WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Cheryl Elm Sizer

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: December 21, 2012

[Note: Some material has been redacted at the request of the interviewee]

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is December 21, 2012, apparently the last day that the world will be here, and this is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Cheryl Sizer in Colfax, North Carolina to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Cheryl, could you state your name the way you'd like it to read on your collection.

CS: Cheryl Sizer.

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

CS: Many years ago. [chuckling] I was born in Morgantown, West Virginia. My dad was going to school there and he was studying to be a geologist.

TS: Oh neat. Did he finish that?

CS: He finished that. He was a geologist for many years. We were raised in Lafayette, Louisiana. That's where I went to high school, at Acadiana High School.

TS: So there's where you would call home?

CS: Right.

TS: Where you grew up?

CS: Well, not so much anymore, but yes, that's where I was raised until I went to college. And then I went to Loyola University in New Orleans in music education. I got a degree there. And then I went to Philadelphia and got a master's degree there.

TS: Oh, okay. Well, when you were growing up—how long were you in Morgantown?

CS: I—You know, I'm not even sure.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Not very long?

CS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CS: Not—Not long.

TS: Did—So, do you have—did you have any siblings?

CS: I had two sisters. One, Kathy was born in Ohio; Lancaster, Ohio. She's my oldest sister; four years older than me. And then I have a sister six years younger than me, Christine, who lives here in Greensboro.

TS: Oh, does she?

CS: Yeah, [comment redacted].

TS: Yeah?

CS: But she traveled from Colorado with us.

TS: Oh, very nice.

CS: Yeah. And my other sister lives in Arizona; Phoenix.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yes.

TS: Well, when you were in—was it Lafayette?

CS: Yes, Lafayette.

TS: Lafayette. Got to get that accent down right, okay. So you—That's where you went to—to your elementary school and—

CS: Yes.

TS: Those years, okay.

CS: Yes.

TS: Now, did your mother work outside the home?

CS: No.

TS: Okay.

CS: No.

TS: So, she—

CS: She was a homemaker.

TS: Yeah? What was it like growing up in Lafayette?

CS: Well, interestingly enough, I was kind of an outsider. As you can tell I'm really tall and—

TS: You are tall.

CS: [chuckles] Yeah, my—both my mom and I were six feet tall, and so I lived in Cajun country—I don't know if you're familiar with that area but—

TS: No, not at all.

CS: —Cajuns are very petite.

TS: Oh, okay.

CS: And very brunette.

TS: Ah.

CS: And—

TS: You're not brunette.

CS: Oh no. I'm—no. And so, I was kind of an anomaly there. Yeah, I—I remember feeling really bad about myself. I'd come home from school and I'd be crying because people would call me Big Bird.

TS: Oh no!

CS: And Kareem Abdul Callahan. Kareem Abdul Jabbar was popular back—back in my day.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's actually kind of a cool nickname. I like that one.

CS: Yeah, but I didn't play basketball. [chuckling]

TS: Okay.

CS: And my mom would say, "Oh, Cheryl, you just be proud of being tall, and think, you know, someday all the boys are going to want to date you when you get to college." And she was right, but they were all about 5'5", [both chuckling] strangely enough; really weird.

But—And then one time we were at a Michael's store or something and a daughter was talking to her mom. You know, they were both tiny little Cajun women. She said, "Mom, look at those monsters. They're huge," and I just remember being so upset about that. But apparently I grew out of it and, you know, I'm pretty—pretty happy to be tall now.

TS: Sure.

CS: You know, it doesn't bother me. So, that was—I had some trauma there, a little bit, but I had a great, great high school and I loved playing the flute.

TS: Yeah?

CS: That was my focus, you know? I got really, really good at playing, and I did all of the all-state honor bands things because that's where my heart's desire kind of went.

TS: Yeah. When did you find an interest in playing the flute? Was it music in particular or—I mean, in general and then you became—

CS: Yes, yes. I would say it was music in general. My dad was always playing Dvořák [Czech composer of the latter half of the 1800s] and all kinds of classical, beautiful music. He had the LPs. [long playing records]

TS: Yes.

CS: And we would dance around the house, my sister and I, you know, just listening to that music. And I had the opportunity to join the band in—I think it was fifth grade, and I remem—his name was Mr. John Ease[?]; was his name, the band director. And I wanted to play the drums and I was pretty adamant about that, but he said, "Girls play the flute." Yes, can you believe that?

TS: He just assigned you the instrument?

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: Okay.

CS: I guess he needed—either he needed flute players or he just didn't want any girls back in his percussion section.

TS: Oh, where there any?

CS: No.

TS: Okay.

CS: You know, back in the day, girls played the flute. So, I thought, "Okay, I'll try the flute," and I wasn't very good but I sure was determined. I don't know why. I think that's part of my personality. If you tell me I can't do something I'm going to do it, and so that's kind of how I—Because my parents were not musical.

TS: No?

CS: No, no. My mom actually would say, "When are you going to quit? When are you going to be done practicing because it's driving me crazy?"

TS: [chuckles]

CS: So, you know, I didn't really have that encouragement there. My sisters didn't play instruments. It was just a freak accident that I picked up that instrument.

TS: Really? So you didn't really like have a role model for—

CS: No.

TS: —playing it?

CS: No, not at all.

TS: Interesting.

CS: And I wasn't good. I wasn't even good enough to where my elementary—I guess it would be fifth and sixth grade, yeah, middle school teacher, she didn't even recommend me for high school band.

TS: No?

CS: No, I was very disappointed in that and I told my mom I wanted to take private lessons, and so she hooked me up.

TS: Really? How nice.

CS: They—They let me—I'm sure they would've let me join the band but—

TS: Yeah.

CS: So, that's kind of how that went.

TS: Well, that's neat. Well, I want to find out more about Lafayette.

CS: Oh, okay.

TS: So what kind of things—So, you're getting picked on a little bit?

CS: [chuckling]

TS: —as a girl, maybe a lot sometimes and—but this like the—this is what you know, right?

CS: Right.

TS: Because you were very young when you moved there. So did you live, like, in the city, rural area; where did you—where did you live?

CS: Lafayette is about two hours away from New Orleans, which would be the largest city in Louisiana. As I said, it was really Cajun country. I mean, they spoke Cajun in—I don't think they offered it as a course in school but it was—I mean, I was a minority there and it was also the oil patch, you know. So, if you weren't a geologist, you were involved somehow in the oil industry; you worked off shore, engineer, something along those lines.

TS: So that's how your dad got—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —the job in this area.

CS: Actually, from West Virginia I think we moved to—down to Texas; Corpus Christi.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yeah, I don't remember it at all. I was really, really young. It was fourth grade when I moved to Lafayette.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yes, fourth grade. And so—yes, it's a very nice town; really, really nice; a good community to live in. He did really, really well as a geologist, became self-employed, and then the bottom kind of fell out when I went away to college.

TS: Okay.

CS: Everything kind of fell apart in our family. We had some serious crisis. I mean, he lost his job, my mom got cancer, and my grandmother got sick and, you know; that's a little further down the line. But when I was actually living there in Lafayette it was wonderful. I had a great childhood.

TS: What kind of things did you do for fun?

CS: I was very involved in a lot of different things. I—I was the only one in my family who went to church. There was a bus that would come by and pick me up.

TS: How—How does that happen?

CS: I don't know. I just, you know—Often they thought I was adopted, because I was very outgoing. I wanted to do everything and they were very shy, quiet people.

TS: Okay.

CS: And so, I was very active in First Baptist Church there. I was in the science club, which I loved but, you know, didn't pursue that direction. I was in girl's service club and I did a lot of volunteer work. The band took up a huge amount of time; marching band. Which, you know, I didn't like as much as I loved symphonic band and stuff like that. What else did I do?

TS: Did you have to, like, play the one to play the other, sort of? I mean, did you have to be in the marching band to—

CS: I don't remember.

TS: No?

CS: I was just going to do it all.

TS: Yeah.

CS: I was trying to do as much music as I possibly could.

TS: I see.

CS: That might have been true. I just don't remember.

TS: Did you play any sports or anything?

CS: No. I totally should have. Actually, I did cross country.

TS: Oh, running?

CS: I ran, yeah. I was just not that good. I was very, very slow but I enjoyed that.

TS: Well, you're so tall and you know a lot of runners are more—

CS: Yeah, I wasn't well suited for it.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —as you say, petite.

CS: Yeah. And then I played tennis.

TS: Oh, now that—

CS: I played on the tennis team.

TS: You probably had a good serve there.

CS: Yeah, I enjoyed that; yeah. I played a lot of racquetball but not competitively.

TS: Okay.

CS: Just with friends and such. And I liked to lift weights. I really enjoyed lifting weights.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yeah. There's a—There was a work out facility there called Red Lerille's [Health and Racquet Club]. I don't know if it's still there. But my parents got me a membership there because I wanted to, you know, keep working out and stuff. And that was another weird thing, because my family was not very physical or active; I just wanted to do my own thing. I also—I remember in fifth grade I won a DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] competition.

TS: Oh.

CS: And I wrote a paper on some historic figure. I don't remember who it was. But that was a huge little turning point in my life. I was so excited that I could write something that people would read and they liked it, but it's the weirdest thing, when they interviewed me and we were at the mayor's office, I got the key to the city of Lafayette, and they said, "So, Cheryl, what do you want to do when you grow up." And I don't know what—I said I wanted to be a mailman, because I liked the little jeeps. [chuckling]

TS: [laughing]

CS: What? Who says that? I just—And my parents just slapped their foreheads and said, "What? You don't want to be a doctor or—what?"

"No, a mailman. Yes, that's my life's dream." But at that time I was—That kind of boosted my self-esteem a little bit—

TS: Sure.

CS: —thinking, "Wow, I could totally accomplish something." Not that I needed it. I was pretty confident. I was feeling pretty good about life in general. I was a very happy person. Yeah.

TS: Now, did you have teachers who were mentors for you at all, in any way?

CS: Oh yes, of course. My band director of course, Gerald Waguespack, now deceased just recently. But he, of course, was a huge influence on me. Also, Art Rydell, he was my—one of my flute teachers, although he was a clarinet player. Really good—He played flute as well. He was amazing. Jeffrey Gilbert, he was another flute instructor but he played bass. So, I didn't actually have a real flute teacher for a long time. I was just studying with anybody who I could get my hands on. Judy Deal was a college student that my mother got—She gave me lessons when I first wanted to take them.

TS: All right, okay.

CS: Yeah, because when I'd gotten to high school, like I said, I was, like, last chair and just not very good. But over the summer I just practiced and practiced and I was able to move up to second chair.

TS: Oh yeah, so talk about challenging.

CS: Yeah, that was always a very stressful thing, but I was highly motivated so, you know, I just practiced and practiced and practiced. And as I worked my way up the little ladder of success I—In fact, the woman who was principle flute the year I was a freshman, I would follow her around everywhere. I'm friends with her on Facebook actually.

TS: Yeah? [chuckling]

CS: And I told her recently, I said "You have no idea how much I admired you, and you were like a celebrity in my eyes." And she didn't—she had no clue.

TS: [chuckling]

CS: But, it is—

TS: It's probably good she had no clue.

CS: Yeah, yeah. But I would just cling to anybody who could help me, you know, get better at whatever it was. But that was—And there was another woman, Kathy Clotiaux was her name, she went to the rival school and she and I were always neck and neck for all-state.

TS: I see.

CS: And I'm friends with her now on Facebook. And she's a teacher now, but I think she's still playing. She was a tall girl, too, which is interesting. Clotiaux, she's a—she's a Cajun girl. But yeah, and she was just really, really—She pushed me a little bit because we were always competing.

TS: Neat.

CS: Yeah, I had some really, really fine mentors. Also, some science teachers that I just loved that got me really interested and motivated in science, but like I said, I had to make a decision, which way to go, and music kind of came easier to me. So, I went that route.

TS: But not at first.

CS: No, obviously. Yeah, that was something that I had that accomplishment that was huge in my mind at the time, you know, trying to decide, "Well, which way should I take my life and my—" you know, my dad, who actually lives in our basement, he was kind of a chauvinist and said, "You just need to marry, you know, some wealthy guy who has a

cattle ranch in Texas." I mean, he had no desire for me to find my own way, and my mom, who's a great artist—she was a really, really fine artist. She's deceased now, but she wasn't—she wasn't pushing me in any direction either. But they both said, "What? Why do you want to be trained in music?" But they let me do it and, you know, they—they were supportive, don't get me wrong, and they loved the band. They were at every single performance that we had. So, I don't know. It's—When I think back, you know, even as I'm speaking now and analyze the path that I was on, I feel like I probably wouldn't have done anything different, you know. My sister—My older sister went to LSU—LSU in Baton Rouge—

TS: Okay.

CS: —got a journalism degree and you know she was kind of doing her own thing and I thought, "Oh, maybe I should go and do what she's doing," you know? Not journalism per se, but I was thinking about nursing, and they had a great music school, too. And—And nobody really said, "Yes, that's a good idea," or, "No, that's a horrible idea."

TS: So, you had to—that was all internally you had to—

CS: Yeah.

TS: And with these mentors that you had, too, maybe? Did they—Were they helping you see that it was possible for your future?

CS: Well, no.

TS: No?

CS: And I think a lot of music teachers, myself included, kind of discourage it, if you are not a prodigy. I mean, if you say, "I want to—I want to major in flute and I want to perform," there is a realism there that, you know, a very small percentage make it to the New York Phil[harmonic]. And when you're a student, that's such an unrealistic goal. And of course that was my goal as well. But, I mean, while you don't want to discourage someone, you also don't want to lead them to a path that they just not going to fulfill.

TS: So it was a same thing like, say, you know, "You're good athletically."

CS: Yeah. How many people are actually—

TS: Going to make the pros or something.

CS: Yeah.

TS: I see.

CS: It was kind of like that. Although, you know, they were—they never discouraged me, and you know, a lot of students, my husband included, started majoring in music performance. There's a huge difference between education and performance. Education, you can still perform but you could also teach if you wanted to. Performance, you are headed down a path were you—that is going to be—you're going to be a soloist or you are going to be in an ensemble or you're going to—you know. And so, there's no turning back. And so education—I loved teaching, which I did a lot of it, as well, during college. I thought, "Well, that's a perfect fit," you know? "I like teaching and mentoring and I loved music. So I'm just going to do both." And that's, you know—that's how I roll.

TS: [chuckling] So, what point did you decide—So, as you're going through high school—

CS: Yes.

TS: —and you're not really being push by your parents or even your mentors in high school. When do you make a decision for where you're going to go to college and continue your education?

CS: Sadly, I was led by a trumpet player.

TS: Is that right?

CS: [chuckling] Yeah.

TS: Sadly?

CS: Yeah, it wasn't the best—I don't think it was the best choice and, you know, like I said, my parents were so not hands on at all. They were encouraging but they weren't going to tell me, "You are going here."

TS: Right.

CS: Well, over the summer—I was playing saxophone in the jazz band and over the summer I wanted to go to jazz camp. And so, my parents were so gracious and allowed me to go, and I met this trumpet player. It was really my first boyfriend, kind of, you know? I didn't really date a whole lot in high school, and I just fell in love with this guy. And so, he lived in New Orleans, he said, "I'm going to Loyola."

And I said, "I want to go too." And so, I decided I wanted to go to Loyola and then we broke up. [laughing]

TS: [chuckles] But you finished in Loyola.

CS: Yes, it's a wonderful school; really, really wonderful music education program. And I guess the thing that I regret is that it cost my parents a lot. I mean, it was a private Catholic school, and I just had no clue that they were, you know, sacrificing so much for

me. Now that I'm getting ready to put my kids through school, I'm thinking, "Wow, I would never have allowed my child to do that." You know, I mean, I think I got a little scholarship but it wasn't profound at all.

