WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Earlene Denise Green English

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 6 November 2015

[Begin Interview]

TS: Well, today is November 6. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Denise English in Greensboro, North Carolina to conduct an oral history for the Woman Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina Greensboro. Denise, could you state your name the way you'd like it to be on your collection?

DE: Sure, that would be Earlene Denise Green English.

TS: Alright. Well, Denise, thanks so much for letting me come and visit with you today. Why don't we start out by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born, where you're from?

DE: Okay. Well, I was born in Harlem, New York. I am from New York. I was raised in the Bronx, and I left New York at the age of nineteen.

TS: Okay. Well, tell me a little bit about growing up.

DE: Oh, growing up I—I come from a family of four.

TS: Okay.

DE: Immediate family of four. My mother, father, and a sister, and myself. I had two older brothers that were my mother's children at a younger age, and they lived and they were raised in North Carolina.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: Little Washington, North Carolina.

TS: Oh, really?

DE: And both of them went in the service. The youngest of the older, name was Leroy Brown, and he died in Vietnam at the age of nineteen.

TS: Oh, no.

DE: As a Marine. And the oldest one was Ronald—Ronald Blunt—and he just recently died a couple of months ago. But I grew up basically with just my sister and my parents. And at an early—

TS: What'd you—

DE: I'm sorry.

TS: No, go ahead.

DE: And then at an early age I—I pretty much played basketball from the age of eight on.

TS: Is that right?

DE: Yeah, I had—my very first coach was Nate "Tiny" Archibald [American retired professional basketball player]. I grew up in Patterson Projects [public housing development] where he grew up, and I played with his sisters—I played basketball with his sisters—and he basically just took a bunch of us and let us play for The Projects, which was called Patterson Projects.

And after that he ended up taking us to "Each One Teach One," which was in Harlem, and from there I just started playing and playing all over. I played in the New York Rucker [Park] Pro; Rucker Professionals [Rucker Professional Basketball League]. I played in the Women's AAU [Amateur Athletic Union]. I traveled. At an early age I played basketball, basketball, basketball.

[Each One Teach One is a non-profit organization, founded in 1967, for youth development and mentoring. They "use sports as a vehicle to motivate young boys and girls to pursue higher education, and explore various careers."]

TS: About how old were you when you were doing that?

DE: I would say about twelve.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah, about twelve years old. By the time I was fifteen I was playing in the Women's AAU, but twelve when I started—

TS: So the early seventies.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Wow.

DE: Yeah, early seventies, when they didn't have the WNBA [Women's National Basketball Association] for us.

TS: Right.

DE: But by the time I was fifteen/sixteen, they had the WPBL, which is the Women's Professional Basketball League. So I played women's—I played professionally then.

TS: Is that right?

DE: Yeah, and I played—like I said, I played in the Rucker's Pro, the Rucker Professional. I just got—Two thousand and fourteen, I just got inducted into the hall of fame as a Rucker Professional.

TS: Congratulations.

DE: Thank you.

TS: That's really a neat honor.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah.

DE: We finally got—After all these years, we finally got acknowledged for our skills and abilities and all things that we did back in the day, because we actually paved the way for the WNBA players now. My—One of my teammates, which I'm sure everyone knows—Nancy Lieberman—

[Nancy Elizabeth Lieberman is a former basketball player who played and coached in the Women's National Basketball Association]

TS: She was one of your teammates?

DE: Yeah, she was one of my teammates, and she's still my friend to this day.

TS: Is that right? Well, because she just got a really cool job, didn't she, as a coach?

DE: Yeah.

TS: In the NBA [National Basketball League], right?

DE: Yeah, Yeah, and she's also part of my—my business, which is World Ventures.

TS: Is that right?

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's really excellent.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Wow, very impressive. Well, when you were growing up then, in the Projects, right?

DE: Yes.

TS: What'd your folks do?

DE: Well, my mother was a stay-at-home mom.

TS: Okay.

DE: And my dad worked two jobs.

TS: Okay.

DE: He worked for Allied Maintenance, and OTB.

TS: Okay.

