giving me all these books to do and I didn't question it, I just did it all. Turns out that they were—they were, like—I was in sixth grade and they were seventh and eighth grade books, you know. So, I was just working like mad going through them, and so he called my mom and dad into school and back then, you know, people didn't pop into school like we do now to go and volunteer. I mean—so people go to school, their kid's in trouble. [both laugh]

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so, my mom got all nervous, and she got all dressed up and she, you know—she went in to speak with him in his role as the assistant principle and not as my teacher.

TS: Okay.

EPT: I remember waiting outside in one of those small desks, you know, just like, "What did I do?"

TS: Right.

EPT: It's horrible, you know?

TS: And you're, like, in sixth or—

EPT: I was in sixth grade.

TS: Sixth grade, okay.

EPT: I was in sixth grade and it was, like, halfway through; we weren't done. And then after they were talking talking talking, and then—and then of course, you know, they don't talk to me and say stuff like, "Oh, what happened?" or like that anymore; like we do now.

TS: Right.

EPT: They just went on talking by themselves, adults, and then there were other people in the room and it just felt like a great to-do. You know, I'm sitting here. Turns out that Mr. Pierce thought that I knew—I covered all the topics that he could cover in a half a year, including seventh and eighth grade math and English. Social studies and stuff like that, they have—by law, you got to do it at a certain time frame. Then they also—they even

tested me on—I forgot what; kind of like given a battery of tests. He said that he felt like I really needed to be accelerated and he's got a friend who—you know, in middle school, and back then middle school was seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. So, what he was suggesting to my parents was to have me go through seventh, eighth, and ninth grade in one year, you know, because by law I had to take seventh grade PE [physical education], eighth grade constitution.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know? And so, you have to be there for that otherwise, you know, my college diploma—I mean high school diploma, is not good.

TS: I see.

EPT: You know? And so—so, that's what he suggested; that he is going to suggest that and he's going to turn me over into the care of a counselor in middle school to—to know that—so I can do seventh grade PE, eighth grade constitution, and take all my other classes as a ninth grader, because all the other topics, in his mind, was covered.

TS: I see.

EPT: You know?

TS: So, you needed to be challenged more?

EPT: Exactly. And so, that's what I did. I did seventh, eighth, and ninth grade in one year, and then moved to high school, so I matriculated in as class of '80—

TS: I see.

EPT: —and I left as class of '78.

TS: I see.

EPT: It was kind of weird because two years later my friends who I did my seventh grade PE with, I was a junior and they're coming out to the school because the schools are side by side.

TS: Right. How did that—How did you do that emotionally, because, like, you're ahead of your friends then that you've gone to school with?

EPT: Within two—after two years it didn't seem to matter anymore, you know?

TS: No?

EPT: And because I did most of my classes with, I guess—that was a little intimidating because I remember I was kind of smallish for my size—my age, and so all of a sudden to be a seventh grader mixed in with ninth graders, you know, who—because a lot of things happen between thirteen and sixteen, you know.

TS: Oh, yes.

EPT: I think I was thirteen, maybe twelve; I forgot; because my birthday's in May. So, that was a little awkward, but since I couldn't date or couldn't go out it didn't matter. [both laugh] You know?

TS: But the academic setting and the social setting? I mean, you're a cheerleader; you're doing all these clubs.

EPT: Yes.

TS: You're, you know, putting the hammer down for the one club you're in.

EPT: That was in high school. [chuckles]

TS: But still; you're still younger.

EPT: Yes. Yes. Yes. I didn't mention that at all for a long time. A lot of people didn't know that.

TS: They didn't know?

EPT: No, they didn't know.

TS: That's really interesting.

EPT: You don't advertise that.

TS: No? I suppose you don't want anything to seem different, right?

EPT: Yes, you're right. As a kid you don't—you don't think about that. But no, I—even in middle school I remember, right—because they had a seventh grade annex, an eighth grade annex, a ninth grade annex, and I remember having—in between classes having to—

TS: Run?

EPT: Yes, run, you know, from Point A to Point B to Point C.

TS: I guess you would.

EPT: But I still did cheerleading, and I met with, you know, our counselor. Gosh, I see his face so clearly but I can't believe I forgot his name.

TS: Oh, you might remember it.

EPT: Yeah, I forgot his name. I met with him once a week to make sure I was, kind of, handling it. But then within about a month or two he said, "You know? You don't need to meet with me. You need to—but come see me if you have any issues. If, you know—ask—tell me if you're—" he was concerned about being picked on and stuff like that.

TS: Right.

EPT: Back then we didn't use the bullying and stuff like it is—but he wanted to make sure that— "Are any upper classmen picking on you? Are they saying anything?" But no, I never got that. I always—the few upper classmen that—that I got to know—I call them upper classmen, but they were sort of—you know, they were in my same algebra class, you know? They were very protective of me, you know? They were very—very nice to me, I thought. And this—I remember this one girl; I thought she was really cool and a very beautiful girl and very popular. A few times somebody said something, you know. I remember her saying very clearly, she said "It's because you're nowhere smart as she is." So, she defended me in that particular case, you know, so I thought that was kind of neat.

TS: So, you had a lot of people on your side that supported you?

EPT: I thought so. I never felt—yes, I never felt like I was at—ill at ease or anything, but I found out earlier on that I'm a fairly self-contained person, you know. That you—given a situation I can feel uncomfortable but I never feel [pause] overwhelmed, I guess.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know, pretty—pretty—and I'm not sure why because I really haven't been through undue hardships or anything like that [chuckles] that would test me, and you know, you hear that's how you get your strength.

TS: Yes. But you're even-keeled.

EPT: Yes, definitely. You know, kind of, whatever issues come up you're going to deal with it. You're going to take a deep breath and move forward.

TS: Okay. So, you graduated from high school in 1978.

EPT: Yes.

TS: What did you do after that?

EPT: I went to the University of Rochester in New York—upstate New York, and—on an ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] scholarship.

TS: So that's like all the way across the country.

EPT: Oh yes.

TS: How'd your parents like that decision?

EPT: Like I said, they were just agog with the thought of me going to college.

TS: Okay.

EPT: They were just so excited it didn't matter. Looking back now you wondered, you know—because I know that when—with our children, my husband and I spent a lot of time subtlely guiding them. With my mom and dad, they never even looked at the application. They just wrote the check, you know?

TS: Is that right?

EPT: Yes. They never—

TS: So, you filled everything in?

EPT: Yes. I filled everything out. I went to the—to the counseling on my own, and I—even the test, ACT; back then it was the ACT test for the west coast. They never checked my homework. They never—they never did any of those things and they just, kind of, trusted that I would do all that, you know. Every nine weeks I brought home the report card and that was pretty much it. But when I needed something like art supplies or needed to get, you know, school supplies Mom would drive me to the appropriate places and I would go get it, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: And she would patiently wait with all the other parents too, after—like, when we came home from away games, and sometimes—back then there were no cell phones, and sometimes there was no radios, even, in those buses.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so, sometimes we'd break down in the middle of nowhere, you know? [chuckles] And then—and so, we'd be getting in at two in the morning after they got somebody out there, you know, to get the bus.

TS: Right.

EPT: But she'd be there in the parking lot to take me home, because they know that, "Oh, we'll be there around 11:30." It takes—some of the away games, they were an hour and half away. So, they did those things, but in terms of coming to school and being the involved parent there was none of that. It was—looking back now compared to all the time I spent in school, you know, being the PTA president and all the other stuff, no, they didn't do any of that.

TS: No?

EPT: They were very, sort of, very respectful and intimidated by the whole school structure. But again, that's sort of cultural. In Korea, even now, school teachers are a big deal. The respect that they get and what they say goes, you know. You don't go and second guess your teacher. That's how things are.

TS: Right.

EPT: You know? So—You don't go home—you don't come to school and say, "Hey, my child's not doing well and it may be your fault." [both chuckle]

TS: Wouldn't cross anyone's mind to do that.

EPT: No, it would not. You would not do that.

TS: Well, how did you end up with the ROTC scholarship?

EPT: Because I was thinking of going to the Navy—to the [United States Military Academy at] West Point—

TS: Okay, tell me about that; —

EPT: —to pay for school.

TS: —how you were thinking about that.

EPT: Well—

TS: Just West Point? Was that the only—

EPT: West Point because we were an army town, and West Point is an army academy and I thought that would be a great way to get a college education, and—because it was expensive. We—my dad was enlisted, and so, you know, we were—we never felt—I never felt growing up that we were in any way poor or less than average because all of

our folks—all the people around were the same. But looking back now, yeah, we were, like, I would say, lower middle class. You know, kind of, working people. So, the idea of college at a private school or—would be—would have been really hard. And the financial aid situation back then was nowhere near the way it is today. I mean, it's amazing to me, I think today any kid who wants to go to college can go to college. There should be absolutely no excuses. I'm telling you, you know, other than their own decision to want to commit to it.

TS: Right.

EPT: Absolutely. No matter what your grades are even, you know.

Anyhow—So, yes, I started looking at West Point, but that is one time that my father didn't interject and said, "You know what? I'm really excited and proud that you want to serve. However, as long as you decide that you want to serve, why don't you consider the navy?" and that's the first time I ever said that, that to me [?].

TS: After all the time you spent in the army.

EPT: Yes, I never even knew a navy person till that point. "What?"

TS: Okay.

EPT: Every person that was influential to me and all the folks that I grew [up] around, they were army. Because there was another gentleman who—ex-army lieutenant colonel who retired and started teaching; he was my history teacher my eleventh grade, and he's the one also who identified me in a class and said, "You know what? There's this contest coming up. It's called 'Voice of Democracy' and" you know, "I need you to enter that."

And I'm going, "I've never heard of that." It's one of those oral type of things where you have to actually record it in a sound studio, and that just seemed overwhelming to me, like, "I have to record it, like, at a studio?" And my dad was away on TDY [temporary duty assignment]. I mean, I can't imagine going home to my mother and saying, "We've got to go to Station WHRO whatever," and that would just, kind of—so I said, "Oh, I don't think I can do that, but I'll write the essay."

And so, I did and he—and he—and he wrote it—and he looked at it and he said, "All right, I'm going to take you myself," you know. So, he picked me up, he took me—he arranged it with a sounding—sound person, you know, and then we—it was early in the morning so we had to do it in, like, one take. [chuckles] And so, we did and I thought, "Okay, that was fun," and you know, the paper was for a grade so that was good. So, I kind of forgot all about it. Then about four or five months later he invited me to—he belonged to the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]. The "Voice of Democracy" is sponsored by the VFW and Mr. Curry[?], you know, belonged to that, and so he invited me and my mom, because my dad was away again, to this "Voice of Democracy" dinner because he said that I had won the local contest.

And I said, "Well, great," you know. So, we went there and I—it was—but when we got there my mom was, again, agog at all these people, and I didn't know enough to

know that there was more going on than the local VFW because it was at—was a big deal to us; a lot of people; a lot of mics [microphones]. There were newspaper people and some television people there—

TS: Okay.

EPT: —going on. And so—so we did, and then they asked me to do the speech, which I did, and then—

TS: In front of everybody?

EPT: In front of everybody during dinner; —

TS: I see.

EPT: —after dinner, and so I did and I sat down. And that's when bunch of people came up and they told me, "Not only did you win the local, you won the county, you won the regional, and you won the state."

TS: [chuckles]

EPT: And I was like, "Ahhhh!" [chuckles] So, that was kind of—kind of a big surprise, and my mom was like, "Wow," you know.

So, I got to go to Washington [D.C] to—because it was an all-expense paid trip, you know, to go to Washington. [James Earl Carter, Jr.] Jimmy Carter was president.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And Jimmy Carter sent all of us winners, of each state, to the [United States] Naval Academy. That's when the concept of the Naval Academy potentially rose up.

TS: I see.

EPT: You know? But—So, then—so, that's when the idea of the navy did—like, "Okay, instead of West Point, the Naval Academy."

TS: Did you get to meet the president?

EPT: Yes, we did.

TS: Oh, you did?

EPT: We got to meet the president, and John J. Rhodes [Republican Representative from Arizona] was the senate minority whip at the time, and so since I was the "Ms. Arizona," so to speak, and that's what they called us, they—I was sponsored by him and I got to sit

with him during the banquet. It was a big deal; I had no idea. The VFW had a lot of—national VFW had a lot of pull, and looking back now it's like—I was so like their representative, so—I mean, they even came to the airport and, you know, brought me flowers and got—we all got these special jackets with—you know how the VFW is fond of all those little pin and stuff?

TS: Oh, sure.

EPT: So, I got pins from all the VFW members. It was like—it was overwhelming, but it was a great experience for a small, you know—I mean, I still consider myself a small town girl at the time; Sierra Vista, going to Washington D.C. Back then you don't go on plane rides too often, you know, and I mean, we went on vacation but we went to, like, Tuscon or something like that, you know. We don't hop on planes and go to—across the state. I had never been to Washington D.C., but the whole week for all the winners they did a fantastic job of—I mean, the Naval Academy; all of the Washington D.C. monuments; we laid the wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier. We went to what they call The SUCCESS Symposium and they had people from all walks of life, including General Omar [Nelson] Bradley. You know, Judge [John] Sirica. We had Steve Cauthen, who was the Kentucky Derby winner. All these very important people from all walks of life to come, kind of, mingle with us a little bit and talk to us, and those are the three people I know—remember because I mingled with them. [chuckles] I actually danced with Steve Cauthen.

TS: Oh, did you?

EPT: With the Kentucky Derby winner that year.

TS: Oh, nice.

EPT: Debby Boone came and sang "You Light Up My Life," during one of our dances, and General Omar Bradley came to one of our dances and one of the—he was in a wheelchair. Of course, he being an army general I was very interested in meeting him.

TS: Sure.

EPT: And—and who knows? Just a lot of—so, it was a very—very gratifying experience for me, and again, because of this army—ex-army person who, you know—who went out of his way to, kind of, help me, because he didn't have to do that.

TS: Right.

EPT: You know? And so, a lot of things like that happened to me a lot, with—like I said, with my sixth grade teacher who skipped—I don't know if he did me a favor, [chuckles] but maybe he did, but he really felt strongly that, you know, that had to happen. He said, "You shouldn't keep her back. She should move forward," and told—I mean, I guess my

parents always felt like I was pretty well schooled and I was smart, but hearing that from a professional person I think they felt really good about that. And then saw a good potential future for me.

TS: Yes. Well, it sounds like a lot of people saw a good potential future for you.

EPT: Yes. Yes. Then in high school Ms. Dory[?]; she was my psychology teacher. She was this southern lady from Texas; different than the army people. She was kind of a—kind of a free spirit, you know. She wore these long skirts and, kind, of, these beads and stuff back when—in an army town back when things were pretty straight-laced, you know.

TS: Okay.

EPT: But she was very—what's the word? She believed in higher education for women, and she was an alumni of University of Rochester and SMU [Southern Methodist University, Texas].

TS: Oh, okay. Is that how you got—

EPT: University of Rochester.

TS: —interested in going to Rochester?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: Because she nominated me for an alumni scholarship on top of the—because you know the ROTC scholarship pays for tuition, not room and board. And so, that would help with the room and board piece, you know.

TS: So, how did you end up then not deciding to go to the Academy, but going to—through ROTC?

EPT: I was too young.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: [laughs] They figured out when they looked at it. When they looked at it they went, "Uh, wait a minute."

TS: How old were you at the time then?

EPT: I was sixteen.

TS: Okay. Had to be eighteen or seventeen?

EPT: Well, there really wasn't an official legal age limit, but remember, that's when the Plebe Summers happened.

TS: Okay.

EPT: They did not want to put a sixteen year old—just turned sixteen years old, by the way—through Plebe Summer. Plebe Summer can be—can be—

TS: Traumatic?

EPT: —traumatic, yeah. And that's—and they do it for that reason. They say they want to break you down and build you back up, but some kids may not build back up, you know. And so—and they do it with good intentions. I'm not so sure if some of those things are—are as helpful. I don't think they're harmful, but I don't think they're that helpful, and—having been through some notions of that. But—so, they realize, you know, not a good idea; "So, how about ROTC?" And the idea was, "You know, you can spend a year in ROTC and you can come back to the Naval Academy at that time." Then by that time—I didn't know back then, but a lot of people told me, "No, you can't. You cannot go to Naval Academy and not go through Plebe Summer with your class. You would be an outcast." Because you have to, sort of—

TS: Bond?

EPT: —bond. That's the time you bond.

TS: I see.

EPT: For you to come and just, kind of, fit in there and try to be not part of that, that would not have worked. And this is coming from the other Naval Academy grads, and this is also only two years after the first women came to the Academy.

TS: True; it's fairly new, right?

EPT: Yes. So, for another woman to come a year later without going through Plebe Summer—you know? I didn't know that, but then—but then by that time I was firmly entrenched in ROTC. Another reason why I looked at the University of Rochester was at that time the University of Rochester had the largest ROTC unit in the country.

TS: It did?

EPT: Yes. It did. They had two hundred midshipmen. That was considered huge.

TS: How many of those were women?

EPT: In my class? Two.

TS: That's it?

EPT: That's it. That's it's. But in the entire unit there were, like, six of us.

TS: Okay.

EPT: But it's also the size, you know, and a lot of the—a lot of the colleges back then, their ROTC units were coming back. Remember, because of the war, the post-Vietnam—a lot of the ROTC units left, you know, the—

TS: Campuses?

EPT: —campuses and they were reemerging, but the University of Rochester, it certainly went through an unpopular period apparently, but they kind of hung in there and they stayed strong, and so that was another reason why I wanted to go into a strong ROTC situation and not be, like, one of ten people on the entire campus, you know, to have a, kind of, ROTC presence.

TS: That's true. That would be a pretty large—

EPT: Yes.

TS: Well then, how were you treated as a female in this environment?

EPT: It was great. I—

TS: You didn't have any—

EPT: I did not have any problems.

TS: No?

EPT: No, not whatsoever. I mean, as long as you can keep up, I mean, academically and everything else. In fact, looking back now—I'm doing a lot of looking back because I went to the—I went to an ROTC reunion last year, and then this year we went to our thirtieth, and you know, it's interesting the impressions you have thirty years later; looking at all the pictures and all that.

I mean, I didn't have any—I didn't have any—feel like I had any problems, but at a larger perspective as an adult, you know, what I was interested in back then was just fitting in. Coming to college, it's like a big pond now compared to my high school. And so, I probably was oblivious of a lot of these things, tell you the truth. I don't remember if

I remember there should be a problem, so therefore there was none. You know what I'm saying? But I personally did not feel in any way like we were treated differently.

TS: No?

EPT: No. No.

TS: Well now, you said you weren't quite sure what exactly your major was going to be for a while, and you're far away from home.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And you see in the ROTC—now, are you seeing that as a conduit into the navy, or you see this as just to get you through school with a few years? Or do you have any idea of what, you know, your vision was for how you intended to use the ROTC.

EPT: To (a) get through school, and then (b) to get some job experience, because you had to give back four to five years depending on what area you go into.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so—and my father was right in that in the navy at the time there was a lot more job—different kind of career paths you can go.

TS: Oh, yes, we didn't finish that conversation about why your father wanted you to go towards the navy instead of the army.

EPT: Right, and that's reason why. Because he felt like for women at that time there were fewer career choices, because army—the army's whole role is to be, you know, the ground soldiers, and since women were barred from that, what's left are the smaller supporting roles. And the navy—and they segregated them more, in his mind, you know [in the army].

And also, he felt—I don't know if this is really true because I don't know if he really had any experience with navy folks, because if you really truly felt that way I think he would have steered me more toward the air force, you know, because I went to the navy—I remember, looking back now, looking at the three services and having had some interaction with all three services, it seemed like the air force was more geared toward a dual-sex environment, you know, even back then.

But anyhow, he felt like—that the army was—could be tough on women, and I think he saw that personally. You know, for the few women that were in at the time. He didn't see it from an officer perspective because he was not an officer, he was a non-commissioned officer. He saw it from—from an enlisted perspective he thought it was harsh.

TS: I see, okay. And he—and that actually was right when the Women's Army Corps was being disbanded.

EPT: Absolutely.

TS: And the women—

EPT: And they were bringing in the—as regulars.

TS: Right. Whereas, in the other services that had already happened.