TS: Right.

CS: So, once again they were incredibly gracious and said, "If that's what you want to do, then that's where you're going." Plus, it was a very dangerous city. I mean, it was not the best place to live. New Orleans is scary.

TS: Is it?

CS: Yeah, and I was living—I lived on campus initially and then I moved into a house, and somebody broke into the house and it was—it was traumatic. [comment redacted]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Where you there when they broke in?

CS: We were not.

TS: That's good.

CS: No, I had a roommate there. [comment redacted] I don't know what my parents were thinking, you know.

TS: [chuckling]

CS: Number one, they were paying so much money for me to go to school. Number two, it's just a horrible dangerous city. But I think they were kind of naïve. They didn't know what they were doing, but—

TS: Maybe—Maybe your dad was thinking you might hook up with somebody, you know. [chuckling]

CS: [laughing] You're right, although he hates New Orleans too.

TS: Does he?

CS: We lived there too. I don't remember how old I was but we lived on—in Gretna, was the name of it. That village actually is what it was called, because he was a marine vet and so he went to school via the GI Bill.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yes, he's got an amazingly interesting past. But anyway, so—

TS: So then—So—But then you went on for your masters. How did you make that decision to—

CS: I—let's see—was finishing up—I was—I was student teaching at a private boys' school and I had a horrible altercation there.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: About what year are we in now?

CS: This would be '80—'89?

TS: Okay.

CS: Is that right? No, no, no. I'm sorry. Eighty-four is when I graduated from high school, so '85—'88; '88. And so, this kid, I was giving him a lesson and he trapped me in a practice room and you know, was inappropriate. I said, "You're going to have to move." I mean, I was pretty firm with him, and that incident just kind of threw me off a little bit. I didn't like it. I was having a hard time with the discipline. I didn't like having to discipline all the time, which is—I know teachers encounter—I mean, that's half the battle. And it was so much energy, I just thought, "You know, if I do this I will never practice. I will never play again. It's do or die time." And so, I took a few auditions. I was playing a lot. I was gigging on my own with a trio that was doing a lot of weddings and stuff.

TS: What was it called?

CS: Blackwood Trio, I guess. Blackwood Trio.

TS: Okay.

CS: We did a lot of funerals. That was the first time that I was aware of AIDS, you know? It was a big deal down there, and I started playing a lot of funerals for gay men that were dying. I just got that connection, you know.

TS: Right.

CS: "Oh, I love that flute, so let me—I'm going to hire you for this funeral." And I probably did about ten funerals for people who were dying of AIDS. And I loved it; I loved it. It

was—it was very fulfilling to serve a purpose in that capacity where you're helping people grieve.

TS: Right.

CS: So, very ironic now—of where I am now, because I'm [volunteering—CS corrected later] for hospice.

TS: Okay.

CS: That's always been in the background. "How can I help people heal? How can I—" And being a professional musician is a very selfish career. It really is. It's—

TS: Why?

CS: Well, you do spend a lot of alone time evaluating yourself and trying to improve yourself and you're constantly introspective; "Well, how can I do this better? What—What can I do to improve this?" And you're also talking to the two selves that you are. The one that's very self-conscious and nervous about performing and being judged by people. And then there's the you that wants to emote and, you know, be emotional and share yourself which is very intimate. And so, you spend a lot of time by yourself.

TS: Okay.

CS: You know? And when you are actually performing it's about "you", sort of; "How did I do with that performance?" It's also about your—I mean, as I matured as a musician, it is about the reaction that you get from your audience, of course.

TS: That fits in.

CS: It fits in a little bit. But, you know, as a young musician it's all about you, you know. And so—

TS: So is it—So when you're—I have—This is something that I have no knowledge of.

CS: Yes.

TS: Or understanding because I'm—you know, I don't—I don't perform in that way ever.

CS: Yes.

TS: But—So when you are performing, are you very self-aware of how—you know, how everything's going, less than the reaction that you're getting form the audience, then, or is it kind of combined?

CS: That's a really good question because it depends on where you are in your musical career.

TS: Okay.

CS: As a child, or when you're a young musician, you're incredibly self-conscious; that's all you're thinking about. You could care less about the audience because you're terrified, because you're very exposed. It's a personal attack on yourself that you're—you're judging yourself constantly. You make a crack or you make a mistake, you're judging yourself. It has nothing to do with anybody else. And so, as an immature musician—And I'm talking—I'm not talking about prodigies because that's a whole different level. Those kids—

TS: Okay.

CS: —they just—you know, they just—I'm talking about somebody that had to work for their musicianship—

TS: [chuckling]

CS: —which I feel like both my husband and I were not prodigies at all.

TS: Okay.

CS: I had to work very hard. But as you get older and as you become mature as a musician you realize that you have to leave yourself behind. You can't be so caught up in, "Oh, that note was a little flat," or you know, "I missed that lick," or whatever. You have to think, "How am I going to make these people believe that there is a fawn in a forest during *Syrinx* [*Afternoon of a Faun*—CS corrected later]?" Or you know, "How am I going to—What's the best way to approach this run so that people will feel like it's a babbling brook," you know. And when you start to interpret music that way, then it's not about you anymore. I've got goose pimples right now—

TS: Oh neat.

CS: —thinking, you know. Because it doesn't matter what instrument it is, you are an entertainer, and you are performing, and so it's just kind of like acting. It's like be—not being yourself anymore and it takes you outside of yourself, and I've had moments like that and it's amazing, it's so awesome. There are other moments where I was terrified; you know, auditioning for symphony jobs and stuff. It's hard to get your heart calm, you know?

TS: I would imagine.

CS: So, that's stressful and hard. But if you can let go of it, it's very fulfilling. And I'm fortunate—I'm so fortunate that I got to perform a zillion times so that I kind of lost that

fear. At the end of every performance in the air force you would do "[The] Stars and Stripes [Forever]". You stand up in the front and you're bum-bum-bum-bum, twiddle, twiddle, twiddle, right? And so, I will never forget the first time I had to do it. I was shaking so bad, you know, even though I knew it and everything, but—and then about the thousandth time, I'm just loving it, you know; so fun.

TS: So you're really engaged with the whole process, then—

CS: Yeah, definitely.

TS: —at that point.

CS: But that is a—That is half the battle of being a professional musician. And, you know, some people, musicians, just don't get over that stage fright and it cripples them. They cannot perform.

TS: Is there something about, like, a perfectionism—

CS: Oh, absolutely.

TS: —that, kind of, can maybe be a barrier for that?

CS: Yeah, and that's a blessing that I have—I am not a perfectionist. You would think, "Well, that doesn't make any sense."

TS: No, it does. It does to me, because then you can get to a different level in a different way.

CS: Yeah. Well, my husband is a perfectionist.

TS: Oh, is that right?

CS: And you know, interestingly enough, in all the research they've done about musicians, a lot of them are introverted.

TS: Oh, that makes sense to me actually.

CS: Really?

TS: But you tell me why.

CS: For instance, my husband, very introverted, very private, and yet he's able to, you know, emote and be—He's a great musician, really.

TS: What does he play?

CS: He played the tuba in the air force but he is a bass player, too, plus guitar.

TS: Oh, nice.

CS: But he was an amazing musician. So I didn't fit that—Once again, I felt like an outsider in that realm.

TS: Because you're not an introvert?

CS: I'm not at all. But anyway, so—What was your question again? [chuckles]

TS: Well, we were just talking about, you know, how your performance—you know, the performance itself and how over time the way you are looking at your music and your audience changes.

CS: Yes, yeah, definitely. And I—I guess [unclear]—There was something I was going to tell you about with Todd.

TS: His introvert—As being an introvert and perfectionist?

CS: Yeah, yeah. Well I—For myself, I think that carried me further than I was supposed to go.

TS: Oh, I see.

CS: You know? Because like I said, I had to practice really, really hard for everything I got. It just did not come—necessarily come naturally to me. I feel like I was a performer before I was a flutist. And most musicians—"Oh, I picked up this cello and it was just natural. It came naturally." I don't think I ever really wanted to play the flute, you know. It wasn't necessarily my instrument.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: It wasn't organic, right?

CS: No. I loved the cello.

TS: Oh, yeah?

CS: Oh, I love it, and I probably should have done that instead but too late now.

TS: Who knows what road you would have gone down if you had done that?

CS: True, yeah, might have been completely different.

TS: Well, now, tell me about when you went to the master's program. So, you had this incident with this young—young man or young boy.

CS: In high school, yes.

TS: And you didn't like that—

CS: No.

TS: —interaction?

CS: That's right. You were—That's the path you were headed down.

TS: That's okay. So, yeah—So tell me what happened after that.

CS: So I took several auditions. I was finishing up that degree, and I met someone else, a singer, Robbie Wagner, and he—oh my gosh, he was just an amazing musician. He was going to go to Philadelphia to study at New School of—no, Curtis Institute [of Music], which is a very elite school for vocalists. And he was actually a bass player but he had a beautiful voice. And we were doing the World's Fair. We were—I was singing, dancing—We had to audition for it, and I got to play a little piccolo.

TS: Where was the World's Fair?

CS: It was in New Orleans.

TS: Oh, okay.

CS: Yes.

TS: What year was that?

CS: Well, let's see.

TS: Eighties.

CS: Yeah, I want to say '86 but that doesn't—

TS: Okay.

CS: Let me think.

TS: That's something we can look up. Don't worry about that. [The World's Fair was held in New Orleans in 1984.]

CS: Okay. Anyway, we were working together, we were there every day for the entire summer and they gave us a stipend to go to school. It was through Loyola; they had their own stage and stuff. And he was telling me his plans and he said, "Cheryl, you've got to continue with your music. You've got to. It would be a shame not to."

He was the encourager. He's the one that really pushed me, because I wasn't feeling, like, "Well, I'm not that good. I just don't know. I've taken these auditions, blah blah blah." Even though at the time, I—I was a music education major but I won a opportunity to perform with the symphony. It was a competition they opened up to performance majors but they opened it up to education majors as well, and so I got to do that. And that was amazing too. I just had that opportunity—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Another "key to the city" sort of moment?

CS: Yeah, exactly. So, I said, "Well, I'll take some auditions and see what happens." And so, I knew that in Philadelphia—Maury Panitz was the principle flutist there in the symphony, and I thought, "Oh my gosh, if I could study with that guy I'm just going to be great." And so, I auditioned there. I auditioned at Curtis—no, not at Curtis, at Cleveland Institute because they had a great music department, too, and I think those were the only two auditions I had because I was limited in terms of my funds and so—Anyway, at the time they had another music—They may still, I don't know. It was called New School of Music, there in Philadelphia, so I auditioned for that one as well. But I think they were combining with Temple [University].

TS: Okay.

CS: And I knew that Murray Panitz taught students at Temple so that's where I wanted to go so I could stay with him. [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: Yeah, that's right. And so, I—It all worked out. It just fell into place beautifully. I started going to school. I got a job at Pennsylvania Hospital, which I love that hospital. It's amazing; very historic; beautiful. I love Philadelphia, although another very dangerous city, at least near Temple. Have you been there?

TS: I have not, no.

CS: Yeah, it's a little—actually the first day I was there, there was a woman in the subway screaming, she said "He took my rent money," and there's a guy running toward me and I stuck my foot out to kind of trip him and he punched me in the gut.

TS: [gasps]

CS: And that was my introduction to Philadelphia, woo!

TS: Oh, good lord.

CS: [chuckles] So anyway—But I loved the school. I loved studying with Murray Panitz. I had the opportunity to hear the symphony every Friday night. We would go to McGlinchey's [Bar and Grill] and have hotdogs there and we would get into the symphony for two dollars as students. It was probably like the best place to be as a performer; so many opportunities to play.

TS: Okay, let's take a short break then; just a moment.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Oh yeah, we got to start again. Okay, we took a short break and now we're back. So you're finishing your master's in Philadelphia.

CS: Yes, I'm taking a lot of auditions, I'm studying with this amazing flutist. [comment redacted] This is a guy, very old school, all of his students were women.

TS: Who was this?

CS: Murray Panitz.

TS: Okay.

CS: He [was—CS corrected later] a principle flutist in the Philadelphia Orchestra at the time under Ricardo Muti, and he smoked during our lessons [chuckles], and he would—he would say, "When I can't play *Afternoon of the Faun* in one breath, then I'll quit smoking," because it's a piece that requires a lot of air, and he would just play it faster and faster each time he played. [both chuckle]

He was a good guy but I—I don't know. When you get to that level of musicianship it's so competitive. And all of my mentors, including him, they totally could have said to me, "Cheryl ,you're not going to make it, so just quit," because there were so many people that were so much better than me. But I was very driven. I probably wouldn't have listened and when people tell me that, I am going to work even harder. And so, nobody was discouraging me from pursuing it even though I knew I wasn't a

prodigy. And so, I just kept plugging along, and I was getting a lot of gigs, while I worked at Pennsylvania Hospital as a medical secretary.

TS: Okay.

CS: Which I totally forced myself onto that job. It's—It's ironic.

TS: What do you mean?

CS: Well, I could type okay but I was not a great typist. But I—I said that I was. [chuckles] [phone vibrating] Oh, is that you? Oh, I'm sorry.

TS: I don't think so.

CS: I'm sorry. Let me turn that off. That's my husband.

They were opening up a new adult day health center—is what it was called—for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, for people to—caregivers to drop off their folks at the hospital. It was an incredibly wonderful service for them. I mean, you could just see the—the exhausted caregivers and how much they needed that [respite—CS added later]. And I think this is the first time—When I was working there, this is the first time I had an inkling that, "Oh," you know, "I'm missing out on this opportunity to—to—to work with people." I mean, I can feel that desire to work in that arena a little bit.

TS: So make a connection—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —on that level in a different way than performing?

CS: And they—Right. And so, they—they were just opening this up, and I told them, you know, "Here's my plan but I'm planning on staying here for a long time. I do outside gigs but I'm—" you know, "I can do this." And Ed Horton was the director and he was—oh, I just loved him. He was a—a great boss, and I made some wonderful friends with the nurse[s] and they were very good friends and we were together for—let's see—two, three, four years I was there at the hospital. Wonderful hospital; I loved it. And Ed let me play for the—the folks that were there. There were about thirty people and it was—gosh, it was really unusual because I was also trying to teach myself piano a little bit and so I would plunk through pieces, and here's a good example. Let's just say I was singing "You Are My Sunshine," right? And I'd—So I'd play the chord, blink, [singing] "You are my sunshine," blink, "My only sunshine," blink, trying to find the chord.

TS: [chuckles] I understand.

CS: It's because I—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I understand that completely.

CS: I didn't really play. And so the clients would say, "She's horrible. Oh man, she sucks."

TS: [laughing] Would they really?

CS: Well, they were very outspoken, you know, but the next day they would say, "Cheryl, play some music for us," because they didn't remember, because they had Alzheimer's.

TS: [laughs]

CS: So, that was kind of fun. I taught myself piano. And—And of course I'd play flute, too, and that was awesome. I got to perform every single day. And so, he was so gracious to allow me to do that. I just loved it. It was music therapy, which was what I originally—I forgot to mention—

TS: Okay.

CS: —originally started in before education.

TS: I see.

CS: That's why I had a few science courses; just a few. But I was working with terminally ill children. So that would be when I started Loyola, and they have a great music therapy department. But I couldn't handle it emotionally.

TS: I can see that it would be very difficult.

CS: Yeah. I can't believe I forgot to mention that. But anyway—And that would have been the best of both worlds, but that's what I was doing at the hospital. You know, I was doing some music therapy. And as much as I enjoyed that job, you know, of course it didn't pay very well, and I needed to do something else. I really needed to figure out the plan for my life. And so, as I said, I was taking a bunch of auditions and, you know, there would be three hundred flute players showing up for an audition for one spot and it got really discouraging, even though I was gigging all the time. I was able to perform for big functions for doctors, and I had wonderful connections; really wonderful. But—Although I do have really good stories. It's kind of embarrassing but I'm going to tell you anyway.