DE: The Off Track Betting. He worked maintenance for both of those, and I remember my father—my mother always telling us to be quiet because he had to get his rest because he was coming in from one job and going out to the next job. But he worked two jobs, and my mother stayed at home, and she took care of everything. She did everything. She was a unique woman, because I tell you, my father wanted pancakes three o'clock in the morning, she got up out of her bed, and got them pancakes, and made them pancakes, but she—she served us. She was a "Down South" North Carolinian girl, and she served us. She cooked the food; put it on a plate; we'd eat it; she'd take the plate; go back in the kitchen and wash the dish. I didn't have to lift a hand; that's how she raised me.

TS: Is that right?

DE: Yeah. When I finally went into the military I didn't even know how to make a bed.

TS: No.

DE: Because my mother made my bed.

TS: She took care of you.

DE: She took care of us.

TS: Wow.

DE: Yeah, she took care of us. Yeah.

TS: So you're growing up in a really interesting time, when you think about like social change and stuff too.

DE: Yes.

TS: Were you aware of issues of rights and oppression, or anything going on in the early seventies?

DE: Not really.

TS: No?

DE: Not at all. I had a super duper teacher from middle—from elementary school, and his name was Paul Vebock[?]. He was Czech—He is Czechoslovakian, and he would take a group of us and he would take us and expose us to different things. And I was really, really good at math. I was able to multiply numbers, four, five figures in my head. Before you'd write it down, I'd give you the answer.

TS: Yeah.

DE: His college was C.W. Post, so he would take me to some of the college classes and show me off, and let them see what I could actually do.

[C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, now known as LIU Post, is a private institution of higher education in Brookville, New York]

TS: Your kidding!

DE: Yeah. [chuckles] And then he—he took me for my first horseback rides; taught me how to ride a horse. He allowed us to play with the boys in basketball. He paid for tennis lessons—for me to take tennis lessons, because he was trying to get me to understand that basketball right now is not going to be a money making future for me, but tennis would.

TS: As a girl?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Right.

DE: Tennis would, and I took the lessons, and didn't pay it no attention, but actually now, today—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —I love tennis.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I play tennis now. [chuckles]

TS: Isn't that interesting?

DE: Now that I'm older I play tennis. But this teacher, he exposed us to so many different things: art museums and—out of his pocket. We're—And it was nothing—no hanky-panky, nothing funny going on. He just was a wonderful, wonderful person. He took us to his mom's house for dinner, she didn't speak a word of English, and I know she was probably like, "What are you doing?" [both chuckle] But evidently she instilled something inside of him that made him do those kinds of things.

TS: Right. Now, what school was that from?

DE: This was from Public School 18.

TS: Public School 18.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's what he was out of.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's pretty neat.

DE: Yeah, and actually the real name of the school was John Peter Zenger.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah, John Peter Zenger. And he took us—he exposed us to a lot of different things, so I kind of lived in this world where I didn't see color; things like that didn't matter. Although, like I said, I was raised as an African American—

TS: Yeah, talk about that a little bit. Sure.

DE: I was raised as an African American, but my father was full Native American—both parents were Native American—but his mother passed after giving birth, and his father gave him away to some African American people who raised him, and they raised him culture-wise as an African American, so I know nothing about being a Native American. And my mother, both her parents were Blackfoot Indian, and they also was raised the culture of African Americans, so we know nothing about that, but—

TS: So culturally you were raised as an African American.

DE: Yes.

TS: But really, like ethnically—

DE: Yeah.

TS: —you're Native American.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's interesting, yeah.

DE: Yeah, very interesting, and a lot of people look at my color and they—right away they think, "She has to be black." But if you really look at my features, I don't have full lips, I have the high cheek bones. So if you really look at my features you can easily see, but that's just how people are.

TS: Right, they have a cursory look at you, and—

DE: Yeah.

TS: Really interesting.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Did you like school?

DE: I loved school.

TS: Did you?

DE: I was an A student throughout; all the way through. I was on—We had—By the time I got to junior high school, we had, what they called, SP classes—they were special classes—and from—junior high school in my time was seventh to the ninth grade; you didn't go to high school until you hit the tenth grade.

TS: Okay.

DE: But—So seventh to the ninth grade we were sectioned off in SP classes. SP classes consisted of—you stayed in that group from the seventh to the ninth grade.