EPT: Correct. So, I think he was right, looking back, because, you know, certainly in ROTC we didn't—I didn't have any problems. I mean, we all—as midshipmen we all had our leadership positions. We all had our mini fitness reports. We did our summer cruises. And I didn't really have any problems in any one of those times.

One time I got some flack, I've got to tell you. It was from another woman. I was shocked.

TS: Why?

EPT: Really shocked.

TS: Not why were you shocked, but what was the issue about?

EPT: She was from the Naval Academy, too. I was on my senior cruise; in fact, it was in Norfolk [Virginia]. We were on board an oiler, and she objected to the fact that—I'm not even sure what happened, but I was small and, I guess, considered cute, you know, and so people reacted to that.

TS: People, as in?

EPT: Men, because they were all men.

TS: Okay.

EPT: So, they would give—they would be very helpful, whether I liked it or not.

TS: You got a lot of attention.

EPT: I got a lot of attention. And so, like, she started calling me "Little Princess" and stuff like that, you know. So, we were on—we were on topside on a black—we were doing operations at night. We were doing what they call vertical rep and unrep, which is underway replenishment. We are practicing in the—in the dark on—as an oiler, you're hooked to another ship fueling them. We're also hooked up to some helicopters, you know, fueling them at constant speed. It's dark, it's cold, and we're scared because we

have never done this, and so some guy brings me a kapok, which is a—it's a, you know, warm jacket. But everyone should have that. She had a kapok on, and so she really thought that was kind of—kind of—

TS: Preferential treatment?

EPT: Preferential treatment, you know, because somebody brought me a kapok and things like that. So—so, she would just say these things and I had never encountered that and I really didn't know how to handle it.

TS: How old were you then?

EPT: I was eighteen.

TS: Okay.

EPT: I was eighteen, and I just looked at her and I went like, "What is the problem?" There were two women, just her and me. In fact, back then it was very difficult—

TS: On the ship?

EPT: On the ship; midshipmen; just midshipmen.

TS: Just midshipmen.

EPT: Just midshipmen. In fact, they were the only two women, you're right, because there were no women on board. Back then they had—you could not be the only woman onboard, you know, so they made sure there were always at least two. And we got preferential treatment whether we liked it or not because, like, if you were a man and you were a midshipman you would be thrown into a nine man berth. But if you're a woman you can't be thrown in with a nine man berth with the seven of the other guys, so we had to kick out the XO, the executive officer; second highest guy, I think, because he's the only other guy besides CO that has a private berthing. So, she and I share that, and so she—we both got preferential treatment because we were. That's just the way things were unless we wanted to share that, you know, and so you took it in stride. What you try to do is not make anything else an issue if you can make it possible. But yes, I didn't want to shower with seven other guys. That's all there is to it, you know.

And so, you try to keep up and you're careful not to try to get any preferential treatment, but a lot of it has to do not so much back then with you but with the guys. For instance, when I came on deck, and I was assigned to the deck gang which is considered the toughest crowd; they call them deck apes. They are the ones who are strong and they pull the lines, and you know, they—a lot of rough language and a lot of that going on, so I—first day I reported, you know, I'm bright and shiny new. I came on—I came on deck and this one chief was cussing; saying words I'd never heard before and just yelling and screaming, and all of a sudden everybody in front of me were going [makes gesture], like

this. And he's going, "What the hell is going on?!" and "What the eff—!" He turned around and he saw me, so I was standing there going [makes gesture] [laughing] with my—

TS: Looking a little sheepish?

EPT: Looking a little sheepish and I'm saying—saying, "Chief, I'm here to report to duty."

And he went, "Oh, shit. [whispered]" [laughs] And he said, "All right, fall in line!" But he did tone down and it's not—that's him; it's not me. You know what I'm saying? Because he was taught as a male you don't do that around—around women; around young women, and a lot of them were old enough to be my father. And so, you saw a lot of that, you know, but that was probably the thing that I encountered the most, is this unasked-for protectiveness. Kind of like "for your own good" type of thing.

TS: Right.

EPT: As opposed to "you're not good enough" type of thing. Like, it was more like "I don't want you to have to do that."

And I'm going—I would say, "Why not? That's my job. This is what I do," you know. And so, you spend a lot of—the first years of my career I spent a lot of time going, "I've got to do—You got to let me do my job."

TS: Do you think there was this tension that at this time between trying to protect women and trying to give them equal opportunities?

EPT: Absolutely.

TS: And in the middle; who do you think is caught in that?

EPT: The women; the women. Us, you know. And then I saw my peers—a lot of my peers, in my mind, trying to overcompensate. They try to be; they try to act tough; talk tough; be tough; not really be themselves; try to, kind of, blend in as one of the boys. Then the other women that didn't, you know, they were sometimes unfairly accused of using feminine wiles, and that's not really true; I don't think. And then there were some people that were in between, and so it was—it was a little confusing.

TS: Where would you put yourself in that?

EPT: I put myself in a category of trying to stay away from all of that. Like, I don't—I mean, I can't care about any of that. This is the way I look. This is the way I talk. This is the way I walk. And I'm going to follow the regulations. I'm going to do the best I can. And when I find anything overt I'm going to address it, and there were a couple of times it was overt. Like, one chief called me "honey." That did it. That was like, "All right, stop all presses there," you know. "I'm your boss. I'm your senior. You don't call me 'honey'.

You don't call any person in my unit 'honey'. Period. Even if she asks for it." So, that was that. And then that didn't happen again.

TS: So, that was—that took care of it?

EPT: That took care of it. Most of the time that kind of talking, private or sometimes unfortunately publicly, took care of it. But—and then—but then there is the protectionism going on from senior officers. You're talking about, you know, you're a young officer and you've got an executive officer—a commanding officer who's got a daughter your age, or you know, who—and he wants to make sure that you're okay. You know, he's always asking you, "Are you okay?"

And I'm going, "Yes sir, I'm fine [chuckles]. Is there anything specific you're talking about here?" I felt like, "Are you asking Lieutenant So-and-so if he's okay?" You know? And so, you had that going on and that, kind of—but you can't do something—you can't do too much about that either. If you try to fight that I think you do yourself a disservice, because they're coming from a good place and you can't change culture by just pushing back. It just—it exhausts you, you know, and that's something I learned early on. And I learned that not in the navy or in the military but culturally, because I have uncles who have been in this country for thirty-five, forty years, but they still are back in the old country when it comes to how they deal with children, women, siblings, you know. And for a while it just really bothered me because I felt like, "You're here. You're not there anymore." But that's how they are, and so you have to work with them, as opposed to trying to, you know—because push back to the point where it does neither—it just hurts relationships.

And so, when I—so, knowing that they're coming from a good place, that they're looking out for you the best they can, what you do then is, like, for example my uncles. When I talk to them I talk to them the best I can the way they expect me to, which is with reverence and a certain tense. And then—and deal with them that way. It doesn't make any sense to try to change them after fifty or sixty years. But then they also—they must also know in the back of their minds that I'm different because when they need some real help, when it comes to legal matters or things of that nature, they call me. They call—actually, take that back. They call my mother to call me, [Therese chuckles] because that's the right way, but then I call them.

TS: That's the chain of command.

EPT: That's the chain of command. Yes, exactly. So, when my uncle I told you earlier had a liver transplant, what happened was is that I got a call from my mother crying on the phone saying, "Your uncle is dying. You must come out. He wants to see you one more time before he dies."

I'm going—this is in November right before Thanksgiving; right around this time. And I said, "We just saw him in September. He was fine. He was golfing."

And he goes, "Yes, but he's very sick now and he is—he's dying, and so all the family's gathering and we're going to say goodbye. So, you need to be out here."

So, I said, "Okay. What happened?" What happened was—is that—I told you sometimes—he had Hep[atitis] B when he was younger; it was rampant in that area—that time frame, and so he was getting some of the symptoms from early onset of liver disease. What happened was that he got the symptoms, meaning he got the extended belly and he couldn't eat, so he was really not feeling well. And so, he'd go to a Korean doctor who'd tell him—who basically told him, you know, to go home, eat some soft foods, and "We'll do the best we can."

So, I said, "Well, did he go to an American doctor? Did he go to an emergency room? Did he do this? Did he do that?"

And my mom goes, "I don't know. He needs you."

So, I said—meaning to see me. And I said, "Okay, well, I can't have this." So, I actually called my friend who was an army doctor; he's an internist who was a neighbor and I said—I told him, "John, this is totally off protocol, but you've got to help me out here." And I told him, "This is what's happening. What would you do?" You know, not knowing—seeing his charts; anything like that.

TS: Right.

EPT: He said, "Well, I would call the—" you know, he lives in Los Angeles. "I would call the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] Medical Center and send him in there in an ambulance. Once he gets admitted they will take care of the symptoms. Then they will see what's really going on. But it sounds like he's suffering from the symptoms. If he can't eat and he's dehydrated that—and he's elderly, that's an issue. That's what he may be suffering from more than anything else. And if his belly's extended they can do something about it."

And so, I called my cousins and I told them, but they were all crying, and you know, they were just—you know, these are college educated people but they can't help but being the people of their culture; a Korean doctor told them this is what's going to be so they're going to, you know—

TS: Prepare to die?

EPT: —prepare to die, and I said—and I'm going, "No." So, I called UCLA. I call the nurse, and I did all the thing—and I have to—probably say this. I basically bent the truth and said, "These people speak no English. I must speak for them. [laughs] And I must—So, this is my uncle. He's doing this. You must speak to me. As soon as he gets there you must speak to me. I must talk to the doctor," blah blah blah. So, long story short they got there, went to the emergency room. They took care of his immediate things. Within twenty-four hours, you know, with a saline drip and all that, he was feeling better. He was eating. Within forty-eight hours he was feeling fine. He got accepted into the UCLA program on geriatric internal medical, where they did a liver transplant and he—it worked fine. So, stuff like that they, you know, call me because they must know instinctively that I will know stuff that they don't. But when I'm back at their domain the expectation is that I will speak to them a certain way because that's what their

comfortable level is, you know. They accept me, to a certain extent, this way, and I must accept them that way.

So, I took that same concept and brought it into the navy. It's not that all these men are chauvinists, and maybe they are, but it doesn't all come from a bad place; it comes from the way they were raised. And so, you can't fight that and be ugly with them, and then expect that you're going to get results. What you do is you prove them wrong one day at a time, or—and prove them wrong in small ways. They're never going to apply that concept to everybody, but they may apply to you.

TS: Right.

EPT: And they may apply to the next person that they meet. That's what it comes down to.

TS: Did you—Did you think though that if—so, if a woman in the service at this time exceled it was a reflection on them personally. If a person, a woman in the military, failed it was a reflection on all—

EPT: All the women. Yeah, to a certain extent. To a certain extent I think—I certainly felt like we felt that way. Whether it was really true or not, we felt like if we did something that was negative it would have been attributed to the women at large, whereas our triumphs were personal. So, yes, I think—I think it was pretty rampant.

TS: But did you think, too, that maybe other women were harder on other women because of that?

EPT: Absolutely; absolutely. I had to be real careful, personally, when it came to the few female, you know, people that I had, that I did not do that to them. But—and also had to try very hard not to seemingly play favorites, because there were some women that I saw that I wanted to spend a little more time with to try to get them on the correct path, so to speak. And so you have to be willing to do that with everybody and not just the women, too, right. So, I had to make a conscience decision to try not to do that.

TS: Well, we're getting into some things I usually talk about later, but I want to stay on this because you're—now you're talking about mentoring a little.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And you had talked earlier as a young girl, basically there were people who picked you to mentor, you know, as a—

EPT: Yes.

TS: And so then, as you're in the navy do you see that happening still? Do you see other people saying—you know, saying, "Oh my gosh. Elizabeth, she looks like a great

candidate for this or that." People who are, you know, lifting you up and helping you along the way, and then as time goes by, you're doing the same thing for others.

EPT: Oh, yes. I think—I don't know why, maybe because I'm the first born and used to, kind of, being the second mom to my brother and sister, I can't help but be a mom to a lot of people if I see the need. And in your role as a division officer, even though I was considered young, that role is exactly that. You are, sort of like, this person that's supposed to help everybody professionally, personally, educationally; in every way you can because you're responsible for a) them doing a good job for the navy, but b) moving them forward in their career, and whether it be through education or whether it be through giving them more opportunities if you see a—something in them. Or making sure they stay out of trouble, you know. So, yes, that's sort of your job, and—

TS: What's that job title that you have, then, at this point?

EPT: At that point? Division Officer. It's like a first line supervisor, you know, to—and my first line supervision job, it was at the Navy Regional Data Automation Center [NARDAC] and I had a hundred and forty-two people; a lot of people. So, you could barely get to know all of them, let alone, you know, really try to do mentoring. You do spend a lot of time with the top ten percent and the bottom twenty percent.

TS: And in the middle—

EPT: Yes, they sort of get lost, but they—but then you have chief—if you have a good chief—a good non-com[missioned officer], you know, they will do a good job of taking care of them. And not everybody needs you. They're there to do their job. They're there to get their paycheck. They're there to do their thing. It's not like they want to have this personal relationship with you, only—but if they need you for something then the idea is for them to come and see you.

And so, one of things that I think I'm very—feel very good about is that I did send a significant number of people through college; through the Navy's BOOST [Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training] program. You know, you take—you have an enlisted person who didn't go to college before for whatever reason. He's been in the navy for two or three years, or she's been in the navy for two or three years, and she's doing well. They want to—they don't mind reenlisting for four or five years. As soon as they say they want to reenlist I say—first question I ask them is, "Do you want to go to college? Because as long as you're reenlisting and going to give the navy six years, why not go to college, you know, and get that and then—and then get commissioned? You'll get paid more and you'll get more responsibility." And so, yeah, that was fun.

TS: Yeah, that sounds like fun.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Well, let's go back to the ROTC for a minute and tell me—so, you—you went through the program at Rochester.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Then you're—you graduate.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And then you're commissioned.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Tell me about how it went from that date when you got—how did—you know, you can tell me about the experience of being commissioned, but you've already been, kind of, in the navy for a while.

EPT: Yes. Yes. We spent four years being midshipmen; not quite as intense as the Naval Academy because at—ROTC program is Tuesdays and Thursdays you're in uniform. You go to navy related classes during those days, and you go—and you have drill and that's where you go and you practice marching and drilling. You practice navy protocol, so to speak. And some of the folks that we considered gung-ho, typically the marines, you know, they meet extra so that they can even drill better. They do precision drilling. You know, the drill team and all that. Then—so—and I actually joined that for a semester and—because I thought that, "This is really cool," because I've always been into the extreme, but twirling the rifles and I knew I wasn't going to be a marine option so it made no sense for me to be with the marines. But anyhow—

TS: But you got to try it out.

EPT: Exactly. I got to try it and I can twirl.

TS: Can you?

EPT: I can, yes. I learned how to do that. You use the—they're like, really, dummies, but they weigh the exact—they weigh exactly the same amount; just fourteen pounds.

TS: Oh, they do? Okay.

EPT: And they got all of these straps to make that snapping sound that—when you do, you know? Anyhow—so—so, you do that and—so, it's not as intense, but you are—you do feel like you're in the navy, so to speak.

TS: So, starting in '78 you started going through ROTC—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —but then you're not commissioned, actually, until '82.

EPT: Until '82. Yes. You finish graduation and then usually the next day—I mean, of course, you're preparing along the way. They're doing your back—they're finishing up your background checks. You've got your IDs. You even have your orders already all set because—because the ROTC unit obviously gets a list of all the folks that are eligible to graduate. As soon as they get that, which happens in March really, unless you really mess up, you know. So, they have to prepare in advance, and they're meeting with you to talk about, "Which area are you going to go into?" The guys are going to go fly; they have to go down and interview. My husband actually interviewed with Admiral [Hyman G.] Rickover, the last year, too.

TS: How was that?

EPT: It was—he was pretty intense. [chuckles]

TS: I've heard that that is pretty intense.

EPT: Exactly. So, he actually interviewed with him. And so, they go through that process, and the women, who are Unrestricted Line [Officers] were not looking at these opportunities. Where—which areas are we—get to choose. Now, we get to choose one, two, three, but there's no guarantee, you know. They'll send you where there are openings.

TS: What were you interested in?

EPT: I was interested in—in being in Norfolk more than anything else.

TS: Just a geographic location?

EPT: Geographic location, number one, and number two, I didn't really have a huge preference. I didn't want to go to a shipyard, though; I don't know why. But that's the only—but I was up for anything. And first line—first job for the navy is always division officer, so it didn't really matter where.

TS: Why did you want to go to Norfolk?

EPT: Because my husband and I were engaged at the time and the best place for us to be together long term was Norfolk because it has the most opportunities.

TS: Is that how it worked out?

EPT: Yes, it did. He had to graduate—because remember, they'll send you—once you're in the navy, you're in the navy. You don't have choices. You have to understand that first and

foremost and there's no guarantees. So, he was going through the Nuclear Power School [technical school that trains enlisted navy personnel for shipboard nuclear power plant operation] pipeline, so he wasn't going to be at a duty station for close to eighteen months. And so—and in order for him to get his choice he had to graduate number one or number two, you know. And he did. He graduated number one, I think. But—so—

TS: That's a lot of pressure.

EPT: Yes, a lot of pressure, but then he—but then when they asked him, "Okay, where do you want to go?"

He said, "Norfolk."

And they looked—"What?" [Therese chuckles]

TS: He had just graduated number one?

EPT: Yes. Yes. Yes. "You can go to Hawaii. You can go to San Diego." Everybody wanted to be, kind of, on the West Coast.

TS: I see.

EPT: He says, "No, my fiancée is in Norfolk," so he went to the USS *Atlanta*, which was a newly commissioned attack submarine in Norfolk, and that's where I was. That's why we took the double tour, because he didn't arrive there until almost two years into my—almost two years into my tour, and so it made sense for me to take another tour in the—in the area.

TS: So, double tour?

EPT: Same location.

TS: You mean that you extended it? Or were you just immediately—

EPT: No, two different jobs. Yeah, two different jobs.

TS: Oh, I see.

EPT: Two different jobs in the same location.

TS: Okay.

EPT: So—which would—which would lengthen your stay in that location. Typically you would be in one place no more than two or three years, but we were there for four and half.

TS: I see.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Well, tell me about that first duty station.

EPT: That was at the Naval Air Station, Norfolk [Naval Station Norfolk] at the Navy Data Automation—Navy Regional Data Automation Center which was a data center that took care of all of the West Coast air craft parts.

TS: Okay.

EPT: They—and this was a main frame station where they had these big reel tapes, you know. And we had, like I said, a hundred and forty-two enlisted folks who was—that I had—was a Division Officer to, and they were predominately naval technicians—naval IS—essentially, you know, the computer technicians or analysts; people that fixed them and people that actually ran the—because the operation was twenty-four by seven.

TS: So, describe, like, a typical day.

EPT: A typical day we start out with—with morning call with everybody lined up, okay, and we do the plan of the day, you, know, and tell them what's going on. If there was any special—a special, like—anything special attention, like an award—a mini award or something like that, we would do those. Any inspections; we would do those. And we would literally tell them—tell all the folks there what the plan was, and then we'd break up and the folks who were on that first shift would go and do their work. I'd go into my office—actually I'd go into officer's call next with our executive officer and the other officers, you know, who was assigned there, and then we'd talk about the budget and the—everything from urine—the next urinalysis to the captain's mast; all navy stuff.

And then—because we also did—we also had, like, our own professional jobs, if you will, and I was an analyst.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so—but majority of my job was really—really taking care of the folks, because there were so many—at any given moment there was either a captain's mast going on—

TS: Do you want to describe what a captain's mast is?

EPT: A captain's mast is the navy's judicial system. This is the system—this is the judicial system where if it's—if an infraction happened, let's say drunk driving, or you know, some kind of a minor infraction that we don't turn over to civilian—anything really serious, you know, that goes into—beyond us. But then they go into captain's mast and I have to, kind of, be the defender, if you will.

TS: Oh, you did?

EPT: Yes. I'm either the—I speak on behalf of the person.

TS: Okay.