TS: All right, good, those are the best.

CS: Okay, so you had Curtis Institute. Those were the top notch prodigy, amazing musicians, and they had contracts already and they had managers. I mean, they were on the right path. Then you had these Temple students who [doorbell chiming] were just kind of doing their own thing and gigging a lot, because we would take any gig that came our way. Whereas the Curtis students, they had to get a certain amount of money and then they had to pay their manager, and blah blah blah. So, we were getting all these jobs.

Well, somebody called me and said, "Oh, I need a flute player for the fourth of July to play this job."

And I said, "Okay, I'll do it."

And so she said, "Well, I just wondered can you possibly, would you mind, playing Stars and Stripes?"

"Sure, I can do that, yeah." "Well, we want you to wear a toga and you're going to be on this pedestal in the backyard and—" you know, it was for an architect or something. I said "Well, okay."

TS: "How much are you paying?" [laughs]

CS: "I guess." Well, I didn't even ask. I didn't have the wherewithal to even ask how much it paid. I was kind of shy about that because I just wanted the opportunity to play.

TS: I see.

CS: So I never really pursued—I never really said, "Okay, I'm going to have to charge you blah blah blah."

TS: Right.

CS: I mean, I did after this gig.

TS: Okay. [laughing] This was a lesson for—

CS: Because this gig, with all the mosquitoes and all the people touching my legs and—yeah, it paid twenty-five dollars.

TS: Oh my goodness. How long were you there?

CS: About an hour.

TS: Oh wow.

CS: Yeah, it was awful. Yeah, I would never do that again, because—

TS: How was Stars and Stripes though? How'd you do on that?

CS: I'm sure it was fabulous but, you know, not worth it. The mosquitoes were awful; that's all I remember. Just—And then these people would come up and touch my legs, because—I don't know—they were all drunk or something. But that was probably the worst gig I ever did.

TS: Wow, okay.

CS: Yeah, and I thought there's got to be a better thing out there. And so, that's when I met Brian, who was a trumpet player who auditioned for the Marine [Corps] band, I guess it was, and I didn't know—I didn't even know there were bands in the military. I had no clue and I thought, "Well, I could audition. It's not going to hurt, because I'm auditioning anyway" So that's how that had happened.

TS: Who did you audition for?

CS: The air force, yeah.

TS: So why did—why would—So he was auditioning for the Marine Corps?

CS: Right, right.

TS: How did you end up auditioning for the air force?

CS: Well, I think at the time, number one, the marines weren't looking for flutists, and what happens is they have openings in the various groups, and at that time the air force had twenty-four bands stationed all over the world. Mostly CONUS [Continental United States] but there were—there was one in Germany, one in Japan, one in Alaska—let's see—Any other exotic locations?

TS: Asia?

CS: There might have been. It could have been before because I don't remember. Oh yeah, Yokota [Air Base, Fussa, Tokyo, Japan]; yeah.

TS: Okay.

CS: So anyway, he said, "Yeah, they don't need any flute players in the Marine—" He said, "Why don't you audition for the—the air force guys?"

TS: Did you consider the navy or the army?

CS: No.

TS: No?

CS: Well, they weren't—they weren't actually actively looking for people, even though they—

TS: Okay, but the air force was?

CS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CS: It was a freak accident.

TS: [chuckles]

CS: But thank god. Thank god I went air force, because I would never, ever want to do anything else, you know? And of course, I did all the research, as much as I could. Did we have internet back then? [chuckling]

TS: Nineteen-ninety?

CS: Yeah.

TS: It's emerging.

CS: Yeah, isn't that something? That's crazy, huh?

TS: When you were talking about your typing I was thinking, "Well, you had to probably use that IBM Selectric?"

CS: That's right, I did, yeah. Wow, that's crazy. It was hard leaving the hospital too.

TS: Oh sure.

CS: But you know, it was such an adventure and I didn't know any better. Thank god, you know, you're so ignorant when you're young and you just—

TS: But how old were you at this point? You're not super young. I mean, you're not—

CS: [chuckles] You're right, I wasn't.

TS: You're not in your forties, but—

CS: But I was very naïve.

TS: Yeah?

CS: Even on my path did—not knowing what I was going to do. So, how old was I?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're about twenty-five?

CS: Yeah.

TS: Yeah, so you're actually older than a lot of—

CS: Yes, I [was—CS corrected].

TS: —of the young people that were enlisting at that time.

CS: Yes, like you, Miss Seventeen.

TS: Yes.

CS: Yes, I was much older and that was a benefit to me in basic.

TS: Why?

CS: And yet a hindrance because, you know, I had all these young kids. I was very nervous about not being able to keep up because I thought, "Oh, I'm going to be so out of shape."

But anyway, I took the audition, they offered me the position in Washington, and I started running and getting in really, really good shape. I was running a lot and—

TS: So you did, like, the delayed entry program?

CS: No.

TS: No?

CS: No, they just—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You just had a slot that when you were going to start.

CS: Right.

TS: I see, okay.

CS: Right, I had many months to prepare.

TS: Okay.

CS: And—Okay now, I'm racking my brain a little bit.

TS: Well, first let me ask you this.

CS: Yeah.

TS: So you—So you're like—All of a sudden you're like, "Well, I think I'm going to join the air force." And what does your dad, especially, and your mother and your sisters think about that?

CS: Well, let's see. At the time my sister had graduated, I think. She wasn't very involved in my decisions at all, neither was the other one of course. I think, you know, my parents visited me in Philadelphia and they knew that I was kind of trying to find my way. They did not discourage me or encourage me either way. I don't think they knew a whole lot either. We're all just feeling naïve.

TS: Because your dad, you said, was in the Marine Corps.

CS: He was, yeah.

TS: So he didn't have any preconceived notions about women in the military or anything like that?

CS: He—Like I said, he's kind of a chauvinist, so I think he did give me a little grief about the fly girl thing and about, you know, "Well, you'll just be sitting behind a desk anyway." You know, there's that—

TS: Okay.

CS: —thing going on. Marines versus [U.S.] Air Force. But I don't think they knew what to expect because I was going in as a musician, because you don't—you know that you're going in as a musician. It's not like a free for all. When you go into basic you're already pegged, you know. You don't have to go to any kind of training school. You just—you go to your first duty station as a musician.

TS: Oh, is that right?

CS: Right.

TS: Okay, I didn't know it worked that way.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: Well—So what about your friends; all your musician friends? What did they think about this?

CS: I don't remember anyone saying, "Wow, that's so shocking."

TS: [chuckling]

CS: The ones at the hospital were very encouraging. They helped me get my hair cut really, really short.

TS: Oh.

CS: You know? I was a very free spirit. I just had no worries in terms of what I was going to do next. And I thought, "Well, this'll be fun. I'll stay in shape." You know, I just—somewhat naïve to the whole process.

TS: Did you have any idea, like "Okay, I'm going to do this," and you signed up for—what? —four years?

CS: Yes. Yeah.

TS: Okay, and then it wasn't like, "Oh, this is the rest of my life."

CS: Definitely not.

TS: Okay.

CS: And especially when I got to my first duty station; like I said, it was not a good band. It was not a good—I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh, what have I gotten myself into?" There—I—I just didn't know enough about the whole process. I knew that once I finished basic training I would go there and I would just start performing. And I knew it was a field band. And a field band is very different than an elite band. There's—I'm talking about the [Washington] D.C. bands.

TS: Okay.

CS: Now, I knew—I didn't even know about the [United States Air Force] Academy Band in Colorado, really. I didn't know that much. But I knew about the ones in D.C. and that's the one I wanted because those were good; I knew they were. This one, I got there and I was just so disappointed because I thought, "Oh gosh," you know, "I'm better than this." And that's horrible to say, but it's true.

And so, I kind of plotted along. I was practicing. I did my own recitals. I performed and taught private lessons. I did as much as I could to improve my musicianship. They provided the instruments too. I had my own but the air force provides beautiful, amazing instruments, so I used one of theirs. There were some good musicians and I did a lot of outside gigs. And there were [sic] some frustration because there were really some amazing musicians and then not so much. Now, that has changed a lot but we'll get to that. And then the commander was a flutist himself and he—Mark Peterson was his name; wonderful man; really supportive. He's the first one that I talked to. In fact, I auditioned for him and he is the one that told me, "Well, this band is not going to be around much longer," and I didn't have any idea about the other bands. I didn't know about their quality, whether they were good or bad or—So I decided I was getting out. And somehow or another, either he or somebody talked me into staying.

TS: Wait a—What point did you decide you're getting out? Are you getting out—

CS: Well—

TS: —like, within the first year of being in the—

CS: No, I knew I had four years.

TS: Okay.

CS: But—

TS: But that—But that you're going to do that and that would be it.

CS: Right.

TS: Serve your time, sort of thing?

CS: Exactly.

TS: Okay.

CS: In my mind I thought, "I got to get out," you know?

TS: Okay.

CS: The air force part didn't bother me. But my mind set was musician first, air force second; this is a vehicle only to get to a—a better place.

TS: That's an interesting point for me, because I've talked to a lot of nurses, and the culture of nursing and the culture of the military are different.

CS: Yeah.

TS: And I would think that a musician's culture and the—you know, a military culture also—

CS: Oh, you are so right. They just do not go together.

TS: Can you explain how they're maybe—

CS: Yes.

TS: —have the—how they have, you know, that oil and water sort of—

CS: Yeah. Well, I'm surprised to hear that from a nurse, because that seems like, you know, they've got their protocol and they have to be exact and blah blah blah. So, that doesn't make any sense—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, there're similarities for sure.

CS: Right. But, you know, musicianship is ethereal. It's artsy. What? It has nothing to do with the military that is regimented and it's got to be exactly this way and you—you know, you serve your country and you don't serve yourself, or—you know, it's not fun; [both chuckle] "Stop laughing and having fun!" But—So that is a really, really good point. They absolutely don't seem to go hand in hand.

Now, that said, things did change for me. My attitude changed, everything changed, and we'll get to that a little bit later. But initially, when I first got in, I obviously had a very selfish motive, and I think a lot of people do. Either they you to—they want the air force or the military to pay for school, [comment redacted]. Well, I had an agenda, of course.

TS: What was your agenda?

CS: I wanted to perform and I wanted to study. They give you private lessons. You can study with anybody in the country you want to. So, if you go TDY [temporary duty] somewhere—

TS: Really?

CS: Let's say I'm in Montana, and I want to take a lesson with the principle flutist in Montana, they will cover the cost of that to help you improve as a musician. So, I loved that. Of course, they provide you with the best equipment. And so, I had all these huge advantages, and I was using every bit of it to improve as a musician. I—I did not have

any interest—I obviously had a little interest in serving my country, a little bit, but that was not my intent initially, at all. Obviously things changed a little bit, but you know, I had very selfish motives, and I was getting in shape; I lost thirty pounds in basic training. I was in the best shape of my life.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit about basic training. You skipped right over that pretty quickly.

CS: Oh, yes.

TS: Because I'm curious about, you know, you being twenty five and a lot of young eighteen, nineteen year olds.

CS: Yeah.

TS: So, was there anything that was particularly difficult for you in basic training?

CS: [chuckling] Well, I actually was in better shape than most of those kids, but I think it was because I prepared for it so much. I mean, I just kicked that track's butt in my boots, you know? I enjoyed it. I enjoyed the discipline of it. But of course, I was a dorm chief and I ended up at the top of—And I had a TI [training instructor] that was—really, really hated me. Now, it could have been—He told me—He got in my face and said I reminded him of his ex-wife. Whether that's true or not, I don't know.

TS: Playing with your head a little.

CS: Maybe so.

TS: Maybe, yeah?

CS: And even though I was really, really good at being good and following directions, I was a target probably because I was older and I was going to the band.

TS: And you were—

CS: I don't know if it had anything to do with my height.

TS: I don't know.

CS: Maybe. But—So it was the last day of basic training and he[?] was being inspected by an officer; something like that. And we were missing a person, I had to go get them, and I think I forgot to give a reporting statement. He said "That's all I needed to recycle you," and so he recycled me for two weeks.

But—And my parents had come for my graduation, and all this stuff, and at that point, you know, I was trying not to—I never got emotional at all. I thought, "This is a process. We're just going to get through it." When somebody got in my face and was

yelling at me, it's like I—it just completely blew right over my head. I—I thought, "Well, this is just temporary." You know, they hold up a candy—candy bar to the door and say, "Let me in." [both chuckle] I just thought that was so funny. I did take it seriously, but I thought, "Okay this was just a process we had to get through."

TS: Were they trying to bribe people to open the door with the candy bar?

CS: Well, you're supposed to show your ID and say—and you're supposed to say, "Can I see your authority to enter?" And they would just put whatever they had up there, and of course you're supposed to say, "I'm sorry. I need to see some ID."

TS: To see if you will challenge?

CS: That's right.

TS: I see.

CS: That's right. Or if you'll say, "Hey, I am T—You need to let me in right now."

TS: Right.

CS: And of course these kids would open the door.
"You're never supposed to open the door unless you—" So it was—

TS: I just hadn't heard about the candy bar. That's funny.

CS: Oh, yeah.

TS: I didn't get a candy bar.

CS: Oh well, we never got to eat it but—

TS: So you got recycled?

CS: I did, for two weeks. I bowled for two weeks. I became a very fine bowler.

TS: You are very determined aren't you?

CS: [laughing] Yes, that's right. So, I didn't know any—It didn't bother me. I thought, "Well, we'll just wait and see what happens next." [comment redacted]

TS: Well, it does sound, kind of, a little bit more harsh—well, actually, much more harsh than—

CS: Yeah. I heard he left a couple months later. He had a nervous breakdown or something.

TS: Interesting.

CS: But I also had—The next TI that I had was wonderful. He was really good. I—I didn't mind basic training at all. I thought it was great.

TS: Physically it was okay. Emotionally it got—

CS: Physically it was wonderful. Emotionally, yeah, there's that. But I hope that it's changed a little bit.

TS: For what way?

CS: Well, you know, there were a few people who probably should not have been in the military and they pushed them through. You know what I mean? I—A little unstable. It's hard to say in a stressful environment like that, but I remember a couple of these girls just having little meltdowns, and I'm thinking, "You need to go home," or physical problems and they pushed them through.

TS: Yes.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: At the time maybe they were just desperate to get folks in, but I would hope they'd be really, really—Well, I know there's a stringence—stringent process. You have to take a lot of tests and such, so maybe that's changed a little bit. But at the time I thought, "This person should not even be in the air force," and maybe they did fine but—

TS: Maybe once they got through basic they were okay.

CS: Yeah.

TS: But you never—Of course, then you see people that you're serving with that you're like—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —"Yeah, How'd you get through basic?" [chuckles]

CS: I know, I—Yeah, I did wonder that with some people.

TS: So you get to your first place and it's not someplace that you're—as far as the music, goes, right—

CS: Yes.

TS: —you're all that crazy about?

CS: Right, I was highly disappointed.

TS: Highly disappointed. But you're only there eight months, right?

CS: Right, and I knew there was hope in sight, and I knew there was an opportunity for me to go to Japan. I was so excited to go. I thought, "Well—" Oh, they did offer the option of getting out. You could, because they were shutting that unit down. You could cross-train, get out, or go to a new duty station.

TS: Oh, okay.

CS: And so, that's why I did have the option of getting out. That's what I had planned on doing.

TS: I see.

CS: But then I could either go to California or Japan. How cool is that, you know? "I would love to go to either one of those, so I'd better stay in."

TS: Okay.