TS: Oh, all together.

DE: All together, and you—your English could have been English A, B, or C depending on what level you were, and I was in English A, Math A, Science C. [laughing]

TS: You got to have a flaw somewhere.

DE: Yeah, but even the Science C was a higher level than the regular community.

TS: I see, yeah.

DE: So I was really pretty much an A student. I just knew that I was going to grow up and be either a social worker or a mathematician. I don't know what happened somewhere down the line—

TS: Is that right? So that's what you had set your heart on, to do something like that?

DE: That's what I set my heart on.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I was going to be a social worker or a mathematician, because I—I just loved math. I just—Like I said, I could add, multiply, subtract in my head before you even write it down.

TS: Can you still do that alright?

DE: I can still do it somewhat.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Not five figures.

TS: Right.

DE: But I can still do it somewhat.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's a great skill to have.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, it really is. And especially now, I look at these kids today, if they don't have a calculator, boy I'm telling you, they're in trouble.

TS: They're in trouble, right.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Or just getting change back.

DE: Yes.

TS: What is the computer telling me to give back?

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: That's right.

DE: I'm telling you, they have to look at the pictures and press the button.

TS: Yeah, exactly. So you're growing up, you're playing ball—all sorts of ball—all over place.

DE: Yes.

TS: And you're loving school.

DE: Yeah.

TS: And so, when you graduated, what'd you do after that?

DE: Well, see, what's happening throughout all that time, I was playing in the AAU. I was playing the Women's AAU, and I was only about fifteen years old, and I was playing with people that are in college.

TS: Right.

DE: Twenty-year-old women. Nancy Lieberman was one of my teammates. And I was being recruited for college, but being the type of person that I was, I was strictly on the books, and about the books, and I knew that there wasn't a future in basketball anyway. I didn't want to go to school—I didn't want to go to college, and depend on scholarships and have to play basketball in order to stay in the school. I wanted to get an academic scholarship, but that didn't happen for me. So I realized that if I go in the service—I can go in the service and have my education paid for, and I could be able to go to school all at the same

time. So that's what drew me to go into the service opposed to going to college. But what happened in the long run, I ended up going in the service, playing sports for the service, getting recognized once again, and by the time I got out in 1981 I had a full scholarship waiting for me at Georgia State University to play basketball. [both chuckle]

TS: You just couldn't get away from all that talent, could you?

DE: Couldn't get away from it.

TS: Well, that's cool. Why did you pick the army over the other services?

DE: I'm not really sure why the army over the other services, because both my brothers did the Marines—

TS: Right.

DE: My father was a navy man.

TS: Okay.

DE: My cousins are air force. My immediate cousins—my mother's sister's children—are air force. My other cousin, she's also army. I have no idea what made me pick the army. I really don't. I can't even sit here and—but—

TS: Did your talk—

DE: I think it was a good pick.

TS: Oh yeah, I think so, too.

DE: Yeah, it was a good pick.

TS: Did you check with the other recruiters or you only go to one recruiter?

DE: I went to one recruiter and—

TS: That's it?

DE: —that was it.

TS: So that might have been it.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That might have been the only reason.

DE: Yeah, I didn't even bother checking the other ones.

TS: You would have been nineteen?

DE: Yes.

TS: Nineteen years old.

DE: Yes.

TS: When you went in.

DE: Yeah, nineteen.

TS: So what did your family think about your decision? And your friends?

DE: They were—My mother was a little afraid, losing one son already.

TS: Oh, right. That's right.

DE: But they definitely were proud of us because the whole family pretty much is military.

TS: Right.

DE: The only—Right now, this generation, my children are not military, but all of my cousins and brothers and aunts and uncles and my dad, everybody went to the military.

TS: Yeah. It was like a legacy.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: And even—I have my nephew that I raised as my son, Janier[?] Green, he spent time—he went to the navy. He's a truck driver on the operator[?] right now, but he went to the navy. His younger brother, Raheem Green, went to the Marines.

TS: It's still in everybody's blood.

DE: Yeah.

TS: There you go.

DE: Everybody's serving—served in the military.