EPT: But I prepare the package for the captain basically saying, "All right, Seaman So-and-so is—he got positive on a urinalysis. This is his first time; you know, THC [tetrahydrocannabinol]. I've already interviewed Seaman So-and-so and he told me what happened. He was at a party. He didn't know. He didn't inhale;" whatever. Then I look at his record and I talk to my chief and we talk about, "Well, do we give him another chance or is this a guy who's going to cause problems for us," you know. And we, kind of, put a little bit of our own subject into it. Then we recommend whatever—what the punishment could be. Which could be, like, oh, he's going to give up some vacation, or he's going to be confined; in other words, he's not going to get any liberty for a while. Or he's going to get double duty, or sometimes they'll get fined money, but we tried very hard not fine money to these folks because they're already on pretty low paychecks. And then we have a, you know, captain's mast where the captain comes in and he reads what's going on and he—he figures out what happened and he renders the punishment. It's like a little mini court session.

TS: What are the typical things that you had to appear for on behalf of the sailors?

EPT: At that time it was—if they get caught out in the civilian world being rowdy or—you know, being rowdy or an altercation like a fight or something like that; —

TS: Okay.

EPT: —number one. Number two: drunk driving. Number three: being positive on urinalysis.

TS: Like drug testing?

EPT: Drug testing, yes. So, those are the three things that we spent the most of our time. Anything significantly more than that we don't really—you know, we don't really do too much with. Anything beyond that it goes to the civilian authority.

TS: I see.

EPT: Yes, so—or anything really serious, and they decide to take a court-martial, that goes—that goes to the navy judicial system beyond the court—our own internal, you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: And also, the seaman will have to—they have to choose to take internal punishment versus civilian punishment.

TS: Okay.

EPT: I'll ask them, "You have a choice; captain's mast or I turn you over to the sheriff," and they always chose captain's mast.

TS: Always?

EPT: Pretty much, yes.

TS: They felt they'd get a fairer treatment?

EPT: I think so, because we were kind of—I think they have a better sense of "we know them better".

TS: I see.

EPT: And so, if they go out to the civilian they're going to get the same regardless—whatever—you know, whatever the punishment is at the time. Internally, they have a better chance, especially if you got—if they've got a good record.

TS: Work record, nobody's going to look at that in the civilian world necessarily.

EPT: No, not really. "You did what you did and that's what you get."

TS: What about the break down for gender in these kinds of things—and I don't know how many women were here in Norfolk in your station, but did—were there a lot of problems with the women, too? I don't mean a lot, but I mean, like—

EPT: Like you mean more or less?

TS: Well, disproportionate or proportionate to the population of women in the—

EPT: In my—in that particular duty station I had a significant number of women. It wasn't half-half, but it was at least thirty percent.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Because this is one of the jobs that women could do; this is a computer facility; it's a shore facility because these jobs do not go onboard ship, for instance; this is a shore rotation. And so—and—but in terms of disproportion—I think there were about the same. I mean, there's some women that got in trouble. They're a different kind of trouble. I had less women pop positive on urinalysis, for instance.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Majority of the people that popped positive on urinalysis were men. There were less DUIs, but women had credit issues.

TS: Oh, really?

EPT: A lot of women had credit—seemingly credit issues.

TS: So, what kinds of things would they go before mast on?

EPT: Like when they owe money; you know, they don't pay their bills.

TS: Oh, so that came up before—

EPT: Yes, yes.

TS: How would you deal with that?

EPT: The same way, and that is—that is that they need to, you know—that they need to get that under control because, you know, you're getting calls from creditors, right?

TS: Right.

EPT: And that looks bad on your record.

TS: I see.

EPT: And so—and we would send them to places where they—we could help them with their credit where—or a portion of their pay, if they chose, can go directly to that—creditors. You see? You could do that kind of stuff, you know, so help them control themselves. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

EPT: Because, remember, a lot of these people, they're young women with a credit card for the first time, you know. And so, yes, they went out and bought stuff that they probably couldn't afford and then the bill came due, and then after a month or two—you know, when you're in the navy you're not a private citizen. You're going to get phone calls, and before they call you—they'll call you, then they'll call, you know, the division officer. [chuckles] So, I get, "Oh, okay. Let me figure this out." And then they started getting these notices; you know, these crediting notices, and that's not good. See, when they have those kinds of things happen, if they have those kind of issues, what's happens is that they cannot go up for the exam for the next rate. You see what I'm saying?

TS: Oh, okay. So, they have to get that all out of the way.

EPT: You got to get that out of the way. So, it was—it is in their best interest and in my interest to help them clear those kind of—those issues. They can't sit for those exams, which means even though they're qualified they can't do the exams, and if they miss the exams then they can't get promoted, which means they have to wait for the next cycle, which means they're behind their peers. You know, like, their peers are getting paid more or have got their crows on or their stripes on before they are, and they don't want that.

TS: Right.

EPT: So, you've got to really help them do that.

TS: Interesting.

EPT: That's important.

TS: Now—so, when your husband got to Norfolk what were your housing conditions like? Did you live off—

EPT: Yes, at that time I actually lived on base at the bachelor officer's quarters until he arrived, and then when we—and then when we got married we bought a townhome off of—in Virginia Beach which is about thirty miles way.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Yes, so then we—then we commuted into the base. He was working at the—what they call a DNS pier, which is the naval operating base. DNS pier is what destroys the submarines, because he was on the USS—and then I was still at the naval air station, you know, at the—which is right adjacent to each other but they have different gates.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And then that's where they had—the naval air station had pilots—I mean, had pilots and mostly helicopters, you know, and so—but that's where the Navy Regional Data Automation Center was located.

TS: Right—that's where you were.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Well, what kind of things did you guys do on your off time?

EPT: We went to places—we went—took little locale trips, like, Williamsburg [Virginia], and then we went to—we would go hiking and fishing and the beach was right there, but we

didn't really have too much off time because he was on a submarine and his working hours were absolutely brutal, especially as a—as a junior officer.

TS: JO?

EPT: Yes. Because when you're a junior officer you come to the submarine for the first time having just qualified as a nuke. Now, it's a race for you to qualify as engineer, so not—you not only have your regular job as either an electrical officer or damage control officer or reactor control officer, you also have to qualify as an engineer. Which means every spare moment you are studying so that you could pass the engineering board, because if you don't then, you know, you're just—you're just not considered good [chuckles] and you don't want to do that. You don't want to not qualify engineer.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—And then, remember, on a sub if—when they're out to sea they're gone, they're working probably fourteen, fifteen hours a day, because you have your normal day to day rotation and then you have your watch on top of that which is four hour shifts. Then you've got to sleep and eat sometimes, and then you're studying for your engineer exam. Then when you're in you have—junior officers typically have watch; you know, overnight watch every third night. Okay?

TS: They're pretty busy.

EPT: Yes. SSN stands for Saturdays, Sundays, and Nights. [both laugh]

TS: Okay. I haven't heard that before.

EPT: Yes, that's what they call them. And then—and so, I took a lot of meal onboard. Sometimes the only way we can see each other is, you know, when he's on duty and things are quiet and he's having dinner I can just join him for dinner on board.

TS: Oh, you could?

EPT: Yes, we could. Then—because while's he's—he has to eat dinner and then, you know, it's kind of routine, everybody else has left for the day and then there's the watch crew on board and they take care of overnight rotate—there's stuff always going on.

TS: So, they're just in port?

EPT: They're always in port, yes. And then, even though they're in port they also have train—what they call trainers, and trainers begin at eight p.m. and goes to midnight once a week. So, just think about that. Trainers—

TS: Did he pick this field?

EPT: Yes, he did. He did.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And he knew—he knew that this would be tough. They worked the submarine officers pretty hard, and they have to because nuclear safety is very, very important, as you know. And I don't know what's going on back then; you know, just the whole strategic deterrence thing was considered very important. They had to be operational.

TS: So the Cold War; the Soviets.

EPT: Absolutely, and Chris was one of the first—his boat and him personally was one of the first folks to go out and qualify on the over-the-horizon Tomahawks. And so—so, he got to do some exciting stuff. I mean, they like that, you know, and actually I worked at—the next duty station was Operation Test and Evaluation Force where they do all of the testing for all the navy's incoming weapon systems, and so there's a little bit of overlap, if you will, of what I did and what he did. So, I got to understand, you know—

TS: This is at—still at Norfolk for that second tour?

EPT: Yes, second tour; second tour at the Operational Test and Evaluation Force.

TS: Now, is there anything in particular that you really liked about your jobs that you did?

EPT: It's the variety, I guess. You do get to do a little bit of everything. At NARDAC, I really haven't been around computers much because I'm a psychology major, okay? I took one course in statistics. During that time I had to run a small simulation and—you know, those IBM stack cards?

TS: Yes.

EPT: That's it. And the whole concept of personal computing was not there, you know. But you go in there and all of sudden a wall full of mainframes are staring at you, and you know—and I told my CO [commanding officer] —I said, "Sir, I know nothing about computers."

And what he said to me was, "You're not here for that. You're here to lead." He says, "Officers—you're here—is—are for leadership and care and feeding of your troops. You don't have to know; they know," you know. "They are the ones who run the equipment. You are there to take care of them."

So, I said, "Aye, aye."

But then, you know, you have to know something, so I took their qualification book; you know, they're called—there's the A book and the C book. A is the intro and C is the, you know, more advanced. So, I took their book and, kind of, studied up on it a little bit so that I could at least understand the language.

TS: Talk the language?

EPT: Understand their optempo [operational tempo, pace of work]. But then—and you get it pretty quickly. You go in—because remember this is three shifts, so one of the things I have to learn to do is to be present at every shift; every one. Not all the time, but every once in a while you walk in at midnight, you know. Every once in a while you got to—you stay behind to, kind of, catch the mid shift, and then every once in a while you come in really early in the morning. So, that's what you got to do to, kind of, sort of, stay connected.

And then I want to try to also rotate the people because some people get very comfortable from, like, midnight to seven and you never get to see them. You know, you want to see what's going on, right, so you—you want to make sure you rotate the shifts sometimes so that the night people become day people and vice versa.

TS: Did they—how did the soldiers—sailors think about that?

EPT: Well, you know, they grumbled at first but they—but, you know, you—they get used to anything as long as they understand number one, what's going on, and b) if you're being fair.

TS: So, if you're communicating well?

EPT: Yes, you come in, you know, with a box of doughnuts. [laughs] You come in—Dunkin Donuts back then—there was no Krispy Kreme back then, it was Dunkin Donuts. You come in with a box of doughnuts and some coffee, and you know—and you just, kind of, sit there and talk to them. You don't even do anything. You just talk to them so they feel comfortable with you. If they just see you from far off—I'll show you some pictures, but in the mornings there's a hundred and forty-five of them lined up and you're up in front. It—you know, you don't get that sense of familiarity, but when you talk to them only for, like, fifteen minutes even though every other word out of their mouth is, "Ma'am," you're still talking.

TS: Right.

EPT: And then you remember them and say, "Hey, Seaman So-and-so. How's that going?" and you get that little bit of connection.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so, I was probably in overwhelm but I was a single gal without her fiancée so you put a lot of time into your work. You know, back then I lived on base, I ran on base, and I worked on base, so I was sort of, like, consumed with work, you know. There was nothing else. My family was, you know, two thousand miles away. What am I going to do? So, I pretty much stayed at work a lot. I created a little volleyball team, you know,

for—and so, we went out and played volleyball. We did basketball. You know, we try to do—have these programs where people could get together and, kind of, know each other, you know, socially.

TS: Right.

EPT: There's always—it doesn't matter whether you're in shorts or whatever, there's always this hierarchy, believe me. But at least you, kind of, see each other in a different frame of mind, because—especially because I wasn't very good at volleyball, you know, but that's what they wanted to do so I go out there and play volleyball.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—and so, that's what you do. And that was fun.

TS: Do you think that's where you get the idea that there's more of a sense of family, sometimes, in the military than in other jobs?

EPT: Absolutely; absolutely. Because, you know, there's a—there's enough healthy dose of complaining and not being happy with the navy and stuff, but I know when things—a few times when things got tough for a couple of people, people really just pull together, you know. And so—even people that I thought had bad attitudes, for that short period did not have bad attitudes. [chuckles]

TS: So, they would be all?

EPT: Yes, exactly. So, that was good.

TS: Was there anything for you during your time in the navy that was particularly difficult, either emotionally or physically?

EPT: [pauses] Not so much physically. I think most of things I was asked to do I could handle physically. I tried to—but I worked at keeping fit, and you know, being able to do those things, because I actually went to what they call damage control school. Damage control school is where you are simulating a rupture in a ship, you know, and then—you're literally in a tank, you know, and they're—cold water is coming through and you have to patch that up. In a real life situation that would be, like, horrible because it's the pressure as well as it's cold and it's salt water, you know. So, even then it was okay. I mean, we were able to make it through—in the back of my—in the back of our mind, of course, we knew that they're not going to drown us but it seemed that way because, you know, you're down there.

Emotionally, yes, I got close to some people, yes, and it was hard to keep the distance sometimes. You know, in terms of trying to be the boss—

TS: Right.

EPT: —and you wanted to help them above and beyond but it really wasn't appropriate.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know. But you can find ways around—around—you call the United Way. You call some other folks to say, "You need to touch base with Seaman So-and-so. She could use the help right now."

TS: So, whatever tools you have, to try to—

EPT: Yes, and that's what you got to do. You can't personally give somebody a loan, or you can't personally house them, you know. [chuckles] You just have to be real careful with that.

TS: But your heart, kind of, goes out to them?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Do you think that the—well, that the military has those kind of tools to help the enlisted, especially?

EPT: Yes, they're very focused on the enlisted, which is the way it should be. The officers are usually fine.

TS: Yeah?

EPT: Yeah. [both chuckle]

TS: Why is that?

EPT: Yeah, they're usually fine, because they usually come with a pretty good network. A lot of—there's many, many reasons, especially back then, that people come into the military, and—but you'd be surprised how often I hear it's to get away from home.

TS: From the enlisted?

EPT: Yeah; get away from home. They had some—they had to go someplace, so. When you come in with—with really no support structure, if you don't have that in the military, you know, you're going from—from the frying pan into the fire. So, you have to have that.

TS: Right.

EPT: You have to have that, and if you—if you come in with a good group of people that does that for you without getting, what I call "gangish" then that's great. Sometimes,

sometimes, you know, is does get, I call "gangish" because they want loyalty from you no matter what because they're giving you that support, and sometimes that—sometimes what they're asking you to do is not the right thing.

TS: You mean, like, in a group that you might—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —you get in that is not necessarily beneficial to you in that way?

EPT: It's beneficial in that they look out for you and they're, kind of, like, your mini family, but what if they're not following protocol?

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know? What if—what if they're getting too far outside, you know?

TS: I see.

EPT: Then you're part of this—this—this thing that's wrong—

TS: I see.

EPT: —and you don't want to rat anybody out. You know, that kind of—

TS: Oh, the loyalty—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —that becomes a detriment.

EPT: Yes, it becomes a loyalty to that group and not to the navy and not to the cause, and that's when you have to be real careful. I mean, you will always be loyal to—to the person next to you, but you got to be sure for the right reasons.

TS: That's a very interesting way to put that.

EPT: Yeah. I mean, because people say, yes, you know, after a while you're not fighting for the navy, you're not fighting for country, you're fighting for the person next to you. But that person must represent, in my mind, the country and the navy.

TS: Right.

EPT: You know? So.

TS: No, that's well put. I think that's very well put.

EPT: Yes, so.

TS: Did you ever get to go on TDY, or temporary duty, somewhere?

EPT: Yes. Yes. I went to oil spill school. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, is that what the—what you were describing?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Did you volunteer or did you get volunteered for that?

EPT: I volunteered because that was part of my job, and because part of my job—my third job was as a—I volunteered for that job because I was supposed to be admin[istration] officer and I told my XO, "You have plenty of people up here doing a lot of admin. Is there any place on base that you need somebody to fill the gaps?" and he sent me down to the service pier.

And part of the service pier's job was to prevent oil spills, you know, for any small craft that come in. Because Hood Canal—I don't know if you're familiar with the geography of Washington state, but Hood Canal comes in deep all the way to Seattle and it is what they call—the Coast Guards calls Class A pristine waters; it's very deep; it's glacier cut; that's why it's perfect for [trying?] submarines, which—draft is very deep. You don't have to—have to dredge like [Naval Submarine Base] Kings Bay, you know, Georgia.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Anyways, the water is very clean so they want to make absolutely sure is stays that way, and so you have all this oil spill equipment and things of that nature, and—but nobody from my area, except the folks that transferred in that have some experience, had that experience. So, I volunteered and said, "I need to go to some kind of school or something that I can know what oil spill prevention means," other than just putting pads out when you see a little shine here and there, you know, because we have a potential for big spills. Now, the Tridents [class of submarines with Trident Ballistic Missiles] are nuclear, but there's a small diesel component of it, and there are quite a few small craft come in that have diesel that will spill, you know, oil if it's not handled correctly.

So, I went to—yes, to Texas. It was—oh gosh, it was not Houston; Corpus Cristi.

TS: Okay.

EPT: It was a civilian oil spill school, but they taught the people in rigs—handle rigs; [U.S.] Navy and Coast Guard, all in commercial because—

TS: It's like the premier place for this kind of—

EPT: Exactly.

TS: —training?

EPT: Yes, because everybody is concerned about—with oil spill.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so, yes, we go out there and it was hard [chuckles], you know, to go out there and to run the small crafts and maneuver and understand the dynamics of how quickly you've got to get to some spills; how to do the booming correctly; what kind of booms you use. It got very technical. You—I cannot recognize booms from the draft; all of them. It's like, "Oh, yeah, that'll be good for that."

And also, I commanded tugs called YTBs, which is the large—they push and pull the giant Trident submarine. A Trident submarine, when it is above—when the sail is above the water they're like beached whales; they can't maneuver very well. They're very large so they have to get pushed and pulled into—into these really small berths, you know, that they got to get into.

TS: Right.

EPT: And then—so, those are the main job of what I had. As a service pier, I was what they called the ops boss, you know, and so—but then we had about fourteen, fifteen small crafts, everything from a little dingy to, kind of, a—like, a—it's a flat craft that—it's a—that floats. It's got several motors on it, but it can hold a lot of gear. You know, like a pontoon boat almost, and—with a little shack in front, because then you can put all the booms there. You have to—you stack them a certain way and then you have to let it go, you know, so that it—

TS: So they come out one by one?

EPT: Come out one by one and then it drops, because you've got to boom the entire Trident submarine. Trident submarine is five hundred and feet, okay, long.

TS: That's a lot of boom.

EPT: A lot of boom. You got to have a certain distance because divers go down there sometimes to set certain wires and things of that nature, you know. So, you got to be careful of that as well. And then you got to be able to get off in a hurry and like, if—like, in a hurricane situation or in a weather situation, you know, a lot of those guys had to go out to open sea; you could not leave them in boat.

TS: You're probably thinking about that during this—

EPT: Absolutely. Those guys—

TS: —Hurricane Sandy.

EPT: Absolutely. Well, luckily there weren't any boats there, but if there were big weather happening in Washington, they—all the big boats have to get out which means we got to get them out of there; we've got to get my tugs out there in a hurry; got to my pilots on there. Because another thing about a lot of these Trident submarines' captains is that they're very good out in open ocean because they have all the equipment to navigate. When they come into foreign waters, or tight quarters, you got to have pilots that understand totally that particular geography. And so, they give up the command of their ship temporarily, and my pilots go on the sail and they maneuver those ships so they don't run aground.

TS: Right.

EPT: So, now we got to get them out there, you know, and then—of course, in the middle of the night; this always happened in the middle of the night. You know, they call you up and you're down there and you're rallying to get folks out because, you know, you do not want damage to a one point five billion dollar craft.

TS: No. That doesn't go over very well.

EPT: And we feel responsible to help them do that, so the whole pier could be, like, bustling with activity to get them out in open water, make sure they're safe, and then we've got to bring them back.

TS: Did you ever have to use that oil spill training?

EPT: Absolutely. Absolutely. In fact, we had several pretty big incidents down there. Nothing compared—you know, compared to what you see, like, the Exxon-Valdez [oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska in 1989], you know, but unfortunately you spill more than ten, fifteen gallons and the sheen could be seen for miles, and so it looks really bad so you want to try to get that as quickly as possible, you know, before it starts foaming and churning.

TS: I see.