CS: Well, as it turns out I couldn't go to Japan because I didn't have enough time in service and you needed enough rank, and so I—I didn't qualify for that. "California sounds pretty cool, I'll do that." So, I show up there and it's an old World War II barrack and—

TS: Where's it at?

CS: It's in Riverside, California.

TS: Do you know what the base was?

CS: March Air Force Base [now called March Air Reserve Base].

TS: Okay.

CS: Yes, and it's out in the middle of nowhereville, there's no potable water, and it's the middle of summer; it's very hot, you know, when I show up there. I'm sweating like a pig and I walk in and a trumpet player—I didn't know he played trumpet but you can figure because he—

I said "Hi, I'm looking for Colonel L.—" or, at the time Captain L. was his name.

He said, "Welcome to hell."

And I thought, "Oh lordy. This is going to be fun." And that guy is still in; [comment redacted].

TS: The one who said, "Welcome to hell."

CS: Yeah, "Welcome to hell." He's a character. Trumpet players have a very distinct personality [chuckles] and he certainly did.

TS: What kind of personality do they have?

CS: Oh, very arrogant, self-assured. I dated three of them.

TS: [chuckling]

CS: That was not good but—you know, they'll tell you how good they are. It's just kind of a general—

TS: It's like a pilot.

CS: Every—sort of, yes. Every instrument attracts certain people, I guess.

TS: Interesting.

CS: It is interesting, and I do kind of fit the profile for a flutist but that was an accident because I was supposed to play drums.

TS: That's right.

CS: Which I don't have a profile for at all. [both laughing] That wasn't really for me.

But anyway, so I met the commander there, [comment redacted]. I think he was a captain at the time, but an amazing musician. Oh, he had vision, amazing vision, for what he wanted to with his ensembles. And I was excited because there were some good musicians there and it was looking pretty good. There were more people. More old—older individuals. You know, most of the bands had young folk and maybe a few out of high school. Most had some college. And that's kind of the attraction for the bands. It was getting better and better. They were attracting better and better musicians.

And—I mean, there were a few that probably shouldn't have been there. But Colonel L.—I keep calling him colonel because he retired as a colonel but he was a captain at the time—he had great vision for his musicians. He pushed them so hard. He wanted a good group and so I think—I don't know how the commanders did it—and all the commanders were officers, all the musicians were enlisted—and he must have, kind of, traded people; "I want that guy. Give me that guy." Because at the time, you know, you switched bands all the time as you—as your rank increased you had to go and serve overseas, you had to go do this duty.

TS: So you had sort of a checklist of where you could be depending on your rank and time in service?

CS: Right. Well, you have your dream sheet—

TS: Right.

CS: —which determines where you want to go but you obviously never get to go where you want to go.

TS: What was on your dream sheet?

CS: All of the foreign places.

TS: Yeah, like Japan and Europe?

CS: Yes, yes exactly.

TS: And [Washington] D.C., was that still on your list?

CS: No.

TS: No?

CS: No—Well, I had been monitoring whether or not there were openings, but there weren't. There wasn't going to be.

TS: That's just like a place people stayed?

CS: Oh yes.

TS: Like later when you got to Colorado.

CS: They will stay until, you know, they're twenty years or beyond. And that's the way those jobs were because—very, very elite. But when I was in California—and like I said, I was only there for two years—but during that time we met so many celebrities and we did so

many high profile gigs because of the commander, because he knew exactly how to network.

TS: Can you talk about a favorite one that you did?

CS: That is where I met [President] Ronald [Wilson] Reagan, and that was the most exciting thing; the nicest man. Actually, I have a picture I will give to you of me, starry-eyed, shaking his hand.

TS: [chuckles] Great, okay.

CS: Horrible hair though; not him, me, back in the day.

TS: Okay.

CS: We got to play for all—for [Mikhail] Gorbachev when he was visiting The [Ronald] Reagan [Presidential] Library [and Center for Public Affairs]; played for all—there were five living presidents.

TS: Nixon?

CS: No.

TS: Oh, he was—Ford?

CS: Ford.

TS: Carter.

CS: Carter.

TS: Bush.

CS: Yes.

TS: Reagan.

CS: Yes. Oh, you're good. And then we played for the Pope; Pope John Paul II when he came into town. Our commander was Catholic so he was just loving on that. We played for *Air Force One*, the movie. He loved the—doing the movie. We—As a band we were in that movie.

TS: You were?

CS: *Air Force One*, I think it was—

TS: Yeah?

CS: —with Clint Eastwood. [Actor Harrison Ford actually starred in *Air Force One*]

TS: Sure.

CS: Yeah, and we did a—My ex-husband did a Mel Gibson movie. I mean, we were stand-ins for all of these movies because we were in California.

TS: What was that like?

CS: Kind of grueling. You know, you spend all day on the set doing stuff like that, but we were introduced to the high profile, you know, arts, the Hollywood thing, and that was kind of fun and exciting meeting celebrities. We met—

TS: Was there anybody you were like—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

CS: —Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver.

TS: Was there anybody you were like, "Oh my gosh, they were—they were just horrible?"

CS: No.

TS: Everybody was just really kind?

CS: Oh yeah. Well, you know, I don't know about your experience but mine, I felt so guilty all the time because people would say, "We're so thankful for you. Thank you for serving."

And I said "I'm—I'm just a musician. I don't play on the front lines or anything." So I felt a little guilty because I was having so much fun in California. I was playing a lot, I was meeting all these celebrities, I was getting to—I was getting to solo a lot. This commander took advantage of the fact that I wanted to play. I learned how to play Native American flute and was featured on a recording doing that. He did a lot of recording projects, which I loved. And in fact, there were so many musicians that stayed in California; they worked on soundtracks and they worked in studios, and these were really fine musicians. Finally I felt like, "Wow, this is kind of my thing." I got to do some recording work in professional studios there and tons of gigs and it was wonderful.

TS: So if I were to ask you, Cheryl—

CS: Yes.

TS: —tell me about a typical day.

CS: Yes.

TS: Did you really have one?

CS: Well, it depends on where—which location and what time in my life. But at that particular band, we lived in the building that we—that old World War II barracks.

TS: Oh right, yes.

CS: And so, the bottom floors were where we rehearsed, the second floor were the offices, and the third floor is where I lived. And—

TS: What'd you think of those conditions?

CS: Well, I didn't care. It was kind of strange because I was older. I should have had my own home by then, maybe had kids and a family and, you know—so I felt like, "Well, I guess this is the military life. This must be the way it's supposed to be."

TS: So you're, like, in the barracks?

CS: I live in the barracks which is, you know, not the best scenario. But I had my own room and, you know, I was there with twelve other people, maybe, that—

TS: On the floor?

CS: —eventually they moved on base, but during that time they were in that building. So I just lived, breathed air force, you know. That was my life and all the people I associated with were all the people I worked with, and we were just a small unit of, you know, people that all had the same vision, which was the commander's vision.

Now, he was kind of a tyrant. I mean, he had a bad temper and he wanted things exact—he was a great musician, wonderful piano player, but we had our share of drama and that was my introduction to commanders that—there were a lot of commanders that created a lot of drama. I just didn't know it yet because [my first commander—CS changed later] was so docile and wonderful.

TS: What kind of drama would be created?

CS: Well, for instance, my ex-husband was a clarinetist in the air force. That's what—I met him in California. And he did the operations for—He booked the gigs for the units, and the commander wanted a grand piano at every location. Now, keep in mind that the

sponsors were members of the community. Everything was sponsored. The air force did not pay for us to perform.

TS: Really?

CS: For instance, later in my job at the Air Force Academy, I was the ops [operations] director for the—the concert band. So I would call up a business; let's say I'd call a local newspaper. At the time the newspapers were great sponsors and I would say, "Hey, we have a great band that would like to perform for your community and we want to make it a free concert;" obviously, it has to be free. "And this is the night we want to do it and here's what we need. We need a stage. We need a grand piano. We need this many stands and chairs. We're going to need support here, et cetera." And so, that's how every gig went. And the person that had to arrange all that was at the mercy of the commander. It had to be exactly what he wanted. Not all commanders were like that. And then he also had to book all the hotels for the people. He had to get the transportation for all the people. And he had to make all the arrangements.

TS: So logistics officer mostly?

CS: Yes. Sometimes it was very easy to do, other times it was challenging, because you were in a community that just didn't have anything. So you'd have to drive—especially out there. It's a regional band so you stayed in that region. But you know, if you're traveling in Montana, there's only a few places in between. You would have to travel on a bus for six hours to play at the next location. It's definitely a young person's gig because we also unloaded the trucks. We set up. We did all of the manual labor and then we performed a concert.

Anyways, so this commander wanted things exactly the way he wanted them. And if he didn't get it he would just go off on the ops director, which happened to be my ex-husband at the time. And so, he didn't get a grand piano for one location. There was some kind of—And he—So he just went off on George, and George had had it; he'd been doing it for a long time.

Eventually he just blew up and said, "You cannot—You cannot make these demands on people. They're just blah blah blah," and he just—you know.

And the commander said, "Okay."

TS: After all that time.

CS: Yeah.

TS: He just—

CS: He didn't know. He just said "Yes, sir Yes, sir. Yes, sir." Finally he just had it and said "Well okay. Well, let's try and work something else out."

Well this commander also called me into his office once when I—I agonized about getting married to [redacted], who as I said was a clarinetist, because I took the

audition in Colorado not knowing if I would go or not and I knew they were shutting the band down in California. And once again, they give you the option, you can get out, you can go to another location, you can cross train. And I was enjoying it, I really loved playing, I was starting to really like it a lot, and you know, I was getting some rank and enjoying the process so I wanted to move; I wanted to go to Colorado. And [redacted] had asked me to get married and I said, "No." I said no probably about ten times. I didn't want to get married because I knew was I going to be leaving. And so, I won the audition and I told him, "Okay, we'll get married." We were separated for a year, making plans to get married. It was not—I should never—

TS: So you're in Colorado and he's still in California?

CS: Yes. Yeah. And he was going to get out.

TS: Oh, okay.

CS: Yeah. He had planned to get out. It wasn't his thing. [comment redacted]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: You're not married yet. You don't have kids yet.

CS: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CS: So, I just felt that pressure and—Anyway, so I got the job in Colorado and talk about amazing musicians. Oh my gosh. Everybody in that band had a degree in music or they were, you know—and I guess at that time there were so many things changing in the career field, as they still are.

TS: About what time did you get there? It was, like, in the early nineties, I think, right?

CS: Let's see. No. I was—In 1990 I joined. That was '94.

TS: Mid-nineties then?

CS: Ninety-four-ish—right.

TS: So you're close to your reenlistment date?

CS: Right.

TS: Okay.

CS: I had to reenlist in order to go.

TS: I see. Okay.

CS: And that commander—Colonel G. was his name; another amazing musician with wonderful vision. I really adored him. But he said, "Well, we want to offer you the job, and here's what you're going to be doing."

So it wasn't just—I mean, all of the jobs, it's not just playing. You know, you don't just sit there and play. So a typical day at that job, and things changed as we progressed, but you go to a rehearsal from nine to noon, and then you have a lunch break, and then in the afternoon you back into rehearsal from one or one-thirty until four. And you were—but you weren't just in one group. He encouraged playing a lot of different instruments, using different talents that you might have. I've always wanted to sing, so one of my best friends was a vocalist and she helped me, kind of, to develop my voice a little bit. So he allowed me—he let me sing. Of course, I played the flute in the concert band. I also played in a woodwind quintet. It was a wonderful quintet. It was probably my favorite experience because of the group of five people and we got to pick our own music. There was little more freedom because, you know, when you play in a concert band there's a certain set. You got to play, you know, the Armed Forces Medley and you got to play Stars and Stripes and you got to play patriotic tunes. You got to do—mix it up a little bit.

TS: Mostly military type songs?

CS: No, not necessarily.

TS: No?

CS: No. He, another great visionary, you know, utilized some of the really amazing composers. They commissioned composers to come in and write pieces.

TS: Oh, really? Wow.

CS: Oh, yeah, wonderful. So we got to do a lot of really fun literature. Got to do a lot of soloing with the band and I also played—let me think—a flute and guitar thing. I did some of that. As I said, I got to sing. I didn't ever pick up the saxophone again because I just was never very good at that. [comment redacted] [both chuckling]

TS: Did you ever get the piano down?

CS: No, no. I was never—I mean, the piano players—oh my gosh, amazing piano players. There's a hotel in Colorado Springs called the Broadmore Hotel and it's the—a six star hotel, and actually, one of the com—composers, arrangers for the Air Force Band at the

time, is now in charge of the music at this hotel, and he was [a] brilliant, brilliant arranger. So they—they encouraged you to do that. You write music, you arrange music, but not only that, I was also starting to book gigs. That's—I really have an interest in doing that. Some people—Some of the musicians there—All the musicians, some work in the library and they do that, some do operations, and some work in the finance. Some—It's self-supported, completely.

TS: Oh, okay.

CS: So you double duty.

TS: It's like a business.

CS: Additional duties, yes. And you really—They like to shuffle you around, because when you do your EPRs [Enlisted Performance Reports] it has to look like you are well-rounded, and so they move people around to various positions. And so, I was excited about that because I wanted to do other stuff. I really enjoyed that aspect of the job too. So he allowed me to book gigs for the concert band and—so I was just really, really enjoying my career. And things started to change for me. I mean, obviously I had a lot of personal things going on in my life but I also started to finally realize the effect that I was having as—not only a musician, but as an airman. I started to feel very proud of being in the air force. Oh my gosh.

TS: What kind of triggered that, do you think?

CS: Well, that's a really good question. We performed for thousands and thousands of people. And when we would play for the armed forces the Armed Forces Medley, all the veterans would stand up at various times. And of course, people would come backstage after the concerts, and I met the most remarkable, mostly men, who served in World War II, Vietnam, and it was amazing. I would hear their stories and I started to develop so much pride that I was part of that legacy. And I felt so undeserving of it. These are people who gave their life, and we hear it all the time, "Oh, let's stand for these people that gave their life," Well, I really felt that. I really understood it. I started to really grasp, you know, the role of the military, and that I got to meet real people who served. And we started playing at VA [Veterans Affairs] homes that—the most amazing jobs that we did.

And so, I became so emotionally attached to airmen and to the process of what we were doing, how we were serving, and I realized we were making a difference. And so, that was a huge turning point in my career, where I realized, "I am making a difference in some lives and I get to perform. What!? That's the best thing ever." And so, I found my niche, I loved it, and I was staying in; I was going to make a career of it.

In the meantime, I had so many personal crises. It's weird how one kind of goes to hell in a hand basket and the other one just flourishes. I mean, I was really doing well in my job, but my husband and I split. [comment redacted], and we had our two small children. I was TDY [temporary duty] all the time. He was home with them. [comment redacted] My parents moved to Colorado.

TS: Oh, they did?

CS: Yeah, they did. My mom was diagnosed with colon cancer in—in Louisiana. Things were doing poorly. My dad had to retire and I had my schizophrenic sister that was living with them, and so they all moved to Colorado to be near us. And I was hopeful that my mom would recover; you know, obviously hoping the best. That was just an amazing miracle that happened. They sold their house. They moved here. She got chemo[therapy]. I don't know how it happened. We found them a house. Did I say here? I meant in Colorado.

TS: Yeah, no, I understand. It's okay.

CS: I meant Colorado. They got set up. My sister got a beautiful house to live in, a group home. Everything fell into place. We were just so blessed. And she, my mother, had to have an operation to try and remove the cancer which had already metastasized but—and they could not afford that. And so, my dad went down to reconcile the bill and they said—they said, "Well, it's already covered, somebody paid for it" And to this day we don't know who paid that bill.

TS: Oh my gosh.