TS: Yeah. Well, let's talk a little bit about your introduction to basic training, which you kind of alluded at with the—

DE: Oh, okay.

TS: Let's talk about that. How was your first experience with the military then?

DE: It was a culture shock for me. It really was, because I was nineteen and, like I said, my mom raised us where she did everything.

TS: Yes.

DE: And I came from a home where we didn't get whippings. My parents didn't put their hands on us. They didn't believe in it. So we pretty much was disciplined through talking and yelling. [chuckles] And that was it. And I actually raised my kids the same way. I don't beat. I don't believe in that.

But I—it was kind of a culture shock because I went in there, now here I am nineteen years old, and this drill sergeant is standing there, and he's expect—and to me, I came also from a family that's a bunch of comedians, we always making a joke out of something, right? And he's standing there, and he's telling me and expecting me to make up this bed, [chuckles] and I'm like, "I really can't make-up the bed." And he's looking at me, he couldn't understand—"At nineteen years old and you can't make up a bed? I can't believe that." I learned really quick how to make up that bed, you better believe it.

TS: I bet.

DE: My basic training was so much fun. Because I was an athlete all of the challenges that they gave me in doing pushups and sit ups and things like that, I basically—I was looking at them like, "Okay, what else you got?"

TS: Right.

DE: That kind of thing. And then we were the last of the Women Army Corps. We were the last of the WACs.

TS: The last class in basic training.

DE: Yes, the last class. Yes, in basic training.

TS: This is at Fort McClellan, right?

DE: Fort McClellan, McCullough, Alabama, right. We were the last class, and it was so wonderful. I enjoyed it. I actually really, really—it was definitely challenging. It was hard, hard work, and I received excellent discipline, which is what I needed.

TS: Did you?

DE: Yeah, I need to discipline because, like I said, I take nothing away from my mother for doing the things that she did for us, but it really messed us up; [chuckles] going out into the world and not knowing how to take care of yourself. The one thing that my mom did that I'm thankful for and—she did many things that I'm thankful for, but I know how to cook.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Because she would allow me to be in the kitchen with her and cook. But all the other things, she pretty much was—she was a servant, and she enjoyed—that was her job and that's what she did. But basic training was really, really like a culture shock for me because there were so many—I had to literally grow up. I had to get disciplined about myself. The fun part was—and some people might not have though it was fun—but I kept my platoon in trouble all the time. They always had to run because of me.

TS: What were you doing to get everybody in trouble?

DE: Making jokes.

TS: Oh, is that right?

DE: Being a clown, making jokes. So the punishment—We had one drill sergeant that wasn't my actual sergeant but she was on duty that night, and I don't remember what we did or what I did, because I do take the blame, but she had us come outside and run around the barracks until she got tired, and she wasn't running. [both chuckle] But that to me was fun. But what I got out of it, though—from that I'm able to run. I have such endurance. Still, to this day, I can run.

TS: Can you?

DE: I can run—I have no speed, but I can run.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah.

DE: I can run.

TS: You just keep moving.

DE: Yeah, I can run.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: I bet all that basketball playing, too, helped with this.

DE: Yes.

TS: You have—Really good in your lungs and everything—

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: —to get that endurance.

DE: Yeah.

TS: So you enjoyed basic training, even though it was a culture shock.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, I enjoyed it. I really did. I mean we—we had our moments where we were totally upset with the drill sergeant, but the training that we received, I really appreciated it.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I think it was top notch.

TS: Now, even though you're the last WAC class, were you—that just meant you were all women, right?

DE: Yes.

TS: And then they also had mixed, men and women, in other classes.

DE: Coming onto the base after—by the time we was midway into our training they had—they were mixing it up.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But they were in other—They weren't in our unit, they weren't in our barracks or anything.

TS: Got it. Were they doing the same kind of training? Was the training different or was—

DE: The training—I'm telling you the training was not different.

TS: Okay.

DE: We had to do men pushups. I didn't know what a female pushup was until I came back to the United States—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —after being in Germany. When I came back that's when I learned—"What's a female pushup?" We had to do men pushups. We had to learn how to fire the weapons just like a man. We had to learn how to throw grenades just like a man. There was no separation.

TS: Okay.