EPT: And then—and it breaks up into this really thin thin thin thin sheen, so you got to get out there and what you do—first thing you do is you got to boom it off so it doesn't go anywhere, and then in that short—in that smaller category you do the initial mop up and get the big gloppy stuff off, and then you do the fine mop up to get the sheen off. Then the little bit that stays in you're not going to be able to do much it but keep it contained until the plants and the natural biodegration reabsorbs.

TS: I see.

EPT: Yes, so you got to do that. So, yes, we do that, and you come back and—you know, we teach the basic practices to the folks that's running the booms and things of that nature. But they're handling the equipment that's—they're handling the equipment. It's very heavy and it's unwieldy. They got to plan very carefully otherwise they got to fold and refold.

TS: Sure.

EPT: You know?

TS: Yes.

EPT: And no matter how tired you are you can't just dump it. You got to—got to—

TS: Lay it down properly.

EPT: Yes, because you don't want to waste a lot of time folding and refolding, so you want to unreel it this way and you want to rereel it that way.

TS: I see.

EPT: And you want to have it done just right so that when in an emergency you could load it and go, as opposed to, "Oh my God, now I got to—" you know, so that was—we had to be really strict about that because you never know when that emergency's going to occur.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—so, that was one part of the thing, and the other part is search and rescue. You know, we are—we were—we share that waterfront space with a lot of civilians. I mean, the base owned about three kilometers, you know.

TS: Now, is this you're talking about in Washington?

EPT: Yes. My crew had to do search and rescue. We were the first responders for search and rescue in that Hood Canal area; after that the Coast Guard, but it takes a while for the Coast Guard to get there, so you know.

TS: Yes. You have any stories you want to share about that; search and rescue?

EPT: Search and rescue? A lot of them are, kind of, pleasure boaters. You know, outside my office I can see—because see, now remember, the base has about three—three kilometers or so of the—of the shore, right? But then they don't own, or they don't have control of,

the entire Hood Canal. It only goes out, maybe, four, five hundred feet, and then beyond that, you know, like, if a pleasure boater or a family or whatever wanted to use that space to get from point A to point B, you can see them far off. They just can't get too close to the base, but you're still in the same piece of water.

TS: Right.

EPT: But if they get in trouble out there and I can literally see them—and Hood Canal water is cold even in the summer; it's sixty-eight degrees, sixty-nine degrees. So, if we don't get out to them they'll get hypothermia immediately within, like, twenty, twenty-two minutes. So, when that happens we're the first call, and we rally up our small craft with the big heavy engines and we rush out there and pick them up. We got to bring them to our place, [chuckles] and then we—you know, then they leave by land. So, most of the time it's things of that nature. We don't do stuff that are way out there, but things that are within the geographical five miles or so that is within our call, we got to get out to them within thirty minutes if possible because even in the summertime—and that's the only time they would do that, is they go out there in one of those dinghies or whatever, you know. And we know especially with kids, hypothermia sets in, so we've had several, you know—I remember one time with one family these two little kids, they were small and shivering, and so we took them down to try to get them hot chocolate and all that kind of other stuff before, you know, they can get them off base. So, things like that. Those are, kind of, fun stuff. Nothing—nothing dangerous.

TS: Nothing tragic.

EPT: Nothing tragic.

TS: That's good.

EPT: Well, nothing—the one thing that—tragic that happened was to the navy people and not to the—not to the—

TS: Civilians.

EPT: —any civilians. And that didn't really happen with us, you know, at Washington, but it actually happened at Kings Bay and we started using that as a training film as a wake-up call, in that one of the tugs during maneuver, you know, got sucked into the rotor of a submarine and the bow part below the water was cut, and so, you know, it sunk so fast that everybody in the engine room, you know, we couldn't save them because they're working with Mickey Mouse ears [referring to headphones?] so they don't hear so the water just [makes noise] rushed in. I mean, they happened to have somebody filming topside because they were doing it as a—they were doing, I think, some kind of a transfer—personnel transfer, and they filmed it and I think they said they sank in, like, eighteen seconds.

TS: Oh my goodness. No time to react.

EPT: Yes. From beginning to—no time to react. The few people that jumped overboard, you know, they were saved but they were lucky that they didn't—also did not get sucked in, because that—the Trident propulsor is forty-eight feet in diameter, so it's got [unclear] the catitation[?]

TS: Wow.

EPT: Pretty tough.

TS: Yeah, that is pretty tough. Now, what year did you and your husband go to Washington?

EPT: We went there in 1986; it was almost—it was '87—because—December of '86. I want to say '87 because remember—I remember we got there in time for Christmas.

TS: Okay.

EPT: So, really we didn't start our jobs until 1987.

TS: And this was in Bangor?

EPT: Bangor, Washington—or Silverdale, Washington, yes.

TS: Okay, Silverdale.

EPT: It's called Bangor—Bangor Base—Sub[marine] Base Bangor [Naval Submarine Base Bangor, now part of Naval Base Kitsap].

TS: And that was a Trident submarine base?

EPT: Yes, it was. It was the—the newest Trident. There's only two. Kings Bay was first, and then—and then Bangor Sub Base opened.

TS: So, for—so, how this works for joint assignments, did your husband get sent and then you had to find a billet there, or did you both get billets together?

EPT: We got billets together.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And we worked really hard for that, and that's why they, sort of—when we did the double assignment they, sort of, put us on the same path timing wise.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know, so that we could arrive at the same time and get, you know—and get detached at the same time. And so—so, we arrived there at the same time and, you know, looked for jobs at the same place. Essentially, he had to get his job first and I had to find a job—because there's more jobs for me than for him. I mean, a submarine officer can only go so many places; where there are submarines, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: So, whereas I can go practically anywhere.

TS: Right. So, you need to follow him more? That's why—that's what I was wondering about that.

EPT: Yes. Yes.

TS: Because I know in some fields that's it. One is more specific than the other.

EPT: Correct.

TS: Or less or more flexible.

EPT: Exactly. Exactly. He was less flexible because he's on a path—now that he'd qualified engineer, you know, after his first shore tour, now he had to go to a—I'm sorry, his sea tour. He had to go to a shore tour and then his next assignment would have been engineer.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so, he went to a squadron to be—to be on a shore tour for that—for two years, so I went with him. And, you know, my detailer, who is the person who takes care of the job, she offered me Brussels [Belgium] which was fantastic, and she thought it was really a great place for me and—but there was no jobs for him there, so I gave up Brussels for my husband. [both laugh]

TS: Do you remind him of that?

EPT: I do. I do, a lot. I do. But I hadn't seen—even though we were married at that time for about three years we had hardly seen each other. I think we calculated that we probably spent maybe eleven months of that together.

TS: Oh, really?

EPT: You know, in the same place; same town. And so, we thought that, you know, since—as long as he has his shore tour it'd be good to—good to be in the same place. If I was in Brussels it'd be tough.

TS: Yes, it would. That's true.

EPT: He could not go anywhere near Europe at that point because at his place it was either going to be Washington or—or San Diego, or places like that.

TS: Right.

EPT: And we had never lived anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. We had grown up and gone practically all over the country, you know. Basically the Southeast, Southwest, Cal—West, and went to college up in the Northeast, but we had never been to Northwest so we thought, "Hey, why not?"

TS: Something new?

EPT: Yeah. And the whole Trident submarine thing, you know, he thought that would be a good—he thought that would be a good experience for him because he'd always been on Fast Attacks [type of submarine] and Trident submarines is a different animal.

TS: So, good experience for—

EPT: Yeah.

TS: —for his career, too.

EPT: Correct. Correct.

TS: How do you feel that you were treated by your superiors during your time in the navy?

EPT: Again, I don't know if I was singularly lucky but I had great experiences. I have good memories of my first XO at NARDAC. He was—he was very—he took time to mentor me. But I remember he would sit there—sit—back then they could smoke, and he just would smoke and smoke, but he would sit there and talk to me about all kinds of stuff, you know, that he thought—things that he thought I needed to know. He—I—I lost touch with him but I'm going to look him up. And he—his wife—I met his wife and she was a career gal. You know, kind of a—first time I seen a—two—professional couple, because she had a master's degree and she worked for an accounting firm, and so—and of course he, you know, was a workaholic and he was a supply officer. So, he was a—his degree was in economics. And so, to see that dynamic, it was very interesting because—

TS: Is this the first time you had seen it?

EPT: Yes—

TS: Okay.

EPT: —at the professional level—that close.

TS: Right.

EPT: Most of the family structure was the traditional family, you know; dad working, mom at home.

TS: Right.

EPT: Especially in the military family, very few military wives work until after they retired. And they would have, kind of, like, part-time jobs. Not a career type job, you know, where you—where you had what you call a professional job. And in some ways I think—I think Amy earned more money than he did because, you know, she was a big muckity-muck. I mean, she had a VP title, and so I thought that was really kind of cool.

And so, they had a daughter—young daughter, and she was real interested in dance and I was dancer so, you know, I would talk to her. So, it was—so, he kind of made not only me but other folks who are single in the wardroom—he took care of us beyond the work. You know, he came to my wedding, and just—you know, set up my twenty-first birthday party. Because I turned twenty-one, you know, under his command. And so, set up my first birthday—twenty-first birthday party, which was very embarrassing. And then—and just did a lot of those kinds of things that was mentoring.

TS: Did he kind of follow you through your career?

EPT: He did, and then we lost touch when—just about the time he retired, but I think I know where he is.

TS: Yes?

EPT: Yes. His name is David, and so—and his wife's name is Amy. And so, I have good memories of them. And usually the XO, the executive officer, took care of the younger officers. The CO got to see you very seldom. He's kind of like the old man. You know, kind of like a god at that point; a captain. Back then we thought captains were like this other worldly creatures, you know? And so—

TS: They're not? [joking]

EPT: Yes, apparently not, [laughing] because I'm one now. I assure you, I do not feel like an otherworldly creature.

And he—he was like this fatherly figure. He showed up to my—a couple award ceremonies, and a—when I got promoted to lieutenant, JG [junior grade]; you know, he put the bars on me. You know, that kind of stuff.

TS: Right.

EPT: But XO is somebody I talk with, you know, on a regular basis. And so, he was—he was a great influence on me, and then my next command at [unclear] four [may be saying AFTEC or AFOTEC 4, Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center, though this does not match with later mention of Norfolk], he was a captain, and him—I—it was sort of neutral. He was more of—I think it was because of his personality, he was more, kind of—very professional, but no—no mentoring, per se. You know, just a very professional basis. But the admiral who worked for us, Admiral Parker, he was totally different. He was definitely this gruff, real—the traditional guy. People were all afraid of him, and I was afraid of him but he was very—I thought he was very fatherly and very nice in his own way. He didn't—he—I remember he just, kind of, noticed things about you, and not in an untold [*sic*, untoward?] fashion but he'll remember things. And so, I thought he was really nice and really great, but very from afar.

TS: Right.

EPT: Like, I—to take a memo down to his office was a big deal, like—kind of, like, surreptitiously go in there and he'll go, "Lieutenant?"

I says, "Yes sir." [chuckles]

He says—he says, "Take a seat."

And I'm going, "Oh my God."

TS: That's the last thing you wanted to do.

EPT: Exactly. He's goes, "So, what's going on down there in O2 Alpha country?" They called us O2 Alpha because we were the deputy, you know.

And I go, "Well—"

He goes, "Oh, just kidding." So, he would do stuff like that. He'd make you feel important even though, you know—even though you weren't. [chuckling] And he'll say occasionally good things, or occasionally he'll say stuff like, "You got to watch that stuff," you know. So, that was a good—but I learned a lot in that—you worked—In that particular assignment, you worked with surface guys, the air guys, the Special Forces, the submarine guys, and Coast Guard, and Canadians, because we had representatives from all of those because they were there to be the—what they call the Operational Test Directors to test systems; all the new navy systems, you know, whether—

TS: Where was this assignment?

EPT: In Norfolk.

TS: Okay.

EPT: This is the follow-on assignment. And so—and I'm working as a deputy chief of staff's—you know, office, and so I am the first line of communication with all these people, and so I understood now a little at that point what the air force—I mean, the air community is concerned about, —

TS: Right.

EPT: —their weapons systems, the submarine systems, and the surface systems. That's where I learned project management because now I'm a P—that's what I work as; I'm a PMP; you know, a project management professional, working all of these—you know, back then people didn't us MS Project [Microsoft Project, project management software], but military did. Now, it sort of common place, you know. But the MS Project, and we'd have this one computer that we'd put that system on. I worked with technical writers who—and the Center for Naval Analysis people that essentially wrote up the results of these tests that went up—you know, that worked on these various platforms and interpret them. And then I actually trained them to be—how to be OTDs; operational test directors. So, I ran this school, like, once a quarter and these guys from all different—would come for the week, and then I'd have to manage the curriculum and that was exhausting.

TS: Yes, I bet.

EPT: Yes. Then I worked with Special Forces, you know, because they had to do stuff that were different than the rest so I had to treat them a little bit differently.

TS: How was that? So, you're in a training leadership position, —

EPT: Yes.

TS: —and is it mostly men that you're training?

EPT: They're all men.

TS: All men? How was that dynamic? Have any—

EPT: No. It's interesting. I always felt like I just, kind of, do things the way I see fit. I don't notice it. Other people seem to notice it. People tell me later, you know, like, "Oh, they're—So-and-so is so nervous."

I'm going, "Why?"

"Because you're a woman."

I'm going, "Yeah? See these?" [chuckles] To me it's like—so, I just talk and walk like there's no issues.

TS: Right.

EPT: I mean, I swear to you we were all wearing the same uniform, and I don't know, a couple times I was—I went out to sea on a boat or—boat meaning a submarine. After a couple days you're really—you're so tired you don't notice the sexes even; you don't. I mean, I didn't.

TS: Right.

EPT: You just kind of stumble in, and sometimes I would even, like, stumble into the wrong head. The head is a bathroom.

TS: Right.

EPT: I would just go to the nearest head as opposed to the one that was designated for me, you know. But you just close the door and that's it. And I'm coming out of it and the guy's coming in and they're going, "[makes gasping noise]"

It's like, "It's okay. I didn't leave any girl cooties in there." [both laugh] It's like—they're like [gasps]. I'm serious. Or I'll say, "I left the seat down for you." So—and then just walk away. It's not a big deal, but it's—I think it's only a big deal if you make it a big deal.

TS: Interesting.

EPT: You're just working. You're eating and you're—

TS: Well, you hear so much in the news about issues of sexual harassment and abuse—

EPT: Yeah.

TS: —in the military. What do you—what do you make of that?

EPT: You know, I don't know. I don't understand why I haven't felt any of that. Like, if you think about harassment, the only harassment that I ever felt like I got was the passive-aggressive kind; the one that I just described to you. Nobody came up to me and tried to touch me or try to bump into me or try to insinuate anything sexual to me, you know? Or if they did—maybe a couple times they did but I would just get in their faces and they'd back off. They really would. The few times that happened I just—they'd just back off.

TS: Do you think that maybe women who were enlisted had more trouble because of the lack of power?

EPT: I do. I do. I mean, I think about that, I think it's—I think they feel like they have to take some of that stuff, you know, and that would just frustrate the heck out of me, because you can't change personalities. Not everybody who goes into the military is this GI Jane

type of character. They're not; they're like normal folks. And if you have—if you were a shy person before the military, you're going to be the shy person in the military. If some aggressive people come and get in your face, you're going to be intimidated. That uniform doesn't change you, you know; not really. So, the thing to do though is to make sure that those things don't happen, but sometimes it does, and it doesn't happen always in front of you. Because I—I went looking for that kind of stuff; that kind of intimidation, you know, from men to women or even from women to men. And I never saw it personally.

TS: Did you ever have other women come to you though saying—you know, when you were in a position of leadership saying, "This is what happened"?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Yeah?

EPT: Yes, they did. And then—and then I had to be careful to make sure that they weren't using that to a) get out of that particular situation, or b) you have to be objective and say not every women who comes to you with a complaint, it's real. Likewise, not every man who comes to you with issues is real, so you got to make sure, you know, that—so, you have to observe, but in times like that you just remove her from the situation. That's what you got to do.

TS: Isn't that sometimes—

EPT: Sometimes—

TS: —punishing the victim then?

EPT: No, it all depends on where you remove her to.

TS: Right.

EPT: Right? I mean—

TS: I don't know. If she's in a job she really likes and the person that's harassing her gets to keep their job and she gets to—she has to leave—

EPT: Yes, that is true; that is true. But typically when—it's not one person, it's the area, you know.

TS: Like the environment; hostile environment?

EPT: It's the environment. Yes, it's the environment, and so—

TS: What do you think creates that kind of environment?

EPT: It's—you know, it's an interesting dynamic. It's kind of chem—a strange chemistry that occurs in a positive or a negative fashion, and I don't really know the answer to that other than the fact that if you get a group of people together that, sort of, feeds off on that and it doesn't get corrected where they understand pretty clearly that that's not acceptable, you know, then it happens, sort of, in a passive-aggressive way.

TS: So, leadership?

EPT: Yeah. And, sort of, constant awareness of it. Then once it stops or goes away and it becomes a habit, where maybe they—they're going to still behave that way perhaps, but not in that environment. Does that make sense? You know, not there in that office.

TS: If they're disciplined for—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —in a particular—

EPT: Right.

TS: —area, then they're not going to continue it.

EPT: Right. And you don't want—I find that most of the time you don't want to take it into their faces, but if you find an appropriate moment to embarrass them in that situation where they can see, "See what you're doing?" you know.

TS: Did you ever have to some like that?

EPT: Oh, yeah; constantly.

TS: Do you have an example? I mean, not a particular name or anything, but just a scenario?

EPT: Yes. Well, it's kind of crude sometimes, but when they talk about—one time this one guy made a comment—because I'm always taking notes—

TS: Okay.

EPT: Because I have to take notes on everything, and it doesn't matter, even though I'm calling the meeting. And then this one guy, he was a peer actually; an older gentleman. We had—it was a mixed group of folks; you know, men and women. He made some comment to the nature of how—"Oh, yes, well, Elizabeth's got to do that." Something about, "Well, it's a secretarial thing so we'll give it over to Elizabeth," you know, "because she's always writing." And I—and everybody's laughing, but then all of a

sudden they realize I'm not laughing, and so I, kind of, learned you just take a deep breath, you pause, and you—I looked at him, I said, "Lance, just because you don't know how to write— [chuckles] just because you don't know how to write," you know.

And then everybody started laughing and he'll say stuff like, "Well, I didn't mean anything by it."

I says—I says, "Well, then don't say it." He says—and I told him, "Hey look, this is amongst friends. You know, we're all, like, officers here, but if this happened between an enlisted and you know, a thing—you could be charged up for harassment, you know. And I may still do it. I'm going to use that as an excuse to get you out of here." So, you, kind of, do that kind of stuff, so it's not really in their faces but you see the little warning in there, right?

TS: You're planting seeds.

EPT: Yes, you kind of—"Because I can do it."

TS: Right.

EPT: I'm not going to hesitate. And he'll just laugh it off but chances are he's not going to do it again.

TS: He's not going to do it again.

EPT: He's going to be extra careful, and he's going to fly the flag of non-harassment with other folks.

TS: Right.

EPT: In fact, he'll come back to me like a week later. He goes, "You know, So-and-so said this. That wasn't right."

And I'll say, "You're right Lance, and you're a good example." [both chuckle] You got to do stuff like that. You got to, kind of, play along. Most of the time, I have to say, a lot of the problems was things of that nature, that if you nip it then it stays that way. But if you let that go on, you can see how it could, kind of, catapult into more abuse—you know, to the point where it becomes very difficult.

TS: To get out of?

EPT: To get out of; where you can't roll it back. One person, and you give a little warning and he's not going to do it, and people are very serious, or they'll complain, "Oh, yeah. Now I can't say anything because, you know, it's going to be called sexual harassment," blah blah blah; things of that nature. It's—they'll complain and then you have a retort for stuff like that too. And so—and you just, kind of, have to make a big joke of it, but at the same time there's an underlying message there that if they don't get it then they understand there's a next step. So far I've never had—in my opinion, had to do a next step.

TS: I see.

EPT: One time I did, and that was on hearsay and not me personally, you know. That job I was telling you about, my first job where there was—was three shifts.