CS: Obviously, I think it might have been her bridge club friends or something. But, I mean, it was just one blessing after another, and so when they moved to Colorado we had a wonderful time. She lived for five years after her diagnosis and we had so much fun. Then my dad's mother got really ill and she moved to Colorado in a home that was close by us; really beautiful assisted living place. And so, that was a really wonderful time that came to an end in one year. It was just—My mother died, my husband had to leave, and my grandmother passed away. And during all this turmoil I was pregnant. I had, you know, the two boys, and the air force was amazing. Oh my gosh.

I told my chief, I said "Listen, my mom's dying. I want to be with her. I want to sit with her while she's having chemo."

And they said, "Take all the time you need," you know. "Just go ahead and do what you have to do." [comment redacted] And they were so gracious. It was amazing.

So I was there when she went to hospice and when she passed away. Probably the most traumatic thing ever in my entire life was the death of my mother. But like I said, the air force provided counseling for me, they provided counseling for my children, you know, as I was going through the divorce.

TS: Yeah.

CS: And, you know, I feel like that year was just—I was so overwhelmed with so much and I got through it, and if I can do that and maintain my job and everything, you know—It was amazing.

TS: Yeah.

CS: I can't believe I went through that, and of course, I healed but—

TS: Well, the idea—So—So you were a single woman.

CS: Yes.

TS: Then you were a married woman, and then a married woman with children, and then you were a single mother.

CS: Yeah.

TS: So you had all these different kind of lives—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —as a woman in the air force.

CS: Yeah. Well—And you know, those experience that—it's weird—You may have experienced this, too, being in a men's environment. I had a different personality at work than I did at home, you know? I was sweet, loving mother at home, but—but in my unit I was no nonsense and I had to put on my pants there, because—you were asking earlier about sexual harassment. Well, it was totally there, so you really had to, you know, stick up for yourself and the women in the band. Actually, when I got to the academy there were only [four—CS corrected later] of us.

TS: Out of how many?

CS: I want to say sixty.

TS: And what year was this? Somewhere mid-nineties.

CS: Right. Now, there were three—there were two women vocalists but they weren't actually in the marching band, I don't think. Well, no, I guess they were so there were like four.

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: Well, I don't think it was very appealing to women.

TS: Because?

CS: Well, there's a persona, you know, that, "Oh, women in the air force, oh, they have big muscles and mustaches." That's right, a lot of kids, when we went into the school, that was their thought process. "Well, you know, those women are tough. I don't want to do that."

And then women thought, "Well, I'm going to be sexually harassed. I don't want to do that, it's just—" or "You have to work out all the time and, you know, I don't want to do that." There were preconceived ideas about what it was like, and I just didn't care about that stuff at all. And the other flutist was a woman. She was the only one in the ensemble. The vocalists, there were—you know, there were two vocalists; they were women. But—And she was wonderful, and I just—[redacted], very fine mentor, and she was passionate about the mission of the [United States] Air Force Academy. She loved supporting the cadets and she—but she had two kids, too, and so she showed me how to do both. She was wonderful. When she went TDY she would record herself reading and singing to her kids, [redacted]—her husband would play that for them. She was remarkable. She still is.

TS: Yeah?

CS: And she's a—a breast cancer survivor. She went through that too. I just adored her. But—

TS: Well, when you were—May I interrupt you for a second? So when you were—Can you give me an example of the sexual harassment issues?

CS: Yeah. Well, like I said, I was a different person at work and I really wanted to prove myself and I wasn't emotional. I didn't want to—anybody to perceive me as a dumb blonde or, you know, a pushover, and so I was pretty serious about my mission. And we were—I was the only one on loading crew—The only woman on this loading crew, and so I totally destroyed my body, lifting huge—I mean, I don't know what I was thinking. I really regret it.

TS: Because you didn't want anybody to help you and—

CS: I didn't mind the help but the men were the pigs. I mean, they were saying, "Oh, we got a woman on loading crew [grumbling]." And so I had something to prove.

In fact we were on—we were in a freight elevator and we were pushing stuff up somewhere and this guy, when I first got there, said, "Hey, you know, I don't like women in my—I don't like women on my loading crew."

And I said, "Oh, that's too bad."

He said "Yeah, I don't like women in my air force either."

And I said, "Well, that's really too bad because, you know, we're here in full force." I didn't know if he was serious or not because he was an unusual person.

TS: Where was he in rank; higher, lower than you?

CS: Higher rank, yeah.

TS: Okay.

CS: And I did ask someone else. I said, "He just said that. Is—Is he serious?"
And they said, "Who knows." [comment redacted] But you know, it didn't bother me at all and we all worked together. I just kind of blew things off. There was no—I wasn't ever backed into a corner by somebody and nobody touched me unwarranted or—but, you know, there always innuendoes, constant jokes, and—

TS: Do you think that changed a little over time? I mean, did it—

CS: No. I don't think so.

TS: It stayed constant from the whole twenty years you were in?

CS: Yeah. Oh yeah.

TS: Really?

CS: Yeah. Well, you have to also realize that we were together so much. I mean, we were together every single day and then we were on the road for months at a time together, and we were together for twenty years, some of us.

TS: Well, that's true. And I guess one of the things people have said about the great thing for them about the military was that if they were in a place and they were dealing with supervisors, or somebody they really didn't like, they knew that within a year or two, because—

CS: They would be gone, yeah.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —moves around every three—they would move; they would have a new place to go. And they said that was actually one of the great things about it.

CS: Yes, I would agree with that.

TS: But you had—But you were—It was different for you because—

CS: Yeah, but we did—we did switch supervisors and such. I did have a supervisor that had pigeonedholed—pigeonholed me as a dumb blonde kind of thing, and I confronted him on it and said, "I—That is not who I am and I will totally prove it to you." But he just—he wouldn't let go of that. He had me pigeonholed as this particular kind of person. And so I thought I had to—I could not win and I was very thankful when our supervisors changed over because he did—he, on my EPRs, reflected his opinion of me and it was really, really hard on me and—So there was that. I felt like I did have to prove myself and

I definitely cannot be emotional. Even when my mom passed away, I went right back to work. I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't want any kind of compassion or—you know, let's just not—let's not go there. Because I felt like I had to be very stoic, you know? I mean, I had wonderful friends who were very supportive. In the girls' bathroom I would just weep. We were all laying on the floor, and [redacted] of course; I had amazing companions. And don't get me wrong, there was sexual harassment both ways, you know; we both joked.

TS: Dished it out, in a way.

CS: Yeah. But there were also a lot of marriages that broke up. There was a lot promiscuity. I think because it was unusual. Musicians are very emotional people, and yes, you had to be disciplined, you have to maintain these standards, et cetera, but—but then you have these partiers. I'm sorry, but they—You know, we had a jazz band. We had jazz musicians. We had a rock band, a country band; any kind of music, you know, we represented. And these—they were musicians, but [throat clearing]—and that's a different kind of person, you know. A free spirit, if you will. But also that environment kind of creates a love-hate kind of thing, I guess. [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: But there was—there was a lot of that. I don't know if that's an air force thing or if it was just our unit, but there was a lot of that and—

TS: I was going to ask you about the idea that you had—and many musicians, you said, had some sort of college education—

CS: Yes.

TS: —university education, and typically in the military if you do, you become an officer.

CS: Right.

TS: But most of you are enlisted.

CS: All of us.

TS: All of us.

CS: Yeah; didn't have a choice.

TS: Except for the commander?

CS: Right, the conductors. Yeah, the commanders are conductors.

TS: The conductors are the—that's the [unclear].

CS: Yeah. That bothered us.

TS: Did it? That's—

CS: Yes.

TS: Okay, tell me about that then?

CS: Well, compared to the other people in the air force we had a sweet cushy job and when anybody else heard, "That's all you do for a living? That's it? You're so spoiled rotten—" and—and we were; we were so spoiled rotten. But on the other hand, I don't think that they—they didn't realize that our lifelong pursuit is to be a professional musician andwe spent every last penny trying to better ourselves and get the degrees and study with the best people in the world, and I wasn't alone. I was surrounded by amazing musicians who did that.

And so, I think, as you recall I said, there's a struggle between your ego and being very selfish about studying that versus helping people and showing that to the world and everybody—every person felt that way. And in fact, I would say most of the classically trained musicians that I was stationed with struggled with their selves saying, "I'm just in the air force. I'm just an air force musician—I'm not in the Chicago Symphony." Everybody wanted to be more than that and they felt like they settled. And in fact we really didn't. I was surrounded by the best musicians in the world. I really, really was. I

am so blessed to have had that experience because I played in other organizations and you have intonation problems constantly because people can't get along. I mean, the symphony orchestra was a completely different animal. And we didn't have a choice. We were going to be together forever, so we got to get along. We have to be able to blend together and settle our differences. And so—

TS: Did leadership matter there for that?

CS: Well, and that's why my husband got out; [chuckles] my current husband. He was in for twelve years and—Well, that's one of the reasons. We had some pretty poor leadership in terms of making the right decisions, musically speaking. And discipline—disciplining people when it was—there wasn't an even playing field in terms of what was going on. We saw a lot of people make bad decisions that were in leadership positions that totally shouldn't have been there. And it—that was the frustration. You know, we—you don't have a whole lot of power when you're an airman or a tech sergeant, and yet you see something going on that's just totally inappropriate or doesn't make sense or is musically horrible, and a person is granted a higher rank because they've been there long enough and they desire it because of their time. And that is frustrating, you know? And we saw that time and time again, and you—that's just a battle that you can't—

TS: So it's like a more of a seniority system rather than a merit system?

CS: It was. It should not have been but the commanders—

TS: Allowed it?

CS: Yeah. Yeah, and there were some people that shouldn't have been there and they just were permitted and stayed until the very bitter end and—and so it's such a small group. Everybody knows everything about everyone and that's a huge disadvantage, and of course, an advantage because you make lifelong friends and you help each other. Being in a position when I—toward the end when I was in charge of the Academy Winds [a quartet ensemble of the Air Force Academy Band] and I was in charge of the concert band—I was the NCOIC [Non Commissioned Officer in Charge] for both groups—I had a huge opportunity to make a difference in those groups and to mentor people, [comment redacted]. I saw some horrible leadership and I didn't have any power over it; I couldn't do anything about it. And so, I took that and made a difference. And I think the people that I left—when I left, I think they continued that; giving people their own power to make decisions. If there's a conflict in a group and there's name calling and it's getting really ugly and people are passionate about what they believe musically should happen, then I knew how to dissipate it and I think that was from my music education, you know. Being able—Knowing how to—

TS: Deescalate a problem that's brewing?

CS: Yeah. It wasn't from any leadership that I got, because it was, "Now, you shut up. You listen to me. I'm the authority here." What? That's just not going to work, and I know that's not going to work. We had a commander who would say, "You need to respect my authority because of my rank." He was constantly doing this.

TS: Pointing to his shoulder board?

CS: Right. And he was not getting any respect. [comment redacted]

TS: So he tried to use his power—

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: —to influence people.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: That's ok.

CS: But that was very stressful. Even in that position I was able to use that to betterment of the people under me; the people that I supervised. You know, trying to encourage them. And so, all around I just feel like I—the person that I am today I could not have done it because of my—without my air force experience. And—And I can totally say I loved the air force. I loved it.

TS: Well, you talk about—in general terms about poor leadership, but did you have a mentor that, you know, you looked up to that you said, "Yeah, you know, I think I—this person."

CS: Well, it would have to be my last commander, I think; Colonel L. was his name. And I had been there—I actually worked for him as his NCOIC of concert band and I absolutely respected his musicianship and I knew he was kind of a perfectionist and I was not so much. You know, I never have been. But I think he—and don't get me wrong, I wasn't like completely like, "That's good enough. Let's just do it." It wasn't like that. I would just—I wasn't as hard on myself as most musicians are; like, "Oh, I missed that note. Dang it." I wouldn't—You know, that wasn't—

TS: You could move on from that?

CS: Yeah, I could totally move on, and if the big picture was there I was okay with that. If somebody made a mistake I wasn't going to be like, "You ruined it for all of us."

I would be like, "It's all right. We'll get it. Don't worry about it," you know? And so—so we worked together really, really well and he is now in [Washington] D.C. I retired and he went to D.C. to command that band.

TS: I see.

CS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CS: And so, he was a wonderful influence. I just admired his incredible professionalism. He wanted a—an amazing product but he was not hard on people in terms of beating them down. He was an encourager, and he handled conflicts really, really well because he allowed me the power—I mean, he gave me power to handle conflicts which he knew I could do. And that's huge for a commander to do that, because usually they're—

TS: They want the control.

CS: —micromanagers, and he was not like that at all. He gave me—he trusted me. And because he did that I totally wanted to work for him and I totally wanted to do my very best and so that was wonderful. I loved working with him. So—

TS: Did you ever have any women as role models or that were like, you know, in a superior position to you for—like in a commander—at a commander level or something like that?

CS: No.

TS: All men?

CS: All men. It was a men's world, no question about it. The closest thing would be my sup—first supervisor at the Air Force Academy, which would be Laura Gomez, who was a wonderful mother. She—She knew that she was in a—a boy's world and she, I guessed—I guess was the—the best one to show me how to live in that world without compromising and without buying into the, you know, boys—good old boy club, if you will. So I—You know, I certainly respected her position there, but I really didn't see a whole lot of women in superior positions. There weren't any seniors, women, none.

TS: Not even at The Academy?

CS: No, no. As I said, you know, when I first got there, there—it was just the [fours—CS corrected later] of us in that unit in the marching positions. Now, that certainly has changed. I mean, we would audition. It became more and more elite. As I said, we started out with twenty-four bands, they cut to twelve—and I think they're cutting still. [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: How it was changing?

CS: Well, not only that. You know, they were trying to decide whether the academies should even have bands and so—or whether it should be a premier group; premier being that we got to travel throughout the United States. The band also went to Poland. They went to Canada. I mean, we traveled everywhere and—

TS: Did you go there?

CS: I was pregnant when they went to Poland.

TS: Ah.

CS: And then I was pregnant when they went to Canada, and totally not planned. I would have loved to go on those trips, but no, I didn't get to go there. But I did go to every state in the United States except for Alaska and Hawaii.

TS: Really?

CS: Yeah, although some people did get to go to Hawaii, and there is a band in Alaska but it's a brass group and I think they cut it. They just cut it recently.

TS: Okay.

CS: I think. So you know, there was a lot of politics; "Should we have bands in the military? It's such a waste of tax payer dollars." And we were having to justify our jobs. And the commander at the time—Well, let's start with Colonel G..

When I first got there he was the defender and did a wonderful job presenting his case that, "Yes, we absolutely have to have this. Look what we are doing in terms of community service and community outreach." And we did. I mean, we worked. We did over six hundred jobs a year with all of our units. We were working so much and—you know, a lot of community outreach, a lot of troop morale things, [comment redacted].

TS: No?

CS: No, and I used to joke, "If you ever hear of a flute player going over—going into battle, we know we're in trouble."

TS: [chuckling]

CS: And that was a joke but eventually—

TS: Yeah?

CS: —toward the end of my career, that was starting to happen and I wasn't very excited about it. I really wasn't. I had four kids and I—Well, at the time I only had three and I didn't necessarily want to do that. It wasn't what I signed—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Where were they being sent?

CS: Afghanistan and, you know, all the "stans."

TS: As a—As a musician?

CS: Yes, only musician. Yes, I never did anything other than that.

TS: Okay.

CS: And—

TS: But they—But not until—not until just recently, then.

CS: That's right, yeah. Well, and for the academy bands, sadly, they did lose their special status the year I left. It became a field band, and that's really sad for Colorado Springs. It's really sad for the musicians that I left behind because it was such an elite group of musicians. Now, that's not to say the musicians in the field bands aren't great now, because they are. It has become such a precious job because there's less jobs.

TS: Right.

CS: And you—My husband's a good example. He auditioned for a symphony in upstate New York. What do they call—Buffalo.