DE: No separation.

TS: How did you do on those things, too?

DE: I did excellent. I was a—What is it?

TS: A marksman?

DE: A marksman with the shooting. I did excellent. One thing that the drill sergeant said to us and explained to us, that women for whatever reason, we become better shooters, better at everything when it comes to following directions and instructions because we listen. A man will come in there—and nothing against men, I love men—but they'll come in there and they'll feel they got it all; they know it all. They'll halfway listen to details of what to do; whereas, we listen specifically to what to do, and how to do it, and we end up being top notch.

TS: Yeah, I've heard that before, and in research, it kind of backs you up.

DE: Yes.

TS: That that's really true.

DE: Yeah.

TS: So that's really interesting.

DE: Yeah, and its true even in sports, with basketball. If you watch the women, we do the basic—some of us have some nice little moves, shake it up, but we do the basic, and the basic will get you through, and get you over every time.

TS: Yeah, the way the game's played.

DE: Yes.

TS: Do you think that's still true today?

DE: I think it's still true today.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I actually—I train and I teach today. I coach a semi-professional women's basketball team here in Greensboro—

TS: Do you really?

DE: —called the USA Elite.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: Greensboro USA Elite.

TS: Okay, I'll have to look for that.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Interesting, alright.

DE: And I train—which I have today at six o'clock—I train eleven year olds—eleven to sixteen year olds. I'm teaching and coaching.

TS: Now, are they girls or boys? Boys and girls?

DE: Boys and girls.

TS: Okay.

DE: But mostly boys. And also on Thursdays—yeah, on Thursdays—I volunteer at a middle school—Eastern Middle School—and I train and teach junior high school—or middle school, not junior high school—

TS: Yeah, right.

DE: —girls in basketball.

TS: Well, I'm glad you took some time for me today, thank you. You got a busy schedule.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's for sure.

DE: Yes.

TS: So when you signed up in the army—

DE: Yes.

TS: Did you know what job you were going to get?

DE: No.

TS: Okay.

DE: And that right there was the only part that the army took me for a little loop.

TS: Okay.

DE: Because the recruiter basically told me, "Okay, you can pick anything you want when you make up your mind, and go anywhere you want when you make up your mind." And I went with that.

TS: Right.

DE: Believing that that's how—and that's how I ended up in Germany, because after I went to basic training, by the time they sent me to Fort Lee [Virginia] for my AIT [Advanced Individual Training] training, I went to the sergeant and I said, "I know where I want to go now. I decided."

And he said, "Oh, really?"

[chuckles] I said, "Yes, I want to go to California. California and Hawaii."

And he's like, "That's so nice. You're going to Germany."

So that was the only thing that kind of took me for a loop, because when I went down to the recruiter I didn't go with my parents.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Both of them were sick—pretty sickly—and I pretty much did everything on my own.

TS: Right.

DE: Even in high school—when I was in high school—my parents couldn't really attend a lot of things because both of them were sick—

TS: Right.

DE: —at the same time.

TS: So you did have a lot of discipline, and independence, really, before you went in the army.

DE: Yeah, somewhat—certain things.

TS: There's certain things you had to learn different skills.

DE: Yes. Yes.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: How to make a bed.

DE: Yeah, how to make a bed. [both chuckle]

TS: When you went to AIT school at Fort Lee, what were you learning for your job?

DE: I was a Material Control and Accounting Specialist, and that's basically—it was a pretty cool job. We were responsible for—They were teaching us how to be responsible for filling requisitions for whatever parts that's needed, for like if—being that I was stationed in Germany, whatever parts that were needed—I worked in a big warehouse that was needed for the trucks, the equipment, the weapons, whatever parts that was needed that had to be on order, they came through our warehouse, and I had to just pull them out of their slot or either I had to stack them when they came in. It was a pretty good job. You had to keep accountability of how many things was on hand. So that's when my math came in.

TS: Yeah. So it wasn't, like, personnel stuff, it was job related equipment?

DE: Yes.

TS: Not like uniforms or boots and stuff?

DE: No. No, we didn't do that.

TS: It was the stuff for like, "Here's what you need for the parts in your job."

DE: Yes.