TS: Right.

EPT: Some of the gals that were on that shift were complaining about this one civilian who was on the same shift, and he'd be down at the—there was this—like, a stocking area where they'd go down and, you know, get paper and stuff of that nature, and it's dark and they're by themselves and he'd be down there, you know, and they would be afraid of—"Well, what are you doing down here?" And so, there would be concerns about stuff like that. Now, with him I had to go straight to the commanding officer and say, "I want him off. I want him out of that shift. He had no business being down there. I don't know why he's down there." And so, I made sure that all the women that went down there would never go by themselves; you know, always in twos, and if anything does happen, you know, is to call me immediately. And so—and that—I didn't feel like I needed to shift—I didn't want the shifts to occur—the shifts to change because it's not fair for them, like you said. I wanted, in this case, him out of there. And it was really tough. I went to the legal officer; I went to his boss; I went to—it was—without—

TS: Because he was a civilian?

EPT: Well, without proof.

TS: Oh.

EPT: Not—without any—it was hearsay.

TS: Worries.

EPT: Worries, exactly, about him being down there and, you know, kind of, without reason to be; without explanation to be; that kind of stuff, consistently; on a regular basis. You know, during times when girls are going down there for supplies. So, that was the only time, but other than that—all the other stuff was—you know, it—sometimes it get tiresome. It's like, "I got a bunch of other stuff going on. Do I have to deal with this too; not only for myself, but for some of the women in my—in my group? And are we all going to be painted by the same brush one way or the other?" I mean, you think about it sometimes; you just feel like, "God, [sighs]" you get really tired. But you—everybody has their cross to bear. It is what it is.

TS: But did you see change in the military culture and then in the navy culture rather from the time, like, even when you were just in ROTC through this time—we were talking about the nineties.

EPT: Yes.

TS: What kind of changes did you think were most visible?

EPT: It's subtle but distinct, and that is that by the time—the problems that I felt like we were having in the 2000s by the time I was in the reserves—and of course, reserves is a different dynamic because we're all part-time people. We're not there all the time and we're not in that constant navy environment, but I felt like the problems we were having had little or nothing to do with sexual harassment; literally.

TS: Really?

EPT: We had to still take the GMT.

TS: What's that?

EPT: General military training. There's a whole bunch of GMT around sexual harassment, drunk driving, suicide prevention, HIV/AIDS; so many. There's GMT for everything.

TS: So, when you say "we" had to take it do you mean officers—

EPT: Everybody.

TS: —and enlisted?

EPT: Everybody. It's—GMT is required.

TS: Okay.

EPT: It's part of your—

TS: So, you didn't think the problems were associated with sexual harassment?

EPT: No, it wasn't.

TS: What did you think they were associated with?

EPT: It had to do with behavioral issues. It had to do with nonperformance issues; both boys—[chuckles] I mean, both men and women, you know. It had to do with, "I've got problems at home so I can't fulfill my duties at work." It's—"Things are very bureaucratic, so I can't get all my requirements done." So, I have to help them navigate that process. You know, like, "Okay. In order for you to get to—" Oh, and a lot of physical issues; health issues. I mean, not—not gripping issues, but the kind that does not allow them to meet or pass the navy's physical fitness test. I mean, young folks that

couldn't run a mile and half in allotted of time, you know; people that were on medication that couldn't do certain things; dental issues that weren't taken care of. Yes, so a lot of the stuff was like that and not really sexual harassment issues. And also—

TS: That's the kind of things that you were dealing with, you mean?

EPT: Yes. And then also, peer to peer; like, amongst my own peers, the work is as though there is no male/female divide. You—what you run into a little bit is the generational. People that are older than you and people that are younger than you, they kind of see you differently, you know, which is interesting. My son is, like, a doctor candidate and he is thinking about becoming a reserve EDO officer.

TS: What's EDO stand for?

EPT: It means—called engineering duty officer. They are the technical people. They need to have advanced degrees and they do a lot of the analysis for shipyards, and you know, they are the extreme—they are the naval scientists, if you want to call it that.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so, it's a five year process and—during which time he gets his PhD, but he puts a—anyhow, so now that he went to talk to recruiter and he went to the community manager and he started looking at the—what's going he, he came to see me differently because he didn't realize, you know, what being a captain meant. [chuckles] To me, it's just, you know, a mom. You didn't realize that for Halloweens—I have a lot of BDUs [battle dress uniform]; you know, the gear, and he used to borrow that from me; not from his dad. Because submarine officers wear what they call poopy suits, which is like an overall.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so, that's not as impressive as the combat—the combat stuff that I had. Not that I saw much combat but that's what they provide to the logistics folks, so—and I got the whole thing, you know, so as a little boy he'd fit into my—

TS: Your uniform.

EPT: —my blouse. Anyhow—so, for the younger folks, you know, kind of, whatever their stereotypes of what an older female is versus an older male. So, that kind of stuff you see, but—so, yes, looking at it, the issues that we may have in the navy it's not, in my mind, like, a gender issue anymore. It's about other issues that's pretty general.

TS: Yes; to go across the board.

EPT: Across the board it's about performance and it's individual. And I don't even see hardly—I don't even see any, I don't believe—any racial. Even back in the eighties I didn't see much racial at all.

TS: No?

EPT: No, did not.

TS: Did you ever feel as an Asian-American that you had anything at any time?

EPT: No, but I know that there aren't that many Asian-Americans in the military. That is not a career path that a lot of Asian-Americans choose to go to.

TS: Right. It is a low percentage—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —compared to the population.

EPT: Yes. Correct. Correct. So—but other than that, no. It's—I know that in some ways when you asked me about this interview I was going to say, "You know what? My story is going to be so boring," because it's—it's been a good career and I—by and large I've had a very good experience from multiple sources, and there were some hardships—

TS: That doesn't make it boring.

EPT: [chuckling] Oh, yes. There hasn't—

TS: They're not mutually exclusive.

EPT: There hasn't been—there hasn't been significant hardships for me.

TS: Yeah?

EPT: I have to say, you know. I mean, there are always some, but I these things could have happened in a civilian community.

TS: Yes. These things? What do you mean by—

EPT: Some of the slight minor things I talked—told you about.

TS: I see.

EPT: In fact, I hear about that from my civilian counterparts. You know, the so-called glass ceiling and the pay differential. At least in the navy, you know, there is absolutely no pay

differential. As lieutenant I made the exact same amount as my other lieutenant; a male counterpart. The only difference would be the bonus structure, if—depending on his specialty.

TS: If there's a particular opportunity—

EPT: Exactly.

TS: —that a man has that a woman doesn't have.

EPT: Exactly. Correct. Like, my husband got a sub pay. Well, he's a submariner and I'm not, so that made sense, but our base lieutenant's pay was exactly the same.

TS: Who outranks who?

EPT: There is no outranking because we're both captains—

TS: [chuckles]

EPY: —you know, but—

TS: Oh, come on.

EPT: I'm serious.

TS: Just kidding.

EPT: No, I was going to say, but if you want to get technical, Therese—

TS: Let's get technical, yes.

EPT: He outranks me because his lineal number is greater.

TS: Okay.

EPT: His lineal number is class ranking. I mean, they literally have—like, if there is[sic] five hundred captains there is number one—

TS: Yes.

EPT: —and there is number five hundred.

TS: So, he's a higher number?

EPT: He's a higher number because—

TS: All right. Well, I have to meet Christopher then.

EPT: Yes, okay. He is—not much [meaning not much higher in rank], [both laugh] because of the community he is in; because submarine officers got promoted a little faster.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so, he got promoted, I think, six months ahead of me.

TS: Okay.

EPT: Because that's when the promotions came out.

TS: Okay. But you were in right around the same time, too?

EPT: Yes. Yes.

TS: Well, I'm going to go off the—this particular line we're on and I'm going to ask you: Growing up in the time you did and you're time you're in the military, did you have any particular models—role models that you looked up to; like, heroines or heroes?

EPT: You're going to laugh.

TS: Maybe. [both chuckle]

EPT: The only person that I really had any knowledge of that was considered a great woman was Margaret Thatcher [first woman British Prime Minister], you know. And so, I thought, being—but she seemed so foreign to me because she was English and all that.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so different because, you know, the English are so proper and so—

TS: Well, your mother spoke well.

EPT: Yes, but not with the same accent. [both chuckle] But yeah, it was Margaret Thatcher.

TS: Okay. What was it you admired about her?

EPT: I liked the fact that she was very strong willed and she got done what she needed to get done, but she didn't lose any of her personality or herself as a woman, you know. I mean, I know they call her the "Iron Lady," but I think it had to do with her will and her strength of that conviction, rather than the fact that she had to try to be stronger and be

like a man and act like a man type of thing. I guess I—I always believed that strength of leadership comes from that and not from the way you look, how you act, how you dress.

TS: What does it come from; the strength of leadership?

EPT: The strength—your will.

TS: Your will?

EPT: Your will and your—your strength of your—that—kind of like that psychological discipline, rather than anything else. So, you try to compare her to, like, [George S.] Patton or something, you know.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And that whole persona, you know. And I'm sure he's a spectacular leader, but he—but he relies significantly on his—his manliness, and a lot of people equate leadership with that manliness and that's not necessarily true. Leadership is a—kind of, a gender neutral thing. It has to do—one thing they do have in common is that strength of will, I believe.

TS: Do you think men and women have different leadership styles?

EPT: Probably.

TS: Yes?

EPT: Probably.

TS: What was yours?

EPT: It was like [manny's?]. [both laugh]

TS: Strong will?

EPT: Strong will. You know, speak—speak softly but distinctively.

TS: Right.

EPT: Like, I am not going to yell and scream and, you know, jump up and down, but what I say goes. [chuckles]

TS: Yes. Okay.

EPT: You know?

TS: Well, let's see now. You've met Jimmy Carter; President [James Earl, Jr.] Carter.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And then you served during times when President [Ronald Wilson] Reagan and President [William Jefferson "Bill"] Clinton.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Do you have any thoughts about any of those leaders, or even the military leadership at that time; like, [Secretary of Defense Donald Henry] Rumsfeld and [Secretary of State] Colin Powell; those at all, politically? I mean, these are, kind of, political questions.

EPT: Yes, not—I mean, I tend to be more conservative in general, but I—during—and there are—I'm sure there are differences, but looking back now—you know, Chris and I just had this conversation where one thing great about the United States, I think, is that whether you're Democrat or Republican, by the time you get to the presidency there is a certain standard of excellence, a certain standard of behavior, and patriotism is there in everybody. And so, whether you're Republican or Democrat there is that core of that standard that allows our military to continue being the way it is. Yes, there's going to be some less budget under this person versus that person, but I think the value for the military is there whether you are—regardless of the Democratic or a Republican president.

Now, do I have some preferences? Another person that I met that I really was impressed with at the time, and still is, is [Vice President Richard Bruce] Dick Cheney; he was Secretary of Defense when I was a lieutenant, and he came to visit one of our ships and I was his tour guide. And so, yeah, I like—I like the whole concept of deterrence through strength, you know.

TS: Yeah. What did you like about Dick Cheney?

EPT: I felt like, talking to him, that he was very decisive and very specific and no too much wavering in his convictions. You know, this is the way it is. There's going to be a lot of people that's not going to like it, but there wasn't a lot of, in my mind, trying to please everybody.

TS: So, he had that strong will that you like?

EPT: Yes. Yes. And in fact, like I said, it could be wrong but it was there. It was very absolute.

TS: Right.

EPT: And it's not like I—I also understand, like, Churchill and a few of the other great leaders, sometimes being stubborn and being absolute is not the best thing for the country. It's just simply being stubborn and absolute, you know. But when they're right and when a

country is in a crisis, those are the folks that you need, you know, and not the, "Well, let's think about it this way, or that way, or that way." So, you kind of—

TS: Okay. So, you need the decisiveness?

EPT: Yes, you need the decisiveness, especially, like, in a military organization. And I think people—with a military organization when there's a chain of command could be ten people down, from the soldier here to the guy—you need that. You have to have that sense of, "Yeah, this is the way things are. There's not going to be too many translations, you know, between here and here." I think that's important.

TS: Make it very clear?

EPT: Very clear, right, very clear.

TS: Well, you were in during some different events.

EPT: Yes.

TS: You kind of—you weren't quite in yet during the hostage crisis of '79 — [refers to diplomatic crisis between Iran and the United States involving U.S. Embassy workers and service members as hostages in 1979]

EPT: No.

TS: —but do you remember that?

EPT: I do, but not too much. We were in college, you know, and we—

TS: And you were young.

EPT: Yes, and—

TS: And busy.

EPT: And there are a lot of things—I really admire the fact that both my children are so much more politically aware—

TS: Are they?

EPT: —than we were, you know. And we were ROTC students, but you know, we remember watching TV and—of course, it doesn't have the kind of coverage that we do now either; it's twenty-four by seven; internet and everything, you know.

TS: True.

EPT: And Facebook. And so—but yes, we were aware but it wasn't something that—I don't remember it being a cataclysmic event for me.

TS: How about the Beirut bombing in 1980 through the Marine [Corps] barracks?

EPT: Yes. Yes. That hit home.

TS: Because you were in the service then.

EPT: We were in the service and we had friends who were Marines; none that were there, but yes. And also, a lot of the Marines that perished were people from our class. You know, think about it. They were class—you know, they were young lieutenants; second lieutenants. So, that hit home.

TS: Then we had a couple invasions: the Invasion of Grenada and Panama.

EPT: Yes. That seemed, kind of, like, otherworldly to me.

TS: Did it?

EPT: Not—That's when Margaret Thatcher was in, you know, and I said, "Go girl." [both chuckle] So, yes, but it seemed—it didn't seem as though it was our thing, it was definitely their thing; you know, we were watching.

TS: Well, we were involved in those two.

EPT: I know, I know; we were.

TS: What about the First Gulf War? So, you were close to going into the reserves?

EPT: Desert—

TS: Yes, [Operation] Desert Storm.

EPT: Yes, Desert Storm. In fact, I had been called up for that, you know, before—

TS: You were already in the Reserves?

EPT: Yes, we were in the—just in the Reserves.

TS: You and your husband?

EPT: Yes. We were in the Reserves, and I was called up for that and getting ready to process, but that was a short—you know, that was with Norman here and that was, like—[snaps fingers] happened like that.

TS: With Norman?

EPT: Yes, Stormin' Norman?

TS: Oh, Stormin' Norman. [chuckles]

EPT: Schwarzkopf, yes; with Schwarzkopf, yes. And so—

TS: That's right.

EPT: And we went in and it was kind of like we came, we saw, we conquered, and it was like, "Yay!" You know. So, that was, kind of, considered very successful, and yes, we had people that stayed, but the actual war, if you want to call it that, the Desert Storm, that happened very quickly. It kind of all went downhill from there.

TS: Do you remember when the space shuttle Challenger exploded?

EPT: Yes, yes. That was pretty traumatic; we were all watching. In fact, I was Public Affairs Officer at that point so it was like, "Oh my God."

TS: Where were you at?

EPT: We were at Sub Base Bangor, you know, after I did the—did the—finished my tour as the Ops Boss[?] I came—I became the Public Affairs Officer for the base for environmental issues, because—

TS: Oh, because of your training, too.

EPT: [chuckles] Yes. Well, I guess.

TS: I would think.

EPT: I guess, yes, for the—and that was a huge issue, believe it or not, for that base—

TS: I would think so.

EPT: —because that base used—is a superfund site. [Superfund is a reference to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), which dealt with the clean-up of hazardous substance-contaminated sites.]

TS: Oh, yes.

EPT: Remember the term "superfund"?

TS: Sure.

EPT: It was actually—It was a beautiful eight hundred acres, but it was, because of the navy's and army's practices back in the fifties and the sixties, which at that time was considered appropriate—it became a superfund site. Because what happened there was, in the fifties and sixties, all of the excess bullets, small bombs, mines from the other wars, and especially Vietnam, it got degaussed or cleaned out there. So, they have to basically either burn—

TS: The dumping ground essentially.

EPT: Yes, right. Well, they had to actually burn the bullets so they can expend the TNT or the RDX, and then the mine—landmines, they use steam to release—yeah, that's what they used. They used a steam to release the chemicals, and the steam condensed and became liquid and it sank in the ground. Then it eventually got down deep enough to plumes of water that—you know, so you get the picture.

TS: Yes.

EPT: But that's why it became a superfund site, and so I was in charge of that wonderful thing in a state that was so environmentally aware—ahead of the normal—and really did not like the military at all, you know.

TS: In that—

EPT: In that community; in that community, or just the state of Washington. The EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] Region Ten—you know, EPA had different regions and they all—even though they're EPA they all have slightly different personalities, if you want to call it that, and EPA Region Ten was considered particularly very, very harsh, you know, compared to other EPA—and they're trying to do the right thing, but to the point where they were really putting a lot of pressure on government and corporations to—because we were essentially ordered to clean the dirt and put it back cleaner than it was in 1958. Because in 1958 they can detect particles parts per million. Well, in 2000 or so they can detect particles parts per billion. So, therefore—I mean, I felt like their heart was in the right place but they were really overcompensating to the point where—we're supposed to all be on the same team, you know, and so they were—so, it was a particularly hostile environment for me to be.

TS: Who was it—where was the hostility coming from?

EPT: EPA Region Ten, because they were—

TS: Towards the base?

EPT: They were the governing body—

TS: I see.

EPT: —you know, that essentially had—it was three things. They were EPA, which is the government body; then there is the navy, who is now responsible for this and they have taken ownership of it; then there was a community that didn't like—they wanted to get this thing cleaned up and they had private, non-profit lawyers and other people like Ground Zero [Center for Nonviolent Action] and all this anti-nuke, anti—

TS: Well, it was pretty—at this time, in the late eighties, early nineties, it was very environmentally conscious in the Pacific Northwest for a lot of different reasons.

EPT: Yes, yes, and to the point of, like—it's like, "Okay, you want to destroy people so that you can save the Earth?" It almost got to be that point, and it's—and it just, kind of, killed me when these same people from Ground Zero and other people who, like I said, had their heart in the right place but often coming from facts that were not real facts, would come out and throw—try to throw flowers in the water to commemorate the bombing of Nagasaki [Japan] and—

TS: Hiroshima.

EPT: —Hiroshima, because we have nuclear submarines on base. Well, these submarines are trying to get to open water and they're coming in their little boats and—to get close to throw water [flowers] on it. They don't understand the danger that they're putting themselves in. The danger they're putting the folks who are trying to protect them in, specifically my people, you know. The—taking those boats amongst the commercial lanes there, kind of, like weaving in the commercial lanes to get out to open ocean. You know, you get a five hundred and sixty foot Trident submarine out there with a tug in front and a tug in back and try to keep an open space to go out to Port Angeles [Washington], which is a two or three hour transit, it's hard enough. But now we got people with little children in little boats who could get sucked into the—

TS: Right.

EPT: You know, and trying to protect them, it became really—at times I felt like, "You know, I understand, I think, your political motives but is this really practical; what you're doing? Are you—are you in any way going to help the anti-nuke situation by doing this? And if one of you, or any of you, get hurt will it—will it be helpful to anybody?" You know? "And if any of my people get hurt trying to save you will it make me feel better?" You know?

TS: Right.

EPT: So, yes, but every year we had to prepare for the—for the anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing. Right from the beginning the people that were—that would come near the base with candles and flowers and, you know, inhibit traffic and all that other stuff, to people that would come on the water to throw flowers in the water, and so on and so forth. I felt like, "You know, have your ceremony. Yes, go do that but try not to hurt yourself and to hurt my people in the process." Not to mention, lots and lots of taxpayer dollars, frankly.

TS: Right, but they're not going to get any publicity if they don't—if they do it off—

EPT: True.

TS: —away from the submarine. Right?

EPT: True, true. [both chuckle]

TS: So—

EPT: It was just a nightmare.

TS: Yes?

EPT: And we have to prepare for it, because our goal was to make sure that no one got hurt.

TS: Right. Sure.

EPT: You know? Because we got to still do what we got to do. We're going to go out to open sea, because we're out there—frankly, at that time, was Cold War. I mean, these submarines carry platforms that could potentially protect you.

TS: Right.

EPT: So, you know, we're going to go out there and do our jobs, but we don't want any of you sucked into the—into the propulsor—

TS: Right.