TS: Okay.

CS: Okay. After he got out he said, "Well, I'll try some auditions, see what happens." He auditioned, he got it—got the job—and he thought, "I don't know; Buffalo; cold. I don't think—" and then it folded, bam, gone, and that's what's happening everywhere. We have all these music—

TS: Because of resources?

CS: Yes, oh yeah.

TS: Yeah?

CS: [comment redacted]—We have—We had two of them from [The] Julliard [School] that came and they were in a field band. And so, they're looking for a place to perform and—

TS: Kind of in the place you were in twenty-some years ago, right?

CS: Exactly, and they probably go through the exact same mental process; "Well, I'm just going to do my time and blah, blah, blah, and then I'm getting out." And then twenty years later they are addicted to the air force, you know? They love it. They love the job there.

TS: Is that it; you were addicted?

CS: I would say that was probably the case. I just—It was such a joy, you know, going on the road. It was also very hard of course, you know, with all the loading and unloading. [comment redacted]

TS: Yeah.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: Did you ever feel that you were—You talked about the one supervisor, commander that—I'm not sure if he was a commander or not but—that gave you poor evaluation reports?

CS: Supervisor, yeah.

TS: Did you feel like you were—it was—you were being discriminated against?

CS: Yes.

TS: In that sense?

CS: Well, only because I knew him really well and he was a chauvinist pig. I knew that.

TS: Yeah?

CS: And I knew that's what he was thinking and I—

TS: Do you think he did that to other women?

CS: Yes.

TS: So the women—you had, like, four, right?

CS: Well, at the time we started getting more and more women and he had to absolutely change his attitude. He was getting in trouble for it.

TS: Did he change his attitude?

CS: No.

TS: No?

CS: He retired.

TS: Oh.

CS: [chuckling] No.

TS: Do you think the new generation of men that were coming through had a different attitude?

CS: Oh absolutely. You know, we got so much training. I mean, it was endless training about sexual harassment, and nobody really took it seriously until, you know—

TS: About when do you think?

CS: —it all came out; all the sexual harassment that was going on. I mean, really horrible things.

TS: When do you think it came out?

CS: Well, I'm going to say around 2005, maybe—maybe 2000. We all started getting training—training in suicide prevention and sexual harassment and mental wellness and cessation of smoking and anger management, and these were all programs the air force was really proactive, trying to help their airmen to cope in stressful environments. Not that I was—I was kind of in a stress—in my own—All the musicians had their stress; "Well, that's got to be a good performance."

TS: It's relative to your life, right?

CS: Exactly. But we weren't naïve to the stress that real airmen were facing on the front lines, and so did we take it seriously? Eh, you know—

TS: Maybe not.

CS: Maybe not. We had anger management issues and the commander could say, "You need to go and take this course," [comment redacted]. But we did have our own, you know, suicide attempts. We did have our own crisis just like the air force.

TS: Everybody else because—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —you know, you're still part of the larger—

CS: Yeah, environment, exactly.

TS: —culture, too, right?

CS: Yeah.

TS: Well, did you see that in your twenty years, anyways, that the air force culture changed?

CS: Absolutely.

TS: What ways?

CS: Oh yeah. Well, the uniform had a lot to do with it because—

TS: The uniform?

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: Now, did you have to wear a uniform every day?

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: Okay.

CS: Yeah. We mostly wore BDUs [Battle Dress Uniform], but we had to wear the blues on Fridays.

TS: Did you have to—like, formation or anything?

CS: We did.

TS: Every day or, like, weekly?

CS: It was a weekly thing. We were not like the army where we would all work out together until five years into—into my—

TS: And then you did?

CS: Then we did. Once a week we'd have PT [physical training] together. We never did that before, and I'm telling you it was really pathetic. Every week a different person would break something. We just were not athletes. [both chuckle] We had the best athletes and the worst, you know what I—

TS: I see, yeah.

CS: So funny. We had marathon runners in the band because, you know, highly disciplined people, and then we had people that would break their ankle or—It was hysterical. We would just all say, "Okay, who's going to break what?"

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Quite an eclectic mix of people, I'm sure.

CS: Yeah, exactly. And so, we only started that towards the end but in terms of culturally, you know—like I said, the uniform; the women had to wear skirts in formation, and we had to wear this certain hat, and we had to wear—I was telling the kids when we'd go play school concerts, women in the military used to have to carry lipstick and a compact and they used to have to do—you know, have certain pantyhose that they had to wear. And I said, "Times have changed, young ladies, because that is not the air force now. You are treated as an equal. You're—You have the opportunity to go all the way up to the top ranks." And these are things these girls need to know because I would highly recommend it to any girl, and I do. Every day I meet someone—

TS: The air force?

CS: Yeah, only the air force. I don't recommend the army or navy. I just don't—I don't know enough about—

TS: Well, it's what you know.

CS: It's what I know.

TS: Right.

CS: That's right. But yes, time—things have changed so much, in that career field and also across the board in terms of being in the military as a woman, and I'm—I'm thrilled. I'm so excited. The air force, I can't speak highly enough about it; how it's run and how they want to be on the cutting edge of technology in the musical world and also, you know, in every world, every aspect. They are the first, I feel like, to embrace change; you know, positive change in equality, and racially as well. I mean, obviously there's racism

everywhere but I totally did not experience that in the air force. Everybody had an opportunity. [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted] I never felt discriminated against in terms of—of being able to progress. In fact, I was totally up for promotion to senior master sergeant when I got out.

TS: Oh, you were?

CS: That was an agonizing decision, that whole thing.

TS: Oh. Sure.

CS: Because—I told you on the phone a little bit about it, when we found out my group, the Academy Winds, small group, was going to be deployed to do embassies and to perform for the kids over there, I thought "Oh, this is perfect for me and for my group." It was a very eclectic group. We played jazz. We had a percussionist that did the mallets. We all sang and we played penny whistle. We played guitar. I mean, we did all kinds of music. It would have been perfect. And I got pregnant, which—[redacted]. It was a miracle. I just totally didn't expect that to happen, and I thought I would miscarry so I wasn't going to tell anyone. And so, I just went on with the training. We weren't getting our shots yet. We weren't doing anything really physical at that point. And I did share with Colonel L. what was happening, and he was wonderful. He said, "Well, don't worry about it. You know, we'll just keep it under wraps for a while and, you know, see what happens." And so, I didn't miscarry, and I had to tell the other flute player because she was going to take my place because that group was going.

TS: And where was it that they were going to deploy to?

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: The Middle East?

CS: Yeah, and it wasn't the safest. It really, really wasn't.

TS: Okay.

CS: We had sent Wild Blue Country [another Air Force Academy ensemble band]—it was a country band—over there and they had near misses. They were totally protected by the people who really knew what they were doing that weren't carrying instruments. [chuckles] And they had an amazing, amazing time. They came back and showed us a video and—and pictures and we were all so excited about the opportunity.

And so, the other flute player wasn't very happy, you know. She didn't really want to go and I felt bad for her but she did an amazing job and, you know, they went. And I felt like I missed out on something but I had a different—I was headed in a different direction completely. I was very close to retirement, and of course we had just tested for promotion and I knew that I was next; I had the opportunity to stay in. I even knew that I had the opportunity to pass on the GI Bill to one of my kids, or all of them. I only had to stay one more year in order to do that but I just had a calling. I just felt compelled that it was time. I really needed to get out at twenty [years], and you know, my family just kind of needed me.

TS: The age of your kids and things that?

CS: Yeah, and—

TS: And what was your husband doing at that time?

CS: He was a professor at CSU—CSU [Colorado State University] Pueblo. He taught music technology and orchestration and he was a tuba instructor. He wasn't quite ready to give up the music stuff. He was playing with the symphony, and he was just trying to figure out what he wanted to do. He—His background is music, of course, but during that time he decided to use his GI Bill and he got a MBA [Master of Business Administration] in Finance. He's a brilliant student; made straight A's and just excelled.

Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: He's the perfectionist right?

CS: Yes.

TS: Okay.

CS: And he did make a A-minus in statistics. But we don't like to talk about that.

TS: He doesn't have to read that part of the transcript. [both chuckling]

CS: Yeah. He just agonized over that A-minus.

TS: You know, he's probably best at statistics now, though, because of that A-minus, I would bet.

CS: [comment redacted] But he's a brilliant man. He can do anything he wants and he actually handled the money in the band when he was—he was in. He was a good finance guy but—but he couldn't hang with the inconsistencies in terms of the—who gets promoted and who doesn't. He just needed to get out. He just didn't like that. But that was his lifelong dream to be in a military band so he did it, and then he went on his merry way. But he—he wasn't enjoying teaching. He was teaching kids who would sometimes show up to class. They had a full ride, and they didn't show up, and he just couldn't believe it because that was just not him. And he was—he's an incredible cyclist; he was cycling a lot. So he was fulfilling his fantasies, if you will; you know, "I'm going to do professional cycling," and he was doing recording stuff and he was playing in a symphony and he was, you know, trying to figure what he wanted—which route he wanted to go. And so, we had this beautiful, amazing baby and my friend who is deployed right now, she was there when I had Olivia.

TS: So this is Olivia?

CS: Yeah, Olivia.

TS: Right, okay.

CS: And so, I—Todd and I didn't know what we wanted to do or where we wanted to live [after I retired—CS added], so my husband and my son took a little road trip—my oldest son—out here to North Carolina, because his family's in Virginia and my family's in Tennessee; the extended family that we have left. And so, we tried to find something in this area. They looked—They fell in love with Boone, and it was just kind of crazy what we did. [Todd—CS changed] saved up a year's income, and he was gigging a lot so he had, you know, quite a bit saved up, and we packed up all our stuff and we sold our house in a week, because we priced it just right, and we sold my dad's house, and we put everything in storage and we decided just to move out here and—

TS: And you didn't have a place to stay?

CS: We didn't have—We didn't have any place to live and we didn't have jobs.

TS: And you didn't know anybody here?

CS: We didn't know anyone; not a soul. He's got his MBA and we're thinking—

TS: You're musicians, okay.

CS: Yeah, very bohemian.

TS: [chuckling]

CS: And so, it was very hard, of course, leaving. Oh man, that was hard but we knew we wanted to move on. My mom passed away and we—his mother had passed away during that period of time, too, and we just felt like we needed to start over and just start a new life. I was excited about change. You know, we had been there for eighteen years together. So we just thought, "Well, we'd better do it before those boys gets much older." My oldest one was a freshman and so we would be pulling him out of high school, and there were a lot of gangs and there were drugs and, you know, they had the shooting in Columbine. We thought, "It's just probably not—" It wasn't necessarily a dangerous place to live but we thought, "We could be better."

So when we moved here we ended up renting a house in Winston-Salem. We did a lot of research into the schools and there were no schools in Winston that we wanted the kids to go to. The best school was Northwest [Guilford High School] as far as we could tell, and so we wanted to move to this area. In the meantime, my husband was interviewing for banking positions. He thought he wanted to go that route because he's really good at finance. He was doing some day trading very successfully. My—Actually, my dad does that too; he's really, really good at it. And so we thought, "Well, yeah, start this new career. It'll be great." And he could not find a job. Of course, it was the worst time in the world to be looking for a job. You know, the bottom—

TS: Two thousand ten?

CS: Yeah.

TS: Yes.

CS: Nine—

TS: Two thousand nine.

CS: Yeah, nine.

TS: Yeah, that was pretty—

CS: Yeah, horrible. What were we thinking? Can we just pause?

TS: Oh, yeah. Okay, we're taking another break.

CS: Okay.

TS: Okay.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, we're back. All right, Cheryl. Was there—Was there any kind of decoration or award that you received that you're particularly proud of? Even, like, for a unit? Did you guys ever like—

CS: Well, we did actually get a lot of unit awards. But I wasn't really into that whole thing; I really wasn't. In fact, I think that's why I wasn't promoted. I wasn't—I didn't take it very seriously. I never did. [chuckles] You know, when we—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Didn't take what very seriously?

CS: The testing—

TS: Okay.

CS: —and the promotion. You know, people were so bent out of shape doing—"Oh, I got to get promoted." But I guess that's where my lack of perfectionism came in. I was doing the job that—

TS: Or ambition for that, you know?

CS: [coughing] I was not ambitious in terms of the rank and moving up the corporate ladder, in that respect. It's not because I didn't think I could make a difference, because I did. Even as, you know, a lower ranking person, I felt like I—I could make a difference. Not everybody could, but I felt like I could; I was pretty outspoken. But I just didn't want to get all involved in all that politics. [comment redacted]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: No, I had no desire. I wanted to perform. I wanted to be in the—you know, in the trenches, if you will, as a musician.

TS: So you've described a lot, actually, of your relations with your peers.

CS: Yes.

TS: In—Just in—kind of, in the talk we've had. But how would you describe those relationships? Like if you had to specifically say, "Here's how I—" you know, "how I was with my supervisors, here's how I was with my peers" and also the people that you supervised?

CS: [comment redacted] When I was supervising, I really could analyze what people wanted, and I could absolutely try and find what their desire was; why were—why were they doing the things they were doing. [coughing] Sorry.

TS: So you could tap into what motivated them.

CS: Yeah, thank you. See, you're good.

TS: Okay.

CS: And so, I think that's how I could be a really good encourager to people and I just kind of had a gift there. I knew I did and I think that's why I was put in positions of authority at a younger rank, or at a lower rank. And I think that they wanted me to get promoted; they really did. And I think I would've really done well, but I had to pick my—

TS: Right.

CS: You know?

TS: Your battles that you were going to fight.

CS: Yeah.

TS: Did you supervise a lot of men as well as women? Mostly men, probably, I would guess.

CS: [coughing] [Both men and women, actually—CS corrected later]

TS: All men.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: I had to break up a lot of conflicts among approximately fifty people and there were a lot of conflicts. And I was just—I think I handled it differently than a lot of militaristic kind of—like, "You—Here's the regulation and you need to follow it exactly." I really didn't take that approach because I took a more humanistic approach, I guess, because of my background. People are more than just the regulations and you need to find out why people are motivated to do certain things. And so, I felt like that was—I was in the right place at the right time in terms of mentoring people. And as far as people in authority over me, I had a great relationship with every one of them [redacted].

TS: Right.

CS: Because I was really communicative and I said, "This is exactly what we need to do to fix this problem," or "I have a conflict with this" or "Here's what I want to do. Here's what I see—Here's how I see my vision." In fact my last supervisor, Steve K., wonderful man, really wanted me to stay, really wanted me to get promoted, even wrote my last EPR with, you know, flying colors—and that wasn't my heart's desire. I wasn't going to do it and, you know, I told him point blank, "That's just not what I'm going to do. So—I've got to think of my family first, and I've got to go." So—

TS: Yeah.

CS: Great support. I would say that I was an anomaly in terms of not letting the rank stuff get to me. It didn't bother me, you know. Sure, some of it was unfair and there were favorites and you see that all the time, but it didn't bother me. I just did my job to the best of my ability and I tried to influence people to do their jobs as well.

TS: Did you have—Could you describe, like, the most memorable time you had in your twenty years? Was there one moment or series of moments that was, like, the best part about being in the air force?

CS: Well, there's no question that when you're on stage performing [for veterans—CS added later] [comment redacted] They come up to you and hug you and kiss you and you know, just praise you. Well, hello, who wouldn't love that, and that's the most memorable, of course, meeting—In Pueblo, actually, there are recipients of the [Congressional] Medal of Honor. [Pueblo is known as "Home of Heroes" because of the four Congressional Medal of Honor recipients—CS added later] There's a—many of them, maybe four or five, from Pueblo, and we got to do a performance for them. The pride and the—It's just—It's remarkable. I mean, obviously, you can imagine having that environment, it's going to just be life changing in terms of respecting what—the heritage and also a new found love and respect for older people; older Americans who—people—even my own

children will say, "Oh, he's just an old man." He is not just a—he lived through this. He experienced this. He, you know, is a generation that you have no idea what they went through. You know, they talk to my own father who was born in 1936 and so [clears throat]—

TS: So he was in during the Korean era?