TS: And whatever you work on.

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: Here's what you need for the nuts and bolts for the trucks and vehicles and everything, from vehicles to weapons to things of that nature.

TS: Okay, so that's what the "material and control" part—Interesting.

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: Material Control and Accounting Specialists.

TS: I got it. Yeah, there you go.

DE: Yeah.

TS: And hunting.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Look for it, right?

DE: Yeah.

TS: So kind of like the Radar from *M*A*S*H*, right?

[*M*A*S*H* was an American film and television series about a group of soldiers working at an army surgical hospital during the Korean War. The character, Corporal Walter Eugene "Radar" O'Reilly, appeared in both the film and television series.]

DE: Yeah. [laughs] Yes.

TS: Yeah, get what you need.

DE: Yes.

TS: That's excellent.

DE: Yes.

TS: You told me about something that happened before we turned the tape on. You're at Fort Lee and you're in your AIT school, and then what happens?

DE: Oh, okay. Just like—I was—Like I was saying, I had decided where I wanted to go, and it really was a disappointment because I really believed that I could decide at that moment, but—I started playing basketball. I started playing basketball in the little leagues that they had on base, and somebody recognized me and said, "Wow, you got pretty good skills. We're going to let you represent this base, Fort Lee, and we're going to send you to South Carolina and you're going to play in a tournament—a big tournament that they have."

TS: Right.

DE: I played there. And then from there I found out that they have, what they call, an All-Army basketball team. So—But it wasn't time to sign up or to apply for it.

TS: Right.

DE: So I just continued to play in South Carolina, and then from there I went back to Fort Lee and finished up my schooling.

TS: Okay.

DE: And from there they sent me to Germany.

TS: Okay.

DE: And by the time I got to Germany I got that call that I made the All-Army basketball team and they brought me back to the United States so I could play there. But unfortunately, I broke my ankle so—

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: How soon did you break it?

DE: I was maybe a week away from us starting the tournament.

TS: Really.

DE: Because we were basically just training. We woke up to basketball, we went to sleep to basketball. We—

TS: Where were you training at?

DE: I believe it was in Pennsylvania.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah, I believe it was in Pennsylvania. And basically, I woke up, we had our breakfast, we trained. We had a couple of hours off to go to the store and do whatever we needed—get any personals [tasks]—and then we had lunch, and then we trained.

TS: Back to training.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

DE: And then had a couple of hours to do some personals, and then we went back to training.

TS: It's a pretty rigid schedule.

DE: Yes, we woke up, we ate, we slept, and we dreamed basketball; that was it.

TS: So you were probably pretty disappointed when you broke your ankle.

DE: I was very disappointed.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Very disappointed, because that was really my dream. I wanted to play for the All-Army basketball team.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But I—Fortunately, I ended up playing for the All-Army softball team. I let my heel—I let my ankles heal—

TS: Properly.

DE: —properly, and by the time softball came around I started playing for the post. I played for Nuremburg [unclear] on the post, and—

TS: That was in Germany—

DE: That was in Germany.

TS: So you went back to Germany.

DE: Yeah, I went back—I had to go back to Germany. I couldn't play so I had to go back. They allowed me to actually come home. I came home, and that's when I took those pictures up there.

TS: Oh, the one with the three of you there?

De: Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I took those pictures, and then I came back—went back to Germany, and let myself heal and everything, and I end up playing on the softball team, and then they constructed a All-Army softball team, and it was the greatest experience that I've ever had.

TS: Now, why do you say that?

DE: Because I saw places that I probably never could have. I met some wonderful women that became my teammates, my friends, my sisters, and we saw—I saw Italy—I saw Venice, Italy, I saw Austria, I saw Holland. I mean, different places in Germany. We went through Switzerland. I mean, things that I literally probably never would have seen unless I continuously signed up for more years in the service, but just from playing sports—

TS: Yeah.

DE: I mean—Well, sports was one of my first loves anyway.

TS: Sure.

DE: So for me to be able to do that, like a 9:00 [a.m.] to 5:00 [p.m.], I mean, it was one of the best that I've ever had.

TS: Who'd you play?

DE: We played—

TS: Not necessarily their names, but what kind of teams you were playing?