EPT: —and making mass news, because the nukes are not going to stop.

TS: Right. Well, I want to ask you, too, about—do you remember when Reagan got shot?

EPT: Oh, yes. That was—

TS: Where were you at then? You were—that was '80—1981 actually.

EPT: Eighty-one? Gosh. We were—we just got—we—that was actually in—in ’81 we were in college.

TS: I think it was March of ’81.

EPT: Yes.

TS: So, just before—you were still ROTC?

EPT: Yes, we were ROTC. We were seniors. Yes, we—I think that was a big deal for us, you know, too, because—not only as midshipmen but as citizens, really, because he was our president, and you know, we knew all about—you know, because Jodie Foster was sort of like our—sort of like our generation and she was going to school and all that and then the whole John Hinckley [Jr.] thing. [John Hinckley, Jr. attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan on March 30, 1981]

TS: Oh, right. That’s right.

EPT: Yes. Anyhow, well, can we take a small break?

TS: Yes, we sure can.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, I’m back with Elizabeth. We took a short break here, and we were asking about some of the things that happened during the time you were in. One thing I was going to ask you about, we never really talked about this specifically, but having your husband as a submariner—

EPT: Yes.

TS: How do you feel about—is there any position that women can’t do in the military, and there’s a controversy now about women in submarines.

EPT: I don’t know if there’s a controversy in women in submarines. I think somebody could make it out to be, but I also don’t believe that there should not be. Having been around that environment I absolutely believe women can do submarine—any submarine position; officer or enlisted.

TS: Well, the controversy, I guess, is about the berthing.

EPT: Yes, the close quarters.

TS: The close quarters.

EPT: Well, the—I know that the new class of submarines, because I was—that's one of the programs I worked on, have separate berthing. They now have—they now have submarines designated—designed in such a way that they're segregated. It's still close quarters because they're not going to make submarines that much more bigger.

TS: Right.

EPT: But there is privacy for both sides.

TS: So, it's designed—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —in such a way for—

EPT: Exactly. Like, even in previous submarines there was always what they call "officer country," and—which is where the officers are, they have their wardroom [the mess-cabin of naval-commissioned officers], and then they have the, you know—there's "chief country," which is where the chiefs are and the enlisted come and go, and then there's a common area where there's usually mess, you know—but I know these particular submarines were designed with the sexes, the gender in mind. It's close quarters, absolutely, and initially there's not going to be as many women. It's not going to be an equal number of women per—you know, for—in the wardroom or in the crew compliment, because typically on a Tri—on a Trident submarine there's about, oh, eighty to ninety folks per crew, because they got the blue and gold crew, right, and then on a—

TS: What's the blue and gold?

EPT: Blue and gold? The whole purpose of the Trident submarine is to be out to sea as much as possible. And so—But the people need down time and people need training time, so what happens is is that the Trident submarine will go out for approximately—I believe it's like eighty-four to ninety—close to three months, and then they come in and they do a transition period of two or three weeks, and then a new crew, a second crew, takes over the boat and they go out again so that that boat is out there as much as possible because, you know, it's an expensive platform. You don't want to have it limited by the crew's ability to, you know, crew it. And so, they usually have two crews for one boat.

TS: I see. Okay.

EPT: Yes, they have a blue crew and a gold crew, and they do exactly the same thing, same number, and then they—but, you know, they come in and they do the exchange and while the other crew is out the other crew is training in what they call the "Refit Facility". You

know, because it's—if they have to actually do their job it's going to be intense, as you know, because their whole sole purpose is—when they get the call, is to launch those missiles, and you know—but they have to be ready psychologically, physically, and also technically because—you know, any changes that happen. My husband was a commanding officer of a Trident Refit Facility, so he understands that, and, kind of, you sort of by osmosis, understand some of these things.

And so, that was good. And—But it's so funny though because what do we call—we call the whole mission—you know, we make jokes about this because hopefully this will never happen and they were only out there to show potential strength and will not necessarily have to use it, but we call the mission of the Trident submarine to "hide with pride". [both laugh] We hide with pride, you know. It was called a silent service.

TS: That's right.

EPT: Because the whole point of these boats is they are quiet, they're supposed to be undetectable, they can go anywhere; literally anywhere that's in the water and all over the world. Although, I'm not so sure why they have to because, it's not classified any longer but it used be, but the range of those missiles is about five thousand miles, with pretty good accuracy. So, you got one on one part of the world and one on the other. You cover the world.

TS: I see.

EPT: But we have sixteen of them so, you know, at any given moment [phone rings] some of them are out and some of them are not. Excuse me.

[Recording Paused]

TS: All right. Okay, we had another short break there. We didn't really get into this too much when we were talking about sexual harassment and things like that, but the Tailhook incident that happened in 1991, since you're in the navy—

[The Tailhook scandal refers to incidents in which U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps officers were alleged to have sexually assaulted at least 90 women and men in Las Vegas, Nevada during the 35th Annual Tailhook Association Symposium]

EPT: Yes.

TS: What are your thoughts on that?

EPT: That was kind of like—we thought that we had made some real strides. It was very disappointing because you think—it made me look around at my male counterparts differently, because I felt like, "Wait a minute. I thought this kind of thing was done. It

was over." But then to see that happening, you know, with all those naval officers that I felt like, you know, we're not like that but then it proved to be not true. You know? That was, sort of—it made you feel as though—question stuff, like, maybe I'm just thinking that these things don't exist because it didn't happen to me. Obviously it does. So, it was a setback, I think; definitely.

TS: Was it?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Well, it's also a different culture than the one you're in because that was the aviation side of—

EPT: Yes, and it is true that, even in the navy, that the aviation culture was always considered a little, you know, more sexist because—you know, whether it's the movie *Top Gun* or, you know—and they try to even explain it and say, "Oh, that's the nature of the job," you know, "It's all that testosterone," and blah blah blah blah.

And I said, like, "No, I don't think that's what it is," you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: I said, "Say what you want to do but," I said, "I don't believe—it is that way because some of you folks are that way, because I've met pilots that are exceptional and they can probably outfly you but they're not that way."

TS: Right.

EPT: You know, so—and I've met women who are exceptional pilots, and you know, they don't have excessive testosterone either.

TS: [chuckles]

EPT: So, yes, I sometimes hear that, and then—but yes, I thought that was a setback, you know, against the women, and the men was, kind of, like I could tell that a lot of the men were embarrassed because I think—I got—to their credit, I felt like some of the men, at least one that—some of my peers, they kind of felt like they had to apologize for that. You know how you say to take on the whole mantle, and a lot of the men in my acquaintance at the time, they—they, kind of, felt that way.

TS: That it was a reflection on all men?

EPT: That it was a reflection on all men, and—

TS: Unfairly?

EPT: Yes, unfairly but deservedly so at that moment because it happened, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: And so—and you don't want to, you know—I see why stereotyping happens because things like that, and you see so many of them all in one place. It's not, like, you know, a dozen or two of them. You're talking hundreds of them. In a navy symposium, so to speak, and that kind of stuff happens? It's bad.

TS: Yes.

EPT: That was bad. I was very disappointed; took a while to get over it.

TS: Did it?

EPT: It took to, kind of, stop looking at my male counterparts askance; as though they're all pretending; as though they're not really treating me equally; as though they're thinking something else in their minds when they're talking to me. You kind of question those things.

TS: So, did you ever get to a point where you felt like you overcame those kind of worries; concerns?

EPT: Yeah, after many years of not—of not seeing that in your counterparts; after many years of business as usual in a positive way. Yes, you can say—you can say it was a bad time, you know, a bad mixture of people. You get alcohol and stuff together and people make bad decisions. And people who were there, they tell me, you know, really honestly, not everyone that was there felt that way or was involved. But when you get that many people, you get out of control, and when you get, let's say, a noticeable amount, even ten percent, out of control, the entire convention, everybody that was there, could be seen that way. I mean, I could have literally been sleeping in my room but since I was there I'm now part of the incident.

TS: I see.

EPT: Yes, so I have had many people come up to me and say, "I was there at Tailhook, but I wasn't part of that."

[chuckles] "We'll see. Okay. Let me just make a count."

TS: Okay. Well, the other question is: When you were—when you first went in the navy there was no such thing as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".

EPT: That's right.

TS: And then in the—I guess it would have happened when you were in the reserves, this policy was implemented.

EPT: Yes.

TS: So, what are your thoughts about, maybe, the policy before and then this "Don't Ask, Don't Tell", and then now it's been repealed.

EPT: Yes.

TS: So, what do you think about that?

EPT: I felt like we started at the same place and ended at the same place and that is, what's the point? What is the point of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"? Or—So, I felt like it wasn't needed before and it's not needed now, but it's—now it seems like we need it because we made a big point about it, you know. I—It's just like—it is true—I think from a gay perspective they felt like—that they couldn't be openly gay and serve. I think that must have been—

TS: Well, that's what it was.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Because if they did—were open then they would get kicked out.

EPT: Yeah, yeah. But—so now what's changed is the fact that you can be openly gay and serve, and I'm okay with that. I think that's the way it should be, but this whole "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" —don't tell me—if you don't tell me it's okay.

TS: That period that that was implemented, you mean—

EPT: Right.

TS: —was, kind of, silly?

EPT: I thought so. I thought it was, like—I thought it was, you know, either go one way or the other, you know, but it's basically saying it's okay but it's not really okay. And so, I think it, kind of, brought a lot of uncertainty into, well, how do you—what do you—how do you handle this, you know. What is the policy on this, in reality? And then some people used it, I think, for ways to get out; other people used ways to kick people out. So—you know, it was—

TS: Do you think maybe it was a transitionary period, though, from a time when you couldn't, you know—before the policy, there wasn't even a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" but that didn't mean people weren't getting kicked out.

EPT: That's true, or that they weren't gay.

TS: Right, or that they weren't gay.

EPT: Right.

TS: So, I don't know if that's what it was; some kind of transitionary, but—

EPT: If it was it certainly—I don't think it was a well thought out transitionary period, you know.

TS: That may be it.

EPT: I think it, sort of, happened by accident.

TS: Yeah.

EPT: You know, it has to do with just the culture, I guess. But the—you know, I have friends who are gay and I have no problems with that as long as they don't put that first. I mean, if you're in the navy you wear the uniform first, just like you and I are talking about how if you're in the navy you're an officer first and a woman and a man second, it's the same way whether you're gay or not gay. I don't think it should be an issue.

TS: Right.

EPT: So—but whenever—in fact, I was shocked, though, in that recently in the navy that they allowed gay members of the military [to] march in this parade in uniform. Well, we don't get to march in a parade in support of Catholicism or in support of, you know, anything else. So, why do gay people get to march in a parade to support their cause?

TS: Where was that at?

EPT: San Diego.

TS: Oh, was it? Okay.

EPT: And so, I felt like, "Well now, wait a minute. I totally believe in equal rights but not overcompensation," you know. So, like, do women in the military in uniform get to go and be rallied for the National Organization for Women? No, we don't. You know? So, that's when I get into a little issue is, like, you know, let's be fair but let's be truly fair.

TS: Right, back to the fairness issue.

EPT: Right.

TS: Okay.

EPT: But as far as having gay people in the navy I have no problems with that as long as they do their jobs. You know, I—I'm sure I've served with gay people I never knew.

TS: Yes. Did you serve with any that you knew?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Oh, you did?

EPT: Yes, and we kept it that way.

TS: Yes?

EPT: I knew, maybe they knew I knew, but we didn't talk about it. [chuckles]

TS: Okay. Well, at what point did you decide to leave the active duty?

EPT: In 1990, as soon as I became pregnant with our son. I—it was really a tough decision for me, tougher than I thought, but I wanted to be—have a more flexible schedule, you know, when I had—once I had [the] baby. And the nature of my job was such that I could be deployed, I stand duty, I have irregular hours, and so I decided to go ahead and resign my commission at that time.

TS: And that was in 1990—

EPT: Well, it became 1991ish because Ross[?] was born in 1990. It takes nine months for the resignation to fully take into effect. You have to, sort of—

TS: The whole pregnancy.

EPT: Exactly, so as soon as I became pregnant, you know, I started the process, and then you save up vacation so that after you have the baby you take your thirty days leave and then you add your vacation and hope that by that time, you know, the whole paperwork has gone through. So, yeah, it became about nine and half months—nine and a half years.

TS: Now, did you decide to stay in the reserve at that time?

EPT: Yes, I immediately—

TS: Oh, immediately?

EPT: Yes, I immediately transitioned to the reserves. I knew I wanted to keep that piece of it.

TS: Okay, so then what did you do when you got out for your regular—did you have a regular job, or did you not work outside the home?

EPT: Oh, you mean after—

TS: After you—

EPT: —reserve? Okay, yes, I stayed home without a regular job outside the home for about seven years, because about two years after we had our—our daughter Amy, you know, and then—and so I did not take a full time position till 1997. Yes, 1997; we had just gotten here into—to Greensboro at the time. And then, you know, I took some consulting positions here and there, but when the kids were so small it was very difficult for me, you know, so I really enjoyed being at home with them when they were so small.

TS: Yeah.

EPT: You know, and so—

TS: Did your husband stay?

EPT: No, he actually got out before me.

TS: He did?

EPT: Yes, he did, because otherwise he would have to go back out to sea and our whole—and our whole plan of having children would have been foiled because we would not be together. [chuckles]

TS: I see.

EPT: Yes, so he would have gone—so he got out before me, got a civilian job, actually, working at Honeywell at the time, and then—as an engineer, of course. Then—and then—and went to grad school; he got his master's at the University of Washington. And then, you know—and then we moved into the East Coast with his job at the time with Lucent Technologies and now we're both at General Dynamics Advanced Information Systems.

TS: So, you both work at the same—

EPT: Yes, again, don't know how it happened, but that's—

TS: That's just how it turns out.

EPT: Yes, it turns out to be, because it's just, you know, we're—we're even doing similar things which is odd because he's a PhD in engineering and I have BS in early childhood education and a BA in English and a master's in, you know, business, so.

TS: Right.

EPT: So, it was like, okay, but we do similar things.

TS: Is that right?

EPT: Yes, essentially.

TS: Did you find that you had any transitionary issues from the military to the civilian world?

EPT: Yes. [chuckles]

TS: What kind of issues did you face?

EPT: Well, my first year that I worked at—I worked for VF Corporation, which is in town, right. Are you familiar with VF Corporation?

TS: Yes.

EPT: Yes, I worked for VF Corporation—

TS: You can explain what it is.

EPT: Okay. Well, VF Corporation is, now, the largest apparel company in the United States. I was hired in to be their—they needed somebody who understood SOPs, which is standard operating procedures, and documentation. Of course, being in the navy I understood that very well and I did that for the navy. And so, they hired me to do that for their data center because their data center, their business was growing and their procedures and their policies were virtually nonexistent at the time. And—But being in IT [information technology], or a computer mainframe, you know, background, it was all men again. And so, I—I don't know, I acted like I was in the military, essentially, and it didn't go over very well, apparently, with my civilian counterparts.

TS: Why not?

EPT: It was very much—I don't know if it's the military culture, or the southern culture, or a combination of both, okay, but I'm very—I can be, seemingly, very in your face and abrupt; that's just the way I talk. You know, I come to you and I say, "Therese, I need this and by three o'clock, it's going to be[?] fine. Thank you very much," and I'll walk away, and I'm used to that, but then other people don't seem to like that or they were offended by it, you know, the guys especially, and—or sometimes—since my job was to

make sure that things get done and on time, if you don't have things on time and you're in a meeting with me I would say to you, "Why not?"

The first time I asked that they just all looked at me, "Well, what do you mean 'why not'?"

"You were supposed to get this report in yesterday. You don't have it. Why not? I just want to know, and when will you have it next?"

So, when you talk to people like that they think, you know, it was just like—so, we all ended up going to, kind of like, leadership school together.

TS: Okay.

EPT: You know? And—Because apparently at the time what was happening with the company—the company was growing and they wanted everybody to do more and take on more responsibility, but Person A from Department B will not be talking to so-and-so, and I just felt like, "You've got to be kidding me," you know, because—and I said to my manager—my supervisor, "Look, in the navy our whole loyalty is this way; sideways." In other words, the wardroom live and die by each other. I'm finding out that in the civilian world the whole loyalty goes this way.

TS: Up and down?

EPT: Up and down, and not even down; up. "You know, we're—our whole job here is to please you, and it's not going to work that way because you don't know everything about any—about everything," and so you've got to work together. And so, he—they sent us to, you know, this "How to Get Along" school, and then it worked out fine.

TS: Did it?

EPT: Yes, it did. The people that didn't want that environment and didn't want to take that ownership, that didn't want to take that responsibility, left. Others were let go and that balance turned out and I survived; I got promoted, twice. [chuckles] And so—because, you know, I didn't want to be offensive but I didn't want to not talk about stuff that needed to be talked about.

TS: Right.

EPT: And I felt like we're supposed to be a team. "I'm not here to, in any way, make you feel bad. I'm going to help you if I can, but if you're not going to hold up your end of the bargain I need to know now, because I'll give it to somebody else. You know? Do you understand that, right?"

TS: It's not personal.

EPT: Exactly, it's not personal at all. It's like—"and if I'm coming across kind of harsh let me know, but I'm asking you a question. You said you could get it done Tuesday, it's now Thursday."

TS: Well, do you think that civilians have the same sense of urgency about completing a task as—

EPT: No.

TS: —as a military? No? You answered that pretty quickly.

EPT: No, and that's when I had—I realized I had to change a little bit.

TS: So, how did you change?

EPT: I had to take—I had to understand the perspective of what was important, you know? Like—like you said, when we have stuff to do in the civilian community, in our day to day job, there are stuff that's important, that's immediate, and there's other stuff that can wait, and I had understand that they were not all equal. Otherwise, you know, we'd be inundated, and I myself sometimes are, so I know what—a lot of stuff comes in my inbox and there's some stuff that goes immediately to the c-drawer[?] and that stuff happen, you know, later on, or if they become OBE, you know, or obsolete, eventually.

But there are things that are immediate and those are things you got to rally around; you got to pick your priorities, and you got to give the people who are the other managers credit that they know that too. The only thing that I—you know, I'm not going to let go of the notion of the communicating and the supporting of each other. You know, we're not in—we should not be in competition, you know, as colleagues. We should be supportive of each other, we should help each other out, keep something to ourselves as opposed to in a—even if you have a good relationship with your boss there's some things that your boss don't have to know. It's got to be taken care of here, you know, and then we give him or her our best advice or whatever. So, I'm used to that where by the time it got to the CO and XO, boy, it better be something that is really cataclysmic.

TS: That you can't handle?

EPT: That we can't handle amongst ourselves, you know, or what are we? A bunch of children?

TS: Right.

EPT: That's the part that I was like, "Everyone's just going to this one person." I'm like, "Why? Talk to me because I can help you do that," you know. "I can solve the problem. Don't tell him that I—you need to tell Elizabeth to do this. Come talk to me." That was the part that was like—

TS: I see; interesting.

EPT: Yes, and I would go to them, you know, and then some people would say, "Well, did Don said I should do this?"

I'm going, "No, but I believe this is your job, so I'm asking you, giving you the benefit of ownership." [chuckles] And so—But then, you know, you don't want to be snide about it so you have to—you know, you learn to soften up a little bit and you, kind of—you, sort of, have to make—you have to—just like the—you have to be culturally aware.

So, I had to learn my culture because—and in fact, later on when I got to be good friends with some of these guys, we'd go out for a glass of wine or something and they would laugh—because I remember this one guy, he's—he was the manager of the data center, and he wouldn't be returning my phone calls, and there were a couple things he needed to do for me, so I went to look for him. And then when he wasn't there, because he was sort of avoiding me, I tracked him down. By that time I was so upset I like, literally, kind of, went into his face and kept on back up and he was up against the wall, and I was, like, going, "So, look," you know, "Scott," or whatever, and I just told him the whole thing. I didn't yell, but I just told him the whole thing. And I'm going, "And I don't want to ever have to do this again." [chuckles]

And people would stop and look, and he's like, "Oh my. Holy mackerel." And so, I guess, looking back that was kind of like, you know—people don't see that too often, like, in a normal office environment, but I was used to it in the navy.

TS: Right.