CS: Right, but he did not go to Korea. But he—You know, he tells these stories and they're like, "Wow, I can't believe that happened. That's just crazy. I—What? Women had to do this?" So, you know, I—I learned all of that and I got to experience all of—That was the most memorable thing; you know, meeting these amazing individuals.

Also, the camaraderie on stage just—you know, playing music together and having those emotional moments together where you connect and you've been playing together for fifteen years—I mean, occasionally, musicians would rotate out but they tried to keep them intact and we had one group, The Academy Winds, that just bonded and we just—we were unstoppable. I mean, we got to perform at [The] Midwest Clinic in Chicago. [The Midwest Clinic is the world's largest instrumental music education conference] When we performed we wanted to just, you know, shoot for the moon. We did a lot of television performances. We—We were starting to just be on cutting edge in terms of our performance, and we'd play anything; we would just try anything new.

TS: [chuckles]

CS: And that was very fulfilling. Those people, amazing musicians, and now we're all scattered throughout the world.

TS: Yeah, but there's Facebook for that, right?

CS: Yeah, and that's how we kind of keep in touch—

TS: Yeah.

CS: —and we're able to see what everybody's doing.

TS: That's kind of neat.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted] Did you do anything?

CS: Well, in Colorado, of course it's ski country so we tried our hand at that.

TS: How'd it go?

CS: I don't like being cold a lot. That's not so good.

TS: Okay.

CS: But we gigged a lot. Actually it was pretty much my life, although, you know, with my children, when I was younger I would spend every moment I could with them because I felt guilty because I was TDY.

TS: Where you TDY quite a lot?

CS: Yes; yeah.

TS: Like, how often?

CS: Well, for me, one month on, one month off.

TS: That's pretty often.

CS: Yeah, and it wasn't necessarily a month at a time, but you know, a week at a time or two weeks. We'd take—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's a lot.

CS: —two week tours and I was feeling very guilty about that. Now, they did not suffer in the least. They really didn't. They don't remember it even, or they—that was the way of life they knew. At least that's what they tell me.

TS: Yes.

CS: And my younger girls, who are three and seven now, don't even remember me being in the military—

TS: Not at all.

CS: —and it's only been three years.

TS: Right, right.

CS: So you know, it wasn't bad for them actually. They got to go to some fun places. They met amazing musicians. They got to see people in a very disciplined environment and they—I think they had a great time. You know, I think they really enjoyed it, but I felt guilty about that and so—

TS: Would you recommend the military to any of your kids if they wanted to?

CS: Oh yes.

TS: Yeah?

CS: I already have.

TS: The air force, right?

CS: Yes. [both chuckle] I really want Joshua to do that, but he—you know, he—

TS: He has to embrace it, right?\

CS: [Right—CS added later], I would recommend it to my daughters as well but who knows what's going to happen by that time.

TS: By that time.

CS: That's a long way off so—yeah, I would totally recommend it.

TS: The other thing that we really didn't get to talk about much, and we probably can't because I know you're on a time schedule, but you were in during a couple, you know—I mean, we're still at war, but you were also in at the beginning—I mean, the Gulf War, when you first went in.

CS: Right.

TS: And so, as a musician, and you're talking about what cush job you have.

CS: Yes.

TS: Do you have any—How did you feel about it? Like, for example, the first Gulf War?

CS: Yes.

TS: Do you remember having—

CS: I remember exactly. I was in—stationed in Washington and I was a little panicked at first thinking, "Oh my gosh. I am totally going to have to, you know—" I actually was a marksman, so I knew how to shoot a gun but I thought, "Oh my gosh. We're going to have to do this." And I remember being a little excited about it because I thought, "I've never done anything like this before. I totally want to—"

TS: Experience?

CS: Yes. And I had total faith in my compatriots, because I saw the training that they went through. [Bandsmen—CS edited later] did minimum training; the gas mask, et cetera. We didn't really do a whole lot of that so I was not trained as a [soldier—CS edited later]; I was trained as a musician. [clears throat] And my commander insisted that we would never experience that because that's not what we were trained to do; "Let the professionals handle that. You play your instrument."

And so, it was scary and I felt nervous for my friends. I was living in the dorm at the time and I was worried about security police or other people that were going to be going, and I certainly didn't feel good about wearing the medal. I thought, "Well, I didn't even do anything. I don't deserve this." So there was that. I just felt— [side discussion redacted]

TS: Yeah, we'll just pause.

[Recording Paused]

TS: All right, we took a little break again.

CS: [chuckling]

TS: But—So you're telling about—you're talking a little bit about during the first Gulf War, how you felt about that as, you know—But you also felt like, you know, you could go and do whatever you needed to do as a—as an airman too.

CS: Right, but I also—again, I was young and naïve. I mean, not so young, but very naïve in terms of how it all worked in the—the front lines versus musicians. I really didn't know what to expect at all and, you know, it was a scary time. You would listen to the radio and TV and think, "Oh, what is going to happen? This is awful." You know, before I

didn't really pay as much attention to it but now I was like in the midst of the whole thing, learning, you know, the—the process; the steps that you have to take in order to protect the base [and country—CS added later].

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: Was that after the Gulf War or after 9/11?

CS: No. I was thinking later.

TS: 9/11?

CS: Yeah, 9/11.

TS: Well, then—I was going to say. So, ten years later you have 9/11. Do you remember that day?

CS: Yep, I do and I was at home. I don't remember why but—And of course being older and knowing a bit more about what my involvement was in the military, I, you know, was more emotionally angry, if you will, about the events and I really wanted to help in any way I could and I—I couldn't believe that this was happening and I knew that—We knew people in [Washington] D.C. Actually, my husband's father worked at the Pentagon and he, you know—he wasn't there at the time and he was fine.

TS: But you didn't know that necessarily did you?

CS: No, no, we didn't. So I—I never felt like I was danger, if you will, because of the—my position, but I had great respect and pride and admiration and prayerfulness toward the troops who were on the front lines and really had difficult, challenging jobs that were—People that were in harm's way, I had—I was very attached to them as a whole even though I didn't know all of them.

TS: Sure.

CS: But I was so proud of—to be a part of that, you know? And we did get to meet people from other units when we were doing mass trainings and NCO Academy and all of that. And people just could not believe what we did for a living, but nobody was ever condemning. Nobody said, "Well, that's a horrible job. You know, I can't believe we pay for that." No one ever did that. They said—

TS: Right.

CS: —"We need that. We need more troop morale. We need people out there as our ambassadors for the nation and for our military," and that's really what we were. We were a liaison between the general public and the troops. And the older I got, the more experienced I got, the more I realized how critical a mission that was, and so I felt like we were doing an amazing job as representatives, because we were. You know, at least in that—at the Air Force Academy.

TS: So you in some ways you're—you're the public relations but a recruiting tool too.

CS: Absolutely. Oh absolutely. Yeah, there's no question about that.

TS: Yeah.

CS: And that's another thing that I admired about Colonel L.. He was so—just a excellent spokesperson. He knew how to use people who were going to be good spokespeople, and the show, if you will, that he would put together for our public relations concerts were spot on in terms of the programming and how to emote the best emotions from people, and I loved being a part of that. I thought it was amazing, and it was very effective .

TS: Well, what do you think about—So, having served career in the military—

CS: Yes.

TS: —and you hear how the roles of women have changed, and now we have women, you know, on the front lines really, even though they're not officially allowed in combat; they're attached to units where they're facing hostile action.

CS: Yes.

TS: Do you think there's any role that women shouldn't play?

CS: That's a really good question. I go back and forth on the issue because there are some women who absolutely should not, but there are other women who [meet all the qualifications—CS clarified later]. You know, at the Air Force Academy, obviously, they allowed women to attend and that was a debate for a long time and they had to try and weed through the mechanics of that when they went to SERE [Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape] Camp and they were doing the—their basic training.

TS: Their survival training and things?

CS: Right, and some women washed out. They should never have gone. It wasn't their forte. Other women excelled and they were brilliant at it and they totally should be doing it. They just had the mind—mindfulness for it, and so I—It's not my place to say, "Oh, you should not allowed to be in combat." If you feel like that's your mission and you're good at it you should totally do it. Now, I don't know if there's discrimination up there at the

top or in the field and there probably is. There probably is and so those women probably work triple time to prove themselves. I mean, that's just kind of the way we are; the position in this world right. Women are still underpaid. They're not necessarily respected in the positions they're in. I think it's changing, of course, but that's certainly an issue in the military as well; having to really prove yourself. But man, there are some remarkable women, and that I absolutely do—do admire.

And unfortunately I don't know names per se but I remember through the years when I would see someone who got promoted to lieutenant colonel who was a woman, I would totally always go up to them and say, "I am just so proud that you are in this position. You are, you know, proving to a generation of women that we can do it," and they always loved that they were—And they knew they were in that position. They were representing women as a whole.

TS: That's terrific that you did that.

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CS: Well, you know, that's important because people need that encouragement. They never know what—well, who are—who are they influencing.

TS: Yes.

CS: They don't know. They have to maintain this persona when you're in a position of authority, so yeah. I think actually all of us did that [as musical ambassadors—CS added later] because that was part of our job, to be encouragers, and it—and those were the people that we were working for. We wanted to make sure they knew that we worked for them. We were—

TS: And supported them.

CS: —you know, their cheerleaders. Yeah. But the women in particular, I just really admired so much. And honestly, when we went into the schools to do our school programs—I'm talking about middle school, high school—we would go in to do recruiting, specifically for the Air Force Academy.

TS: Okay.

CS: And then the air force as a whole. We would actually do a segment where I would talk about women in the military and how it's changed through the years. [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [Women in the military used to be required to—CS clarified later] carry their lipstick and compact. You know, I told them a little bit about the history, and what I knew about it.

TS: Right.

CS: And I said, "In fact, [now—CS clarified later] women have to do exactly what men do. Like, for instance, we go to basic training." [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: I'd say, "We have two women here who could probably do more pushups than any boy in this auditorium. Do you want to see that?" And of course they would go crazy.

TS: Oh, sure.

CS: And so—And these girls were—they could do push-ups, and I was the MC for a reason because I couldn't. [both laugh] So I didn't have to do it. So we'd get about ten boys [from the audience—CS clarified later]—

TS: Okay.

CS: —up here and we would count with them. The drummer doing the drum roll.

TS: Right.

CS: And we would have them do push-ups and they would just keep going and keep going and finally I said, "Okay, we don't have all day. We just got to stop. So give them a hand." And so, we were just proving that women could be just as strong and had a vital role in the air force and it was just kind of a pep talk to the girls to say, "You can do anything you want and we highly recommend you do it in the air force."

TS: Excellent.

CS: That went across beautifully and it was a really good tool for us to use, and girls would come up afterwards and talk to us and—So, that was a very positive endeavor that the commander actually wanted—

TS: Have that kind of outreach?

CS: Yes, he absolutely did.

TS: Nice.

CS: He had a few things that he really wanted us to stress and that was one of them; that we—It's a new air force.

TS: Equality.

CS: Yeah. We really need to embrace women and their role.

TS: Well, the other thing that happened while you were in, too, then, would have been—Well, for gays in the military. So, when you first went in there was the "homosexuality is incompatible". [This refers to a Department of Defense directive issued in 1982 which stated, among other things, that "Homosexuality is incompatible with military service."]

CS: Yes.

TS: Then you had "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".

CS: [chuckles] Yeah.

TS: And just as you're getting out, the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".

CS: Yeah.

TS: What do you think about all that?

CS: Well, again, gay and military, you know, don't necessarily go hand in hand. But gay and music, yeah, they kind of go hand in hand.

TS: Oh really?

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: I never even—I wasn't even thinking of it that way.

CS: Yeah. [comment redacted] But—And then I had many friends that were in the military and they were gay and everybody knew it.

TS: So how was that handled, you know?

CS: I wasn't. It—There was no issue.

TS: I mean, did people talk about it?

CS: No.

TS: They just like, "Oh—"

CS: Yeah.

TS: "—he or she"

CS: Yeah.

TS: Mostly he, I guess, for the musicians.

CS: Yeah, and—But, you know, it was different because we were not in a life threatening situation as musicians, you know. They were great musicians.

TS: Do you think it was more culturally accepted because of the music culture?

CS: Yes. Absolutely.

TS: Okay.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: So you didn't have anybody you knew that was kicked out because of that?

CS: No.

TS: No?

CS: And it was blatant.

TS: Oh really?

CS: Oh yeah. They had a significant other. Actually my first duty station in 1990, there was a woman and she had a companion and it wasn't a big deal and—Yeah, it wasn't an issue.

TS: So, what do you think about then, the fact that they've—now gays and lesbians can be openly—

CS: I have no problem with it at all. I—The whole thing seemed ridiculous from my standpoint because I was—I witnessed highly successful gay people. They were just

people and they can do their job just as well as anyone else and—But again, I don't know exactly how the training goes and if there is some kind of issue that—

TS: You mean outside of the world that you were in?

CS: Outside of the musical world. It's unfair for me to say, "Oh yeah, there's no problem," because I don't know. Maybe there is some kind of problem that I just am not aware of, but in my little world there was—it was kind of a blessing, you know, to have that—that—what would you call it?—culture.

TS: Right.

CS: To be exposed to that culture and to, you know—One of my best friends was a gay man [in the military—CS clarified later] and an amazing musician; [an oboist—CS added later].

TS: So, yeah, I actually—I never really put that together when I was asking that question but it's interesting that that's your response.

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: You talked—You talked briefly about meeting President Reagan.

CS: Yeah.

TS: Now—So, did you have any other role models in the—in the political world that were, you know, presidents or Secretary of Defense or things like that, Secretary of the Air Force, or anything along those lines that you, like, followed or respected or—because you were in for a long—we had a lot of different—different types of leaders.

CS: Yes. Well, actually, I don't know if it was because it was encouraged or if was just the world I was living in but we—I respected and admired all of them, you know. Even the ones that I didn't necessarily politically believe in, but they were—they were my commanders. I mean, they—I was in their chain of command and I whole heartedly supported them. I wanted them to succeed. Our chain of command was posted in our squadron and I'd see that every day. And it wasn't necessarily indoctrinated in us. We weren't—

TS: It was part of our education, too though, right?

CS: Yeah.

TS: For your—

CS: It is but it wasn't like, "You must respect blah, blah, blah. I don't—I don't care what your political—You're going to buy into—" It wasn't like that at all. We just did. Well, I just did because it was the right thing to do. From a spiritual standpoint, too, I believe that it doesn't matter who's in charge. They were put there for a reason and, you know, you have to—Well, maybe I have been indoctrinated.

TS: [laughs]

CS: But it sounds like—You have to, you know, trust that they're there for good and not for evil. But there's not necessarily anyone that stands out in my mind in terms of the politics, and I do admire Ronald Reagan. I did because when I met him, you know, he was so genuine. [comment redacted]

TS: Right.

CS: —you know, popularity. So, you know.

TS: And he would have been out since '88, so he actually was just recently out—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —as president.

CS: That's right.

TS: So a couple of years or so.

CS: And he wasn't ill.

TS: Right. Really? That's Neat.

CS: Yeah.

TS: As a musician, we haven't talked at all about, like, your culture, what you listened to, what you liked, what kind of movies you like to watch; things like that. Do you want to share any of that?