DE: Yeah. Yeah, we played other—other military.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Army people; army personnel. We played some of the Italians.

TS: Oh, okay. I was wondering if you played against other—

DE: Yeah, we played outside people as well. It was really, really—it was such an adventure. It really was. It was so nice. And we won every game.

TS: Every game?

DE: Every game. We never lost.

TS: You army. [both chuckling]

DE: We never lost. I never experienced losing. I'm so serious.

TS: I'm going to have to send you a clipping from a game we had against the army sometime. Maybe not this week. No, you had quality, yeah.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, we never lost.

TS: And never lost.

DE: I'm telling you, it was beautiful.

TS: Now, this was all in Europe though; your tournament was.

DE: Yes, this was all in Europe. Yeah.

TS: Did they have another, like, All-Army softball in a different region, like in the Pacific or something like that?

DE: I don't know. We didn't play against them if they did.

TS: Yeah. So it was just this regional All-Army—

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's pretty neat.

DE: Yeah, it was really nice. Oh my goodness, yes. But we never lost. I'm telling you.

TS: I've heard you say that. [both laughing]

DE: We never lost. It was so nice. I'm telling you, it really was. We got—

TS: What position did you play?

DE: It was the strangest thing; I played first base.

TS: Okay.

DE: And most of the time, they want a lefty to be first base.

TS: Right.

DE: I'm ambidextrous, but when it came to softball I played—I catch with my left and throw with my right.

TS: Right.

DE: So I played first base, and I was clean-up batter.

TS: I can believe that.

DE: Yeah, I was clean-up batter. I mean—

TS: Yeah.

DE: I guess I'm boasting. [laughs]

TS: Well, you got a chance to boast. It's good. That's alright.

DE: I got a chance to boast, yeah. I was clean-up batter. I actually—like I said, I'm going to dig some of these—some of the papers out—

TS: Okay, that would be interesting.

DE: —and show the articles of things that I've done.

TS: Sure, you're probably in the *Stars and Stripes* [American military newspaper] too. You got—

DE: I don't know. Who knows?

TS: I would check it out. Well, what do you think you learned from being part of that team, and travelling around in these different cultures? What do you think that brought to you as a person?

DE: I think that I learned that America is the greatest country that you ever want to live in or be a part of. America. And the military puts together by teaching and training people—some of the people with different backgrounds that form the best team in every aspect, even when the concern is learning how to defend and protect yourself; even when you're learning different sports; all of it. I just think that it's—it's the best teamwork I've ever seen in my life.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Communication. How to be a leader. Leader's lead from the front not the back. Even to this day, I'm still the same way. When I'm going somewhere, I take the seat in the front. I never take the seat in the back. Leader's lead from the front. I learned great leadership skills. I learned that from my military training as well as the sports. And I'm able to—the things that I learned, I'm able to apply it to my life. I even raised my kids the same way. They say I got a little OCD [Obsessive Compulsive Disorder] going on, but it's okay. [chuckles]

TS: This question I usually ask later, but we're kind off talking about it right now: how do you think—the way you talk about teamwork and this—is that any different than when

you come back to the civilian world? Is there a different way that the civilian workplace is from what the army workplace is?

DE: Absolutely. The civilian work world I—I've had some real sweet jobs. I worked for the New York City Police Department, the New York Post Office, and a lot of those places is like crabs in a barrel. I've worked corporate America, I've worked—I've had some really, really good jobs, and a lot of places are kind of like—like I said—crabs in a barrel.

TS: What does that mean?

DE: You ever seen crabs in a barrel when they're stepping on each other to try to get to the top?

TS: Okay. Okay.

DE: That's the way it is. We're—

TS: People are out for themselves.

DE: Yeah. With the military, I don't know if it—if the thought—that you can't be out for yourself because one slight move or one slight mistake could be someone else's life, as well as your life, and we take that into consideration, so everybody's joining hands, and trying to be a brother and be a sister to you.

TS: Yeah.

DE: So that to me—that's the difference.

TS: That's really interesting. Well, what about the experience as a woman in the army at that time. I mean, you're the last WAC class—

DE: Yes.

TS: You're talking about the late seventies, right?