EPT: Most of the time we didn't have to get to that point, you know.

TS: Right, exactly.

EPT: And so—and then—so, he immediately got me what I needed, but then he avoided me for, like, almost a year. But then we got on an assignment together and we would be staying up late at nights, and stuff like that, and talking, and you know, it was like a couple years later we felt comfortable and we were at a—he told me, "Boy, remember that when you had me backed up—" of course, he'd be exaggerating, "Remember you had me backed against the wall? I thought you were going to kill me with a pen," [chuckles] and all that. And so, "Boy, I remember when you'd come down the hall, people would just turn around and go the other way. [Therese chuckles] But no, they were afraid of you; literally, afraid of you. They respected you but they were afraid of you."

And I would just say, "Well, that's the way I wanted it," you know.

TS: Well, a lot of people don't like confrontation and they—that passive-aggressiveness, right, that you were describing that your mother—how she dealt with things.

EPT: Right.

TS: Do you want to get it—

EPT: I was too—in fact, one of—it was my navy mentor who told me; he says, "Elizabeth, you've got to give a person a room to move." In other words, even if they're wrong you've got to give that person a room to move this way or that way. So, you don't have to always be right. Sometimes you're more powerful if—you know, you want to be right or powerful. You either—your goal is to make that person move, not to say, "You're right. I was wrong. You were right." That's very cathartic but it's not what you're really looking for, and most people don't—won't do that because they have this self-protectionism about them that they will keep that ego, you know. And I should know that because I'm a psychology major, but I—at that point—I'm still working on trying to be more powerful than right.

TS: That's interesting. That's a really interesting concept.

EPT: Yes, you—and that's where you want to be able to be influential regardless of the situation. Being right always is not—is going to—is the best for the situation.

TS: It may not advance your cause at all, right?

EPT: Exactly; exactly. It's exactly, and so I'm working on that. Even with the—you know, it helps with your children a lot. There are a lot of times that you know you're right. They didn't do the right thing, but to, kind of, push it into their face, that's not going to help. So, now you, kind of, give them a room to move, give them a room to go a different direction, and get what you want, which is you want them to stop, or you know, do more of something, and you're getting them to—

TS: Right, change behavior in some way.

EPT: Yes, change behavior, but—and not—not ruin relationships, you know, because when I did that to—to him—to Donnie he—I mean, I didn't even think about it but his whole manhood and all that other stuff was questioned. He was embarrassed. He's a—turns out, like, an introverted person, even though he comes out brash with all his jokes and the mannerism that he had. He was, you know—it really just kind of took him for a loop, and he was, literally, afraid to be in the same room as me because he saw me as this powder keg waiting to go off and just, kind of, you know, do anything. And that's not the way I saw myself but I must have come across that way because I didn't yell, I—because I really hate this whole "B" label; you know the word I'm talking about, as a—

TS: As a woman?

EPT: —as an assertive woman, you know. But—so, you don't want to be that way, but I—at the same time you have—I really, really feel like you got to nip it in the bud. When something happens and some things get said, or something is not right, you have to take

that moment and nip it in the bud there, and you got to do it sometimes publicly and not privately because sometimes people won't change their behavior, you know, if they don't. You know? Like, a lot of men, you know, they—like, in a conference room or whatever will say something off colored, everybody would laugh or chuckle and if nobody said anything it's carte blanche now, you know. So, now you got to stop and say, "Brad, say that again. Just—I just want to make sure I heard that from you because I did not think that could ever come out of your mouth," and then it makes them think, like, what did he say?

He goes, "Well," repeat.

Just that exercise alone, kind of, makes him think about, "What is it you said? Is that something you would say to your mother; your wife; your daughter? If it's 'no' to anyone of those things it should not be said in this room, period." And you make a joke of it and say, "I forgive you this time but next time I need you to wash my car," you know, or something like that, and then people laugh and you know that moment is gone but the message it taken care of.

And then—or, you know, because I'm not an imposing person, sometimes they say that and a lot of guys they're very comfortable, they have their legs up and stuff like that, and they're saying something. Well, you just, kind of, physically get up from the thing and I go, "I need you to repeat that for me. I really do, before I leave, you know, because I want to make sure I heard that. Then I'm going to leave."

Then he goes, "What?" Then he stands up, you know—and so that kind of—that kind of thing helps to, kind of, sort of, cement the fact that, you know, "Who are you talking to here? If not me, personally, as one woman; let's talk about all the women; all the people out there." And there's men who could take offense to it, too, but sometimes they don't say anything because I don't know why. Then later on they'll tell me, "I'm glad you said that because, you know, that's not good."

And I felt like, "You know, grow a set." You know?

TS: Right.

EPT: I says, "You being quiet, that tells—that tells him that he can continue doing that, so next time I would appreciate a little bit of public support, not just—"

TS: And would you get it?

EPT: Sometimes, yes.

TS: Yes?

EPT: Sometimes, yes. Yes, and—the trick, I found out—I mean, sometimes I would just love to just, kind of, rub it in your faces because I get, really, kind of, angry, but—but most of the time the thing to do—I—in general, I like these people. They have these flaws, but I like these people; I want to get along with them; I want to work with them; I want to be friends with them if I can, but not at the cost of accepting all that, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: And most work relationships, it's pretty—it's pretty nice but it's not like family, true deep friendships, either, so I don't have to be—I don't have to be popular. I don't have to be well liked. I don't have to do any of those things. I just want to work and be respected enough and not have to put up with stuff that I don't feel like anyone should put up with, so—but I never—

TS: Where's the balance?

EPT: Yes; that balance. So, like I said, I don't know what it is about me personally, but I've never been one to need to be liked. I—you know what? Chris told me there's this innate arrogance in me. "You expect to be liked. You just, sort of, take it for granted. People—you think people—everybody just likes you."

TS: Who said this?

EPT: My husband.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: You know? [both chuckle] And so, I said, "I guess that's true, but why shouldn't they?" It's, kind of, like this—I think it's—I feel like it's because I was raised in such a way that my parents thought I could do no wrong. My grandparents thought I could do no wrong.

TS: Real supportive, nurturing environment.

EPT: Real supportive. And so, I knew when I was wrong and I knew when I did bad things, but outside of that I don't see why I should walk around as though I am not as good as the next person. So, I kind of have that and I kind of feel good about that. [chuckles]

TS: Well, that's very—that's a very interesting—that's an interesting point you made there.

EPT: Yes.

TS: I want to ask you about—a little bit about the reserve—

EPT: Okay.

TS: —and—where we talked about, like, the difference between the—

EPT: Active duty?

TS: —active—yes, active duty and civilian. How about active duty and reserve, and similarities, too, maybe?

EPT: Active duty and reserve, I think, are pretty similar in general because all the folks that are in the reserves have been there; they come from context and history. What I—but I consider reserves the active duty lite. You know, it's kind of like people in the reserves—I mean in the—in the—in active duty, we—at that moment you have drunk the Kool-Aid. You—in some ways you're very insular. You are focused and you, sort of, see your whole world as just right there, as though the whole country, and then sometimes they're shocked that people standing next to them or sitting next to them on the airplane know so little about what you consider so dire and important. I used to get that all the time. I'm sitting next to them on the plane and people are asking me these questions, I'm going, "Really?"

TS: What kind of questions would they ask you?

EPT: Well, they would ask me questions like about maybe women in the military, they would ask me questions about, like—they'd see the movie *G.I. Jane,* for instance, and they think it's like that and I'm going, "No," [chuckles] you know. "Women are not in Special Forces."

He goes, "Oh, really? Then what do you do?"

So, it's like you've got to explain the whole thing, you know. They get a lot of what they believe is the military, for women especially, in the movies.

TS: I would always get, "Do you fly planes?"

EPT: Yes, because you're in the air force.

TS: Yes.

EPT: Everybody in the air force must fly planes.

TS: Right.

EPT: And things of that nature, and they don't understand, you know, that we all have jobs and we're not all ready to just, kind of, go to war. There's a lot of preparation and that kind of thing, so—so they're—so from the active duty side I think they're always shocked from that point of view, so you do—are somewhat insular and I think—but then—so when you come to the reserves you're, kind of, out in the greater world now. You've been there so you're more balanced about it from the active duty side. They would look at the reserves and feel like, you know, the reserves are not as intense and not as focused, not as ready, and—but in some ways I felt like, being on the reserve side, that yes, you know, we got a little more perspective of what's important. Like, out of the seventeen hundred lines in the SOP [standard operating procedure] I can tell you only about ten of them are really important, and you should focus on that.

You come from a, kind of, business mind, too, you know, in a sense that—in fact, I was at a program where I was supposed to actually help SUBLANT [Submarine Forces,

Atlantic] put in a system that's going to allow them to keep their training records, and it was just a simple system, but with all of these rules and these—the way they did the procurement, you know, in the navy, the government procurement, it turned out to be like a regular nightmare, whereas I could have just gone to RadioShack, you know, and gotten these things. This is what—all you need. Don't go out and spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on it, and—or the admiral will say, "Well, I want to use [IBM] Lotus Notes," blah blah blah.

I had to finally go to the admiral and say, "Sir, are you a computer technical expert? Do you have that in your background?" respectfully.

He goes, "Well, no."

I say to him, "Then how do you know that Lotus Notes is going to do this for you? Do you understand that Lotus Notes has these issues and if we do that and replicate that on the submarines," you know, "it's going to be—it's going to be—we're going to have to change that every year? That's going to, you know, negate the whole purpose of that?"

He goes, "Well, what about—I really like it."

I says, "But Sir, you're not using this. Some third class petty officer is going to be using this." And so, things like that, you know, so—whereas if I was a lieutenant commander under his command I would never do that.

TS: No?

EPT: I would go, "Lotus Notes? Yes Sir; will do."

TS: Really?

EPT: Yes, absolutely.

TS: So, what's that—why is there that difference?

EPT: I don't know if it's a function of me, or a function of me being a civilian, is that I see that—that the admiral is not God, he doesn't know everybody—everything, and I also understand that he doesn't necessarily mean to impose his—his little technical will—knowledge on it. But people are not—the chain of command the way it is, people are not willing to question him on it, you know. They assume that he must have a reason. So, I was questioning, "What is your reason for this?"

TS: Okay.

EPT: "Were you suggesting or are you directing? If you're suggesting, forget it. If you're directing, why? Because your requirement is this. By imposing this particular brand you have your requirements now become difficult or impossible, so what is your point? I'm trying to do what your requirements are." And so, people don't have that—in fact, I had to talk my boss at the time to have this conversation.

He goes, "Oh, I'm not going to have—"

Said, "Well, you need to." I said, "Or I will because I really believe that the admiral wants this end result, and his imposition of this does not—makes this end result very difficult if not impossible. He needs to know that so he can make a choice. Can you at least agree on that?"

He'll go, "Well, yeah, you can talk to him."

I said, "Okay." And so, I was drawing little diagrams and saying, "Yes, it works really fine, a little slow. Works really fine on this, but what we're talking about is a little more complicated," and so I drew him all these little diagrams and he understood.

"Okay, we don't have to do Lotus Notes."

"Thank you," [both chuckle] and you go out—go off and develop stuff on your own.

TS: Okay.

EPT: So, I saw that kind of thing; you know, a little perspective—

TS: Sure.

EPT: —where, like I said, the chain of command is very strong. It needs to be, but sometimes in some of the decisions that they make, you know, you have to allow for understanding that the person, your leader, may be making a suggestion and not necessarily imposing that on you, and that's also true in the civilian world. Like, I mean, there's a lot of—I mean, you call our CEO [chief executive officer] Macky[?] and Bob and stuff, but there is an underlying hierarchy there that you don't cross. I think most people understand that, you know. In the military we're a lot more formal about it so it's a lot more straightforward. So, what you have to understand even in the civilian world, that, yeah, we're more casual about it but there's certain lines you don't cross with your senior people. So, you know, people are not going to say, "Oh, I don't agree with you." You're not going to say that. They're going to say it in a different way, you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: I—and the question always for is, "Is—What is your—what is your purpose? What is your end result?" You know?

And then—and they'll say, "Well, I want this, this, and this," and half time they go, "Oh, I see why."

I says, "Yes."

TS: So, you make them think about it.

EPT: Yes, exactly.

TS: Make it be their decision, sort of, in some ways?

EPT: Exactly. "Oh, I see why," he says.

"Yes, so if this is important just give me the number one priority, number two priority, number three priority, and if that's so, then based on that decision we make here technically matters; also your budget and your timeline and all that other stuff. You don't want to just go [nods head] and then put yourself in a position where—

TS: Nod your head?

EPT: Yes. Also, you got to always use—I always take it from the user's expect—because I do software, and worked on software, and infrastructure development programs. In the end, if the users don't like it, if they don't use it, it doesn't matter what you did to it and what their requirements are; I've learned that. So, I always work backwards because even if—you know, the CEO might—or the IT manager, whomever, may say, "Hey," you know, "I want it this way because I want this particular report or I want this particular thing; I want to cut down this particular thing." In the end, if the users like it and they're working it, and then he forgets what his original requirements were. You know, he's happy because they're using it; it's served a purpose; it has brought something new, or has cut down some other aspects of it.

And so, I always work backwards, even when I was doing—and that's what, kind of, made—I think what [made] my implementations a little more successful. I start with the users and say, "Let's really talk about your requirements. Let's talk about it from a user's perspective." Because I was shocked to find out that typically they had this all mapped out before they went to the users. They don't go to the users until they have a prototype, and by that time it's like, "Well, you've spent a particular—a lot of time and energy and money on a prototype," and then find out, "What is this? What's going on?" You know? "Why is the button over here? I got to do now—hit seven keys, or seven functions," you know. And so—"the screen looks bad."

So, we always start with just a mock up, and that's the way I feel like it should be for the sailors because by the time they get a piece of equipment or a piece of software, or even a uniform, you know, I really feel like they should start with them and say, "Why is it that you don't like this particular piece of uniform? What is it you like about this other thing?" Then you can design it within the standards of the navy guidelines.

TS: Well, when we took a little break there you were showing me some pictures and you had gone to South Korea and that was while you were—two things, you'd gone to South Korea for an exercise?

EPT: Yes, it was a—a war games exercise.

TS: War game. So, what year was that? Do you remember?

EPT: I want to say it was '99?

TS: Nineteen ninety-nine?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Then, how was that experience there?

EPT: It was really a great experience, not only for—from the navy perspective, because—because it was such a—it was such a big exercise and the role that I played in it was really—I thought it was important, and I got to meet people from all over the United States and from—I never worked with intel[ligence] officers, for instance, and that was really good to do that; got to kind of see all the piece parts, you know, instead of just the logistics which I was, sort of—was focused on before. But then from a cultural perspective, going back to this country I remember as a little girl and all of the stereotypes I had in my background of what it would be like—

TS: Had you been back there before then?

EPT: No.

TS: That was the first time?

EPT: Yes, first time since I was five, you know? And so—and, you know, you hear about all kinds of things about—like, culturally about how they think about Americans who are—Koreans who are Americans, number one. And number two, women in the military, because there are none in the Korean mili—army; not even nurses. And then—and then also, you know, how they see the role of women in general, because even in the nineties, late-nineties, it's not quite like the United States. You know, they have some deep seated opinions about women's role in society, and it's not being a military officer, I can tell you that, back then, even now.

And so—and then also this concept of, "I'm an Americanized Korean". Even today they have some issues with that. You know, like, if you're Korean you're Korean; none of this Americanization business. I got a lot of that from my mother's generation, so I was a little concerned about that. You know, that I would go back and—and the Koreans would look at me and would not be receptive to that. But that wasn't true.

TS: No?

EPT: It was not true. In fact, my cousin who is—you know, she married an American man—of course, she's American, too, you know, but she married an American man. She's older; she's about ten years older. So, she had left the country when she was, like, nine or ten, and she went back in her late twenties after she got married as part of the honeymoon. She got a very bad reception in the—this was in the eighties, you know. She'd be walking down the street with Eric, her husband, and people would give her dirty looks because she had married an American. They saw that as being, kind of, you know, not good.

TS: No?

EPT: Yes. Yes. So, she told me, and she told my mom and everybody, that she's never going to go back because she thought that was just so bad, you know. And so—and she's still—she—that particular experience really, kind of, had an impact on her. And so, hearing that I felt like, "That's kind of odd," but you know, you have to, sort of, be—I was, sort of, apprehensive.

TS: Right. Well, I have a question here for you then about being a trailblazer, possibly, for the time period that you went in to the military and the field that you were in, especially associated with the submarine.

EPT: Yes?

TS: But also, as you're talking—you know, for the Korean culture that you just described.

EPT: Yes.

TS: Can you answer that—like, did you ever feel like you were a trailblazer, or a pioneer in a particular field, in any way?

EPT: I don't know about being—I didn't think about it that way personally, but at the time I felt like a one of a kind, because—it was an interesting situation because a lot of Korean—Americanized Koreans of that—my generation, were immigrants but they had both Korean parents, and so they were culturally Korean even though they spoke English, and went to the United States and so, at the home. So, they retain a lot of that and understand that better. Whereas for me, I was raised as—literally like I was adopted or something, you know. Even though my mom was Korean she's pretty much embraced the American culture, or the Western culture, for the way she raised me. She didn't make a big point of trying to teach me Korean or learn Korean dancing; all those things that the Korean culture finds important in—for women. In fact, I remember when I was like sixteen or seventeen she was getting a—kind of, a, you know—a talking to by my uncle who—he mentioned the word, "Well, she's barbaric," meaning me.

TS: You?

EPT: Yeah, because of the—because my speech pattern is very one-way. See, in Korean, or a lot of Eastern cultures, when you speak to a man—an older man, you speak in a different dialect. And when you're speaking to your equal you're speaking in one dialect. And if you're speaking to your junior, or younger person, you speak in another dialect. I only know one dialect; that is this [sound of making a hand gesture, probably meaning peer dialect]. So—and also, you know, the language is not very sophisticated; not a lot of—how do you—subservient type of language. It's very much you, which is the like a peer—

TS: Very direct?

EPT: Yes. So, I'm talking to the head of the family who's older, who's male, as though we're peers, and he just—that's, kind of, shocking to his sensibilities; who grew up in a very traditional time. And so, even though he mentally understand why, I think, you know, when—it's like a little child talking to—kind of talking down to you.

TS: Right.

EPT: And so, he was really concerned that I'm not being taught those sensibilities, and thinking that that's going to turn me into a—this—whatever in his mind was this person without respect, without—you know, without a lot of those, because he was extrapolating, you know, from his culture.

TS: Right.

EPT: Now, that's not true for our culture but for his culture, in his mind, that was what was going to happen so he was concerned. So, he was basically admonishing my mother and saying, "You're not raising her right," you know. And so—and it's funny because—but in Asian cultures the talent of a child is kind of like a commodity, and I was considered very talented, you know, academically. So, he particularly felt like she was wasting my talents; like she was polishing me intellectually on this one person that they really felt like was going to make it to be a doctor or something and marry a rich person and that—because that's what's important, you know—and bring honor to the family, but here I was this barbaric person who can barely talk to an elder.

TS: So, how did it go over when you joined the—you know, the navy?

EPT: Not well. [chuckles]

TS: No?

EPT: No, he—in fact, my mom said that—my mom—could not believe—they told my mom that they could not believe she—that she is allowing me to do that. He had no—you know, she—they thought that was a total waste of my talents, and they weren't too happy that I was marrying an American guy—

TS: That's right.

EPT: —another military guy, and going, "What? Her—with her credentials," you know, whatever that was in their mind. They wanted to send me to Korea and have me match made with the son of a guy, I guess—a little known company called Hyundai back then. [both chuckle] And—because it's funny, they, the Koreans, and still do; they revere education. For the sake of education, I mean, I could have been a PhD in astrophysics, but once I'd got married I would have been a stay at home mom. I would have never been allowed to use it, but for me to have it that was a big thing; that was a good deal. So, for

them to say I was an American, private college educated scholar speaking English and all that other stuff, despite my barbaric ways, apparently it would have gone over really well.

TS: You would have been quite a catch.

EPT: Apparently, yes. And so, my mom sat there and she said, "Yes sir," and "No sir," and ignored it.

TS: Did they finally—did they ever come around?

EPT: Yes.

TS: Yes?

EPT: It took about fifteen years. [chuckles]

TS: Okay.