CS: Well, I loved classical music first and foremost because that was my training. I would listen ad nauseum to recordings where I could pick up ideas and stuff, and through the years I started to develop a love for all music because there—like I said, there were so many different ensembles, and I wanted to sing. And so, I got into the rock a little bit; I loved the rock bands. I really don't like country music. [comment redacted], and of course, we had a wonderful country band, Wild Blue Country; very successful, especially in Colorado. [comment redacted] [They have performed at the Grand Ole Opry, Nashville

Now, Opry Back Stage, and deployed several times to support the troops—CS added later]

TS: [chuckling]

CS: Of course, we started to really branch out in terms of ethnic music. We started performing really avant-garde pieces. We wanted to stretch our audiences and so we would do unusual music that maybe wasn't—it wasn't main stream but we would ex—have an explanation; "Okay, here's what you're going to be listening for. Here's something that you might, kind of, think about while you're listening to this." And everything was really well received in terms of, "Okay, that's something different and new but not necessarily something I would listen to twenty-four/seven, but you know, I can dig it."

TS: Broaden your horizon, sort of thing?

CS: Yeah, and that was part of our objective to try and—especially performing for kids, that, "You might enjoy this kind of music or maybe you love these African drums or—" You know, we did a piece where we were just clapping and we would do it in—it was kind of like a round, very unusual piece. It would phase, [and was based on a piece by composer Steve Reich that my husband Todd arranged—CS added later]. It was just like—it was just [sounds of syncopated clapping] And then the whole—and it's on the video as well.

TS: Oh, okay, really neat.

CS: So you'll be able to see that.

TS: All right.

CS: And then we thought, "How can we make this better, more accessible." We started using drum heads, and so the pieces that we created would evolve. "How can we—How can we do this? We'll write it—We'll do a story." We did the story of *Carmen* to kind of bring opera into it even though but—Nobody sang, we just narrated this piece *Carmen*. And then another ensemble, the Stellar Brass, decided to use trash cans. That's when—what group—

TS: The Blue Man—

CS: Blue Man Group kind of became popular, and so we were just trying to really get out of the box in terms of showing communities that the air force is coming out of, you know—We're not just your—

TS: A military band.

CS: Right. We can do it all, and I think we were very successful at that because would come to the concerts and say, "That was amazing! We had no idea that you were so talented!"

TS: Is that right?

CS: Yes, all the time; all the time. Because they—There's a preconceived idea that you're [a "non-emotional, military machine."—CS added later]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: What about the change that happened within, you know—for music and the way it's presented and the way that, you know—maybe technical aspects? You kind of described some of the changes in the type of music that you were introduced to, but—So over this twenty years how did that—how did that—How did your career change as far as the music went, in that part?

CS: Well, you know, it's really at the commander's discretion in which direction the ensembles are going to go and some commanders love the—what we call, the "dinosaur" which is the concert band, which is this huge monstrosity of musicians, and you played standard concert band material and you played for a certain audience that you knew was going to be there, which would be a lot of veterans or older people, if you will. And then there are commanders who had a lot of vision that wanted to change things to keep up with the times and Colonel L. was one of those individuals. He would actually ask us, "Well, what do you want to do? What's out there? How can we change this up? How can we make things different?" He would include other ensembles to come and be featured in addition, or we'd have guest artists come in and perform with the group or bring in narrators. I worked with—Wilford Brimley [American actor]. Yeah, oh my gosh, what a nice man. He came and did a narration with us and went on tour with us. I mean, he just—he was so supportive. And they were starting to do that; get more and more celebrities to come in and, you know, just perform with us so that we could reach a different audience, if you will.

TS: To see what would resonate with whatever—

CS: Right.

TS: —age or group—

CS: Right.

TS: —or, kind of, [unclear].

CS: Same thing with the ensemble. He would bring in Wild Blue Country to come do a feature during a concert. On the tours we would actually break out into the smaller groups so that Academy Winds could go do a TV performance over here on a morning show and then we'll do a concert that night, or we'd have the—the Brass Quintet which would go into a school and do a school performance to encourage those kids to come to the concerts. So it was called a breakout tour and those were really, really successful too. We would reach a wide variety of audiences and that was the point. We had to start being a little more—

TS: Diverse?

CS: —diverse with our audience because we were recruiting for the Air Force Academy, as well as the military, as well as being a public relations tool, as well as entertaining troops. I mean, we had a lot of roles to fill and it's always the commander's vision, you know, how we're going to pursue that and I think that's why people started deploying. Like I said, it became a field band and so they had to accommodate the needs of all the bands, and so they would train the group to go and then they would go overseas for three months at a time.

TS: Three months at a time.

CS: Yes; yeah. And they've been highly successful too; great political tools. I mean, they would go in and entertain top, you know, generals and VIPs and [members of the community in Kyrgyzstan, Qatar, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Afghanistan—CS added later]; just a huge positive response.

TS: Oh sure.

CS: So, that's so fulfilling as well. And of course, you know, we—My group didn't do troop support so much. It was the rock band [and country band—CS added later] that did that but they were also highly praised when they went out. It was just wonderful. And a lot of times they would try and connect with celebrities to bring out there as well.

TS: Sure, to get, you know—

CS: Yeah.

TS: To publicize it—

CS: Yes.

TS: —and have it [unclear]. We've talked a little bit about your adjustment to civilian life.

CS: Yes.

TS: What was the hardest thing for you?

CS: It wasn't hard.

TS: No?

CS: It was awesome. [both chuckle]

TS: So, there really wasn't a big adjustment period for you at all?

CS: No.

TS: No.

CS: There wasn't. I miss wearing the uniform, to be honest with you, because I didn't have to worry about what to wear.

TS: What to wear sure.

CS: I'm sure everybody says that.

TS: No, not everybody but—Yeah.

CS: And I do miss wearing the uniform because people treat you very differently. I never had any one negative; it was always very positive.

TS: Positive.

CS: Of course, you know, in Colorado Springs, it's a military town; there's Peterson [Air Force Base] [Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, Schriever Air Force Base, Fort Carson army base, and of course, the Air Force Academy—CS added later] there and—

TS: Right.

CS: —the Air Force Academy. So, I—It's not so much here, people don't see it. Or at least I haven't experienced—

TS: It's less visible.

CS: Yeah, definitely less visible, but it wasn't a hard at all. I—I enjoyed slipping right into the new role [of "retired military member"—CS added later] and—Now, you know, part of it is, I'm still doing what I was doing. I still play, you know; I still perform. Not to the capacity that I did where I was playing daily, and it's a—that's a little painful because I'm not at the level that I was playing every day.

TS: So, you've lost some of that.

CS: Oh yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CS: It would take months for me to get back in shape.

TS: Yes.

CS: But I can do little gigs and—

TS: Only you will know the difference.

CS: Yes, and my husband maybe.

TS: [chuckles] Well—

CS: Because—Actually we—our whole family has been doing caroling—

TS: Oh.

CS: —at community—

TS: Very nice.

CS: Yeah, retirement communities, and we're actually going to the Hospice floor[?] on Christmas Eve.

TS: Nice.

CS: [Todd—CS added later] doesn't play but twice a year, too, and he, you know—We were joking about having blood on his fingers and my lip, you know—

TS: Oh.

CS: —because it's—

TS: Right.

CS: It's hard to just jump right back in there but—

TS: Yeah.

CS: Yeah, nobody notices, you know?

TS: Yeah.

CS: It's—It's fun and the kids play and we have a good time with that so—

TS: Well, how do you think your life has been different because you joined the air force—

CS: Oh wow.

TS: —back in 1990?

CS: So different. I'm much more disciplined and there's no question about that. You have to be disciplined and that—That's why I wanted my kids to do it because I knew they would—they would get that. It's wonderful. I mean, you have a—Well, you have a newfound respect for your country of course. That was kind of like a light bulb moment too. I was at a game—I don't go to many sporting events, but we were at a hockey game, I think, my husband and I, and we were standing for the anthem and he and I were both, like, at attention and people around us were talking and kids were eating and sitting and—oh my gosh, I was so upset by that. I wanted to get on the microphone and say, "You show respect for this flag!" But we both felt that way. We thought, "This is so sad." You know, it's a sporting event, of course people are going to be talking and whatever, but every time there's a parade or you have the opportunity to show respect, I am—I'm a different person. I—I have all of those years of witnessing these remarkable people and it just flashes in my mind—just like for all veterans, it flashes in your mind that there's more to it than just a football game or a sporting event. It's a huge honor to have been a part of that and this is just an amazing country [comment redacted]—it's a wonderful country and I love it. I love serving—I loved serving in that capacity.

TS: You're kind of answering this one question I have a little bit, but it's—What does patriotism mean to you?

CS: Well, that's a really hard question because I—My experience was so unusual and unique and music speaks of patriotism in terms of the honor and respect and sacrifice and all of those things that we kind of take for granted, but it's definitely, obviously, a love for your

country that goes beyond what words—You just can't even put it into words; where you would die for your country and, you know, that never really never sunk in because I'm a flute player. I'm not going to die for my country playing the flute, but at some point in my life I realized, "You know, I am part of an organization where people do this, and am I willing to do this? Would I do this for my country? Yeah, I guess I would. I would."

And you know, that—that's huge because certainly in—as a musician you would think, "No, I play—I play the oboe. I'm not going to grab a gun and protect my—my country." But I think—I would be willing to bet that as you go through the process and if you're in for twenty years—[comment redacted]—you start to develop a sense of, "I'm part of this big thing that is—is really important. That's really a critical piece of what makes our country, our country". Which you know—So, that's really a hard question to answer, but for me I guess it's a willingness to give up your life as you know it in order to be a blessing to your country and to other people, and service is the biggest thing I think I would take away.

I want—obviously want to give back just like I think a lot of vets feel that way. I want—I want to volunteer. That's something I learned to do in the air force. I want to help people in a capacity that I didn't do as a musician. Like I said, I felt like it was a very selfish career and so now at this point I feel like, "Well, I had a great career and I had fun and it's time to do something different where I can give back. And the air force is actually allowing me to do that using the GI Bill, you know, and I am forever blessed, nonstop. You know what I mean? I have retirement and I'm going to school and it's all due to my career.

[comment redacted] I've had such an amazing life, a lot of fun, and you know, I've served a greater purpose. It's not over; I still have the opportunity to do something completely different.

TS: And you know what else? You—And I learned this just from talking to you, is you are a pioneer for women.

CS: Well, that would be true in my career.

TS: And—Yes. Have you ever really thought about that?

CS: No, not at all. No, but yes, that's right and you know, actually there were many times that I had to pull a new woman aside and say, "You need to—You need to handle this a certain way, or you need to be aware that this is how your life is going to be if you're going to survive here." And as I said, [comment redacted]. You've got to maintain who you are and a respect for yourself. Whether it worked or not is a different story but—

TS: Yeah.

CS: Yeah. But yeah, you're right. To a certain extent I guess I was.

TS: Well, you were showing me the picture—

CS: Yes.

TS: —of—How many were there in that picture? Seven of you?

CS: Yeah.

TS: And you started out with just two [four]?

CS: Right.

TS: You know? And even though there's sixty, right, all together, it's—

CS: Well, not so much anymore.

TS: Because there's smaller numbers, right?

CS: Yeah.

TS: So, the percentages has actually gone up.

CS: Yeah, the percentages have definitely gone up and I believe that [14.6 percent of the military is made up of women, but the air force percentage is the highest at almost twenty percent—CS added later].

TS: So, it's like getting into the like the—the congress, you know.

CS: That's right.

TS: We're not at fifty percent or anything but—

CS: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CS: Yeah, there's definitely appeal now. I think maybe because job—because of job scarcity or maybe the persona is changing a little bit and women are becoming a little more open to the opportunity there, but yeah, there are definitely more women; definitely more at the Air Force Academy. It's still less than half but more. [1980 was the first class with ninety-seven women graduates. Now I think the ratio is around eighty percent male and twenty percent female—CS added later]

TS: Right.

CS: So—

TS: Well, do you think there's anything that you would like to say to, like, a civilian that might be reading this or listening to this to tell them about the military, or the air force in particular, that they might have—that they might not understand or might have—We talked about some preconceived notions.

CS: Yes, there's definitely that. Well, for people contemplating making a career of it, it's definitely a specific personality type. It's not for everyone. And then for just a typical civilian I think that they need to realize that public support is key; really, really critical. Because there is a—kind of a high rate of suicide and there is—there's some drama and trauma in the trenches. And I—Like I said, the air force is being is being proactive about taking care of their people and trying to make sure that they're emotionally stable. I don't know about the other branches but the public support is huge and I know there—more than once somebody has come up to me and said, "Thanks for your service," and that's amazing. And you know, I feel undeserved for it but—

TS: Well, think about, too, the sacrifices that you have made. I mean, how much—you're TDYs are extraordinary. I mean, even in this—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —you know, year of deployments overseas, that's an awful lot of TDYs in a year.

CS: Yeah.

TS: Especially with a family.

CS: Yeah, but it—they were fun. I felt a little guilty having fun when somebody was home taking care of the kids, but the good thing is my current husband knew what I was doing. He knew it was hard work.

TS: Yeah.

CS: You know, so he was—

TS: So you had that support?

CS: Yeah. Oh, I definitely had that support.

TS: Yeah.

CS: Yeah, he was wonderful. But yeah, I think—I think the older generation gets it, of course; they get it. But this current generation, I'm a little concerned about their separation from the military and what their perception is of—I mean, they think trained killers. They think crazy people. You know, because in the news a lot of time you see these—"Oh, this guy went off and killed everybody and he was in the military."

TS: That'd be the only time you hear about it.

CS: Right.

TS: Not about all the other good things that are being done.

CS: Right, exactly, exactly. So when we went into the schools those were some of the most fulfilling jobs because we were able to defuse that [perception—CS added later], and—and that's why I want to give you that video. We made it specifically to—as an outreach tool for kids. And once again the commander, [name redacted], had the vision at the time. He's someone that gave us the keys to do whatever we wanted.

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: [comment redacted]

TS: [comment redacted]

CS: Yeah, 2006. But anyway, I think the commander, you know—he knew as well that it was important for us to try and change the perception of the general public to make sure that they understood the type of people that were serving the country; that these were really professional people; they were getting top notch training. Not everybody knows that. Not everybody, you know—like you said, they only hear the bad things and that's unfortunate.

TS: Well, we've covered a lot.

CS: Yes.

TS: And I don't actually have any—You've answered a lot of questions that I didn't have to ask, but is there anything that you want to add that I haven't asked you about that I might—might have missed?

CS: Well, one of the concerns that I have for military bands, not just the air force band but all of them: you know, they're on the chopping block; always they're on the chopping—There's a—There's a chance that they will eventually go away. That it won't

be—be a public relations tool anymore. That's a real possibility as we have the budget cuts, and not all presidents support it and that's unfortunate. And I think that unless you know the big picture and you get to see everything, how it works and the benefits of it, then you really can't tell, and so I think that's a huge wonderful tool that we have. I hope it doesn't go away but, you know, it's sad. It will be a legacy if it does, and actually there's a historian at the Air Force Academy who's been gathering information. You might want to get in touch with him. I don't know if that would be helpful or not to see all of that. I would be very sad to see all that go but times change and—

TS: So an awareness of the impact that—

CS: Yeah.

TS: —it has would be good for the public to know.

CS: I think so, yeah.

TS: Yeah.

CS: A lot—It's amazing, there are a lot of people who will say, "Oh, I didn't know they had a—I didn't know they had musicians. Oh wow." Still.

TS: Sure.

CS: So—And that's their—the desire of the band program, is to get—is to get public—get the whole public aware—

TS: Right.

CS: —that it's even out there.

TS: Well, that's a good thing to put on here.

CS: Yeah.

TS: Well, that might be a good thing to close with then.

CS: Alright.

TS: So, advocacy for the military bands.

CS: Yes. [humming "The U.S. Air Force", also known as "Wild Blue Yonder"] You getting that? [humming] [chuckling]

TS: That is perfect. We'll end on that note right there; on that note.

[End of Interview]