EPT: In fact—in fact, during the wedding, on the way to the church, my uncle said to me, "It's not too late. [both laugh] We don't have—" and it's so funny, it, kind of, goes to show you the arrogance of it all and he doesn't even realize is it—because he just, kind of, takes it; he's not my father; he's not my mother; he's not me, but because he was the head of the family he felt like he could just put a stop to everything; "Time out. This is not happening."

And so, I just looked at him and said, "Yes, Uncle. I'm sure." I could have gotten very angry, I could have gotten whatever, but I knew it was coming—I had to always remind myself it's coming from a good place; he wants best for me. He really thinks that I could do better, whatever that means. His definition of better is different than mine, you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: But he finally came to visit about five years ago; to this house. My mother had to drag him cross country because he refused to get on an airplane.

TS: Oh my goodness.

EPT: But then he made the trek all the way here and he basically said that, "Chris is good. Chris is okay." And he told me, "You know, for a Western man he has lots of Eastern habits. I like that." [both chuckle] And he thought I was raising my children well—

TS: Good.

EPT: —and that he thought that things were okay. So, yes, he came around but it took fifteen years; fifteen, almost twenty years.

TS: Yes?

EPT: He was concerned all along, he says. He didn't think it was going to turn out well; you know, being married to Chris, and that I would regret it or my—and he would scold my mother and say, "It going to be your fault."

TS: Oh.

EPT: "You allowed this to happen." That's how it is in Korea. If anything good or bad happens it's, you know—just like after my uncle got his liver transplant and everything turned out well and they had a big celebration and all that stuff; lots of going to church and donating a lot of money and tithing and all that other stuff, they didn't really come to me and say, "Thank you for intervening." They came to my mother, in front of me, and just really, kind of, everything—in fact, the children, my—the sons and daughters of my uncle, they would do the bowing to my mother, [chuckles] you know, and just basically crying and saying, "You saved my father's life."

My mother's going, "I—"

TS: Pointing at you and—

EPT: No, she didn't; she couldn't. She had to take it—

TS: Right, but on the inside?

EPT: On the inside saying—she goes, "I called—I called your cousin and she disobeyed me. She didn't—" I didn't get—I was supposed to get on a plane—

TS: Oh, that's right.

EPT: —remember?

"And she disobeyed me."

And so I said, "No, I want you to go, and go to every appointment—once he goes through all the, you know—I want you to go to every appointment with him and translate correctly and—or get me on—" sometimes I'd be on a conference call with them and the doctor would talk to me and I'd tell my mother, "Mom, this is what the doctor said but say this," because some of the stuff that the Americans think is important, the Koreans don't think is important, so you have to, kind of, understand what to say, you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: And then I tell the doctor. So, it's kind of like this four-way cultural thing happening.

TS: Right. Right.

EPT: And then—and then I would also say, "Can we get a—just—can we get an Asian doctor? Just—It doesn't matter what flavor, just Asian doctor; it would make my uncle feel more comfortable." Turned out to be an Indian girl—woman; a young woman.

TS: Yeah?

EPT: But that was okay.

TS: Was it?

EPT: It was okay. And then—so—because she came from a culture that also—she was doing geriatric internal medicine, which is for people over sixty so she understood that, and I talked to her on the phone and she laughed and she goes—she [I?] goes, "I am glad you're so patient."

[She?] Goes, "No, he's a dear."

I says, "But I hope you know he's going to insult you ten times today, right; without realizing it.

She goes, "I know, but he's like my own father. Not to worry. Not to worry." [chuckles] So, that was good.

TS: That's really nice.

EPT: Yes, it's that kind of thing. So, you kind of have to navigate all that. I, kind of, have to apply that kind of concept to every situation and try to always remember most people are coming from a good place. The way they translate it is different so you have to, sort of, stop and go, "All right, I am not going to take offense and I'm going to try to be powerful and not right." I don't always succeed, but—"

TS: I'll remember that line.

EPT: So—And coming into a—kind of, a certain culture, too, there's this—kind of a seemingly condescension sometimes toward women, especially the older men that you come across, and you realize it's coming from this chivalry thing, you know, and they're trying to take care of you; open the doors and call you honey. At first that used to bother me but now it's like, "Open the doors. Call me honey."

TS: Yes. [chuckles] There you go.

EPT: "Don't get in my way." [both laugh]

TS: Well, was there any particular award or decoration that you received that you're particularly proud of?

EPT: Yes, it was, sort of, unlooked for, and it was, I think, really on behalf of my people, but when—when I was down at the service pier—

TS: Where was that?

EPT: That was at Sub[marine] Base Bangor.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And we ended up getting an award—I ended up getting an award on behalf of my people, I always say—getting an EPA Award; the navy's environmental stewardship award which, like I said, I didn't really do that for—for the award. I didn't know it existed; that they'd nominated us for it, but what was happening is that our folks would always get real nervous whenever the Coast Guard came around to take water samples, and they'd walk around looking for things that were bad, you know, that we were doing, but we're a navy facility; they were chipping paint and using solvents, because we have a lot of small engines and they have to do small engine repair and stuff. And so, I'd walk around and say, "Hey, you know, look. We're a working shop. We're going—we're going to do what we got to do but there are things we can do differently, you know, if we wanted to be better at it."

So, we had a couple of young people come up with some ideas; we had, like, a little contest. And so, chipping paint example. They set up this—we had all these pontoons anyways, you know, to float equipment and stuff around, but why not get those pontoons and—and set them up at the bottom of the air—of the section, because the ship's in the water; it's not dry docked or anything.

TS: Okay.

EPT: And so—and then, when you chip paint and stuff, you know, it all falls on that, and then you just move it around. It's little things like that; it was not a big deal. And things like when we do solvents and stuff like that we have a catch system. It's one more, two extra steps, but if you're going to be less nervous about getting tickets, and stuff like that, and write-ups and having the Coast Guard come down on you to the point where all of you are, like, so nervous you can't work, it's worth it. Let's just, as they say in—I don't know how where they came up with this but it's called "open kimono;" meaning let it all hang out.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

EPT: Don't try to look good, don't try to look bad, we do what we do. And so—But the Coast Guard came down and, you know, they were—at first they didn't say anything but they must have been impressed; they came back and took pictures and stuff like that.

TS: So, they like the way you did things.

EPT: Yes, they did. But we kept on doing it and some stuff did fall in the water but not nearly as much, you know.

TS: Right.

EPT: And then we'd catch all that and dispose of it properly and stuff. So, it's just good housekeeping in my opinion.

And so, we did stuff like that, and then that particular thing along with a couple of other stuff in the navy—you know, because it's a big base. We got the waterfront award and it was navy-wide, so we got to go to Washington and, you know—and get the award and—in the [White House] Rose Garden, and it wasn't the [unclear]—

TS: Back to the White House again?

EPT: Back to the White House, yes. And so, I was the representative for—at the base.

TS: Which—Who was President at the time?

EPT: It was actually—gosh—it was Reagan; it was Reagan.

TS: Oh, okay.

EPT: Yes.

TS: But you said you didn't get to meet him?

EPT: No, we didn't get to meet him. We got to meet some—one of the undersecretaries that came out and gave the award, you know, but it was in the Rose Garden and we got the big trophy, and we got—oh, they sent a plane for us. There was a party of us so that was, kind of, exciting. Oh, and my husband got to come along because you got to bring your spouse. And just, kind of, wined and dined. I think the base got a big plaque and things like that. I convinced my CO to do something nice for our people, and so we had a party down at the—at the pier—

TS: That's nice.

EPT: —using the navy funds.

TS: There you go.

EPT: And liberty; they always appreciate liberty.

TS: Yes, liberty is always appreciated.

EPT: Yes.

TS: You have a son and a daughter.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And we talked a little bit about your son a little bit, possibly, thinking about the military.

EPT: Yes.

TS: What about your daughter?

EPT: Actually, you know, she is—if she goes to dental or medical school she is considering doing the navy health professional program. It's a scholarship where they provide all the monetary support while she goes to dental or medical school, and a stipend, and then—and then she—it's kind of an ROTC scholarship, except for graduate school.

TS: So, if any—if someone else, a young man or a young woman, came up to you and said, "I'm thinking about joining the navy or military," in any respect, what kind of advice would you give them?

EPT: Well, I have to find out why there doing it in the first place and what expectations they have, you know. And so, if they have these unrealistic expectations of what being the navy is or being in the military life then I would, you know—I would try to get them more information so they understand exactly, because it all depends on your expectations whether you have a great experience or not a great experience.

But in general I think the military, short term or long term, is a great experience for young people. I think that in many ways that it'd be great for our country—I don't think this is going to happen, to have—have service—required service for young people, you know, for two years, whether it be the military or whether it be the Peace Corps; any of these service type organizations. I think it'd just be a great, great thing to do for all of our young people; to make it required and they get to choose. It gives them experience, it gives them some time to grow up a little bit, and it give them some perspective, you know, because I don't think our son became the ardent patriot that he became until he went to Egypt. He was in Egypt right before the—the—

TS: The Arab Spring? [The Arab Spring is a revolutionary wave of demonstrations, protests, and wars occurring in the Arab world that began on December 18, 2010.]

EPT: The Arab Spring; he came home in December and the Arab Spring happened in January. We visited him there in November because that's their big—their big holiday; Eid. We didn't see any evidence of that, but you know, he was there and just being in another country for an extended period of time—and it just made him think because—about what the United States is all about and what—how we do things here versus how things are done there; a lot of little things, you know, that you don't realize until you're actually in country. Everything looks wonderful and glamorous on posters and pictures and as a tourist, you know, but living there is different.

Just the whole concept of—he was so uncomfortable with the fact that when he was at that university—this is The American University in Cairo—he was actually assigned a steward to his room. That's just the way things are over there, and his—and a lot of the folks—the Egyptian kids who are there, they're from the wealthiest wealthiest families. They have never done anything for themselves. And so, he says that they'll go to a local eatery and they'll leave all their stuff right there; all the garbage and all that other stuff. And he'd go around picking things up—he's an Eagle Scout—and they'd look at him as not doing a good thing, but as though, "You're acting like a servant," because they're used to having servants. So, you see? That dynamic hasn't changed in Egypt, and so it—it—

TS: It was an eye opener?

EPT: It was an eye opener and you realize, you know, it takes years to, kind of, shift this kind of thinking around. And so—like, he told me that he felt uncomfortable with this guy, his steward, coming in to straighten his room up. He's like, "There's nothing to straighten up."

I said, "But, Ross, you need to let him to that because that's how he gets paid. You understand that, don't you? So please don't make it difficult for him. It's not his fault. It's just the way—it's an expectation and he gets paid very little, so leave him a tip if you must, and—but make it easy for him to—so talk to him and maybe just let him come in for a little while, you know, like, when you're gone; whatever. Just—But just don't open the door and go, 'No, thank you.'" [laughs] Because he just felt uncomfortable.

TS: Right.

EPT: He's not used to having that kind of—

TS: Right.

EPT: You know? And just having things done and the excess of—the incredible excess, in his mind, of some of the rich and privileged and the incredible poverty of those people that didn't have any.

TS: Right.

EPT: We talk about the dynamics here in this country; of the ninety-nine percent versus the—no. You just—he has no idea; most people don't; the kids have no idea. And I feel like young people in general, and it's not their fault; it's because they're not—they don't have perspective yet, but they're so enamored of other countries; of other cultures; of other things; anything but home, you know? As though—and they kind of have this—this—I feel like a resentful attitude about the U.S. And yeah, we have a lot of issues; we do. But in general the whole world is trying to come here.

TS: Well, you mentioned something about making sure that you understood the expectations that a young person would have. What were your expectations, and were they fulfilled?

EPT: Yes, my expectation was to have a job; my expectation is to have something that was challenging; and my expectation was to—not to have too many choices. So, I kind of went in with understanding that, and so—so whenever something other than that happened that was more—more positive it was like a big—it was a boost. Like, you could have gone—you could have gone to grad school; you know, you could have gone to these other schools. But the idea my father instilled in me was, 'When you're in the army or you're in the navy you belong to the United States Navy or United States Army. You will do what you're told, and you will do it when you're told and how you're told. That's—and if you're okay with that—but you will get paid, they will take care of you, and they'll make sure, you know—they'll keep you out of harm's way, unless you do something stupid."

TS: Do you think your life has been different because you were in the military?

EPT: You know, I don't know, but it must have because I think your experiences guide you. I think your experiences hone you and your experiences give you direction, you know, that you would not have had otherwise. So, yes, I think so; I think so.

TS: Well, you're not married to the chairman of the—Hyundai.

EPT: That's true. [Therese chuckles] That is true, you know, but they would have—they could have—it's possible that they would have found me barbaric, or I could have started a small revolution in Korea by now.

TS: That's true; could have. Thank goodness.

EPT: So, it's maybe a good thing, because this same personality goes wherever I am. It's—you know.

TS: So, you were—I mean, I don't even need to ask because you've described it pretty well, but you're pretty much an independently minded person before you went into the military.

EPT: I think so. I think I have that capacity. You know, I—but, you know, one thing about the military, even under this—under this structure it builds your confidence, and when you're confident whatever is, hopefully, the best in you comes out more, you know. If I was independently minded before, with more confidence I can take more risks.

TS: Well, that's one thing that I've talked to a lot of women about, too, is that often times they say that they were given a task that they had no clue that they had the capacity to finish—

EPT: Exactly.

TS: —and—but whoever, you know, their superiors, said, "You can do this," and gave them the tools and support to do it—

EPT: Right.

TS: —and then they came out on the other side with this empowerment feeling.

EPT: Exactly. It's like, "Well, I can do that. I can do the next thing. I can do the next thing." Eventually you feel like, "Okay, I can do anything, really, given—given the—given the tools and the opportunity and—" because you feel like you can, you know. Other than, you know, doing any physical stuff that it's physically impossible, but I'm talking about a job.

TS: Right, a job.

EPT: Any job.

TS: That's what I'm talking about, yes. That's what I mean.

EPT: Any job that you can—you can learn as you go, because it's often not the knowledge; it's what you do with it, you know, because there's so much information you can get. You can get up on Google and YouTube and learn anything these days; it's what you do with it. And I try to, you know, just always try to remind people, "It's your judgment; it's your decisions; it's your will; it's the whole—" you know, it's very hard to explain those soft aspects of it to an employer or a—or in terms of leadership to even a person, but I think that the navy or the military puts young people in those situations, and therefore, if you make it through—because some people don't, you know. If you make it through you walk out of it with that forever, in any situation.

TS: Well, do you think that—is there anything in particular that you would want a civilian to know, or understand what it's like to serve in the military, that they may not understand or appreciate?

EPT: A lot, actually, but I'm trying to think.

TS: I think you've probably talked about some of them.

EPT: Pick carefully. [pause] I think that—in fact, we have some veterans who have joined our company and we have, you know, our side chats because they're just coming directly from active duty; either retired or, you know, gotten out and come into the company. And I think the big thing is that—they have to understand about military folks who have been out there and served, is that they understand and are capable of much more than their civilian counterparts believe, and so—but then again if you are a civilian, you come in as

the finance manager, you know, you're going to do self-finance managing, not anything else, so it's not like you want them to be treated differently. But if you want to look to somebody to do more, to do something above and beyond, the willingness and the work ethic is there.

TS: For people who have served, you think?

EPT: Yes. Yes. I think the work ethic for people who have served is pretty tremendous. It's not a nine to five job. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

EPT: And they're used to that.

TS: Right. What does patriotism mean to you?

EPT: Oh my God. It's hard to define in words, but for me it is really evaluating what we have; our country and all the best parts.

TS: What are the best parts?

EPT: The best parts is the—the willingness to work hard; take responsibility; to help each other out; be compassionate; and to rise to the occasion, and—regardless of hardship. Yes, and understanding the value of freedom, and that with that comes a lot of responsibility, too, and always remembering that. And it's kind of hard because we've been very lucky. We've prospered as a country and we've done—you know, to be at the—quote unquote, at the top, the world power, it's easy, I think, you sort of rest on your laurels, but you have to be constantly vigilant. It's kind of discipline you have to keep. And I think patriotism, for me, means understanding and valuing that and doing your part in that; being one of the people that are examples of that, and you know, being a mentor to others; helping others to realize that; living your life in such a way that reflects that; and—yeah.

TS: I forgot to ask you about 9/11. Where were you when that happened?

EPT: Oh, gosh, I know exactly where I was. I was downtown in my office, and—

TS: And where?

EPT: It was downtown on North Elm Street. I was working for VF—

TS: Here?

EPT: Yes, here in Greensboro, and we were—we had just gotten into the office. It was not—we had just had our morning meeting with all of the managers, and we had gone

back to our individual offices when—you know, then the commotion started, because we do have a TV, kind of, in a break room, you know, and then—and then all of the—we were just riveted to the TV, and with—just, kind of, in shock, you know, and the sense that, "Oh my God. This is going to change things forever," because we didn't know whether that was it or not. It could have been—it could have been everywhere, right? You see movies and you can just—it's like, *Independence Day*, you know?

TS: Right.

EPT: And then thinking, "What are we—" I didn't think about what—when things like that happen, immediately for the reserves in the military, there was a recall. You got to be—you have to be prepared for that, you know—like, you could—whether it's an emergency, they want to know where you are and how quickly you can get in if you're needed. And so, there's, kind of like, a phone tree; a recall, and I was one of the senior leaders at the time so I had to—I knew I had to exercise that immediately, and then—so, we did. We all had to call into our units and we all figured out where we were, what's going on, what—how ready are we if we need be, and everybody, the whole country, was on alert; all the military bases went on alert. They went from whatever con there was and raised it up, so we were aware of that on one side, but then it was just, kind of, a—you know, a rude awakening. I mean, as military people you always, in the back of your mind, know or think that kind of thing could happen. When it's happens it's still a shock.

TS: Right.

EPT: Still a shock.

TS: Were you called to—called up at all?

EPT: We were all recalled, you know, immediately; not immediately but, like, as soon as we get to our next duty station—you know, we had to come with all of our paperwork and everything in order, and we get debriefed, but by that time we pretty much knew what happened; what was finite and what was not finite. But then, of course, the outlook in terms of what terrorism meant changed.

TS: Right.

EPT: It's not a group of people here and there, random, that they had the ability to do this, and it was a rude awakening because there might have been some arrogance on our part to think that this is not going to happen. How can—because they are a small little country in the—you know, halfway across the world with little resources, but here they have—they hit the Pentagon. You know? So.

TS: The place where you worked. Did that hit you pretty hard too?

EPT: Yes. [quietly, seeming very emotional]

TS: Well, I—actually, we've covered a whole lot of material, Elizabeth.

EPT: Yes.

TS: And I don't have any more formal questions for you for now.

EPT: Well, good.

TS: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you wanted to touch on at all?

EPT: Oh, no. I think—I mean, you can talk for a long time, you know, because it's been thirty years, or close to.

TS: Well, we'll never get the whole picture

EPT: Oh, I know, I know, but, you know—but as a summary it's—to me it was everything I expected and more. I met and served with people that I still keep in touch to this day and really enjoy. I've been on some unique experiences that I know that if I was not in the navy I would have never had, and I think that because of that—and some difficult times. You know, not for me personally, but with the country and with the situation I've been in that I had to overcome that probably strengthened me as a person, and all those are good things.

TS: Yes.

EPT: Yeah. So—and then—and both my husband and I being in the same line of work, we share a lot of similar, you know, language and background.

TS: You think that helped strengthen your relationship?

EPT: Our relationship? I think so, because a lot of—you know, a lot of marriages—depending on what the husband's doing, if it's really intense, the wives don't get a chance to understand that, and they don't understand why sometimes their husbands behave the way they do, and—but I do, and so—because I—pretty close to it if not exactly. And he understands the issues that I've had in the waterfront, and like I said, I was on duty when they had this double suicide, murder—here's comes Chris right here; you can meet him.

TS: Yes.

EPT: And so, things like that. So, you can be supportive of each other. I think so.

TS: Okay. Well, his timing's great—

EPT: Yes.

TS: —because I think we're done.

EPT: Hey, honey!

CT: Hello.

TS: I'm going to go ahead and turn it off. Is that okay?

EPT: Yes, absolutely.

TS: Okay.

[End of Interview]