DE: Yes.

TS: I mean, their starting to get a lot more women, but you're still such a minority.

DE: Yes.

TS: What was that like? Did you have—

DE: I had—I had some experiences that—I don't know if you want to—

TS: You want me to—oh yeah, I can do that—off the sound.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Aright. Okay, some of the experiences that you had—we were talking about—at that time—

DE: Yes.

TS: —not all positive.

DE: Yes. As a woman I was faced with some challenges where a superior might have approached me in a certain manner expecting—had certain expectations, and if you didn't fulfill those expectations you didn't get that promotion or you didn't get that assignment, or you were—you were pretty much put off to the side and kind of punished.

TS: Right.

DE: In one particular situation I had a—I think he was a sergeant first class.

TS: Yes.

DE: And every day he would come at me with the expectation of sexual favors.

TS: Right.

DE: And I was young. He was, maybe, in his thirties/forties. I was young, and I didn't really know how to respond to it so I'd respond to it childishly. And of course I said no, but I respond to it childishly. I drew a picture of him making him out to be ugly, and this, that, and the other. But I told my peers, "This guy is really coming at me," and whatever. I made a picture and we all laughed about it. He found the picture. Got me in trouble. Got me kicked out of my—because I was in headquarters—got kicked out of headquarters and put me in a different unit. And the unit actually—they pretty much stayed in the field all the time. So he got me kicked out, and I couldn't fight it or deny it because I never said anything about the—

TS: What he was doing.

DE: What he was doing. Only to my peers, and of course they wasn't going to get my back [support] on that. And I did draw the picture.

TS: Right.

DE: So I had to take punishment. But that was one of my bad experiences which made me realize if you don't put out [idiom for have sex], certain things will happen to you; just from that one experience with that man.

Then also I noticed that—Also, we weren't treated differently when it came to going in the field, because you have to go in the field to be trained, because a bullet does not have a gender on it. So in the event that something went down or something was happening, we had to be prepared and we had to know how to survive out there. So we had to mix it up right along with the men. There was no different—because, okay, all the women get to stay on post and the men have to—that didn't happen.

TS: Right.

DE: The only thing that saved me from that is the fact that I was playing sports.

TS: Yeah. So you didn't have to do it as often?

DE: I didn't have to do it as often.

TS: Did you not like going out in the field?

DE: I didn't like it at all.

TS: No?

DE: Because even though I was rough and tough playing sports, I still was a prima donna.

TS: Yeah? [chuckles]

DE: I wanted my toilet; I wanted my shower. I didn't want to do any of those things.

TS: You didn't want to get out in the dirt.

DE: No, I did not want to get out in the dirt.

TS: When you did, for the sleeping arrangements, was it mixed/co-ed for housing out in the field or—

DE: Yeah.

TS: Was it?

DE: Yeah, out in the field and even in the barracks.

TS: In the barracks, too?

DE: In the barracks as well. We had—we had the—one side of the barracks was all females, but then on the other side, or maybe on the next floor, was all the men. But—

TS: Not in the same room but on the same floor and stuff.

DE: No, not in the same room, on the same floor. Pretty much in the same area. But—

TS: Were you staying in the barracks with your unit? Was it unit related?

DE: Yes. Yeah.

TS: So you kind of were housed with the people you worked with.

DE: Yes.

TS: You never really got away from that for good or for ill, right?

DE: Right.

TS: What was that like?

DE: It was—to me it was a lot of fun, because when you get a little free time you'd go down to—you had a pool room—you go down to the pool room and you'd mix up right along with the men. When it came to the duties—the clean-up duties—whoever was cleaning the bathrooms—you might have men and women cleaning the same bathroom.

TS: Together?

DE: Yeah, together. So that was pretty cool.

TS: Yeah. Did you stay in the barracks the whole time you were in Germany?

DE: Actually, I moved out the last—my last year. When I moved out, I got a roommate, and I moved out.

TS: Okay.

DE: But then I ended up coming back to the barracks because she ended up getting married.

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: But yeah, I stayed pretty much throughout the whole time I was there in the barracks.

TS: Mostly in the barracks.

DE: Most of the time, yeah.

TS: How was the food for that?

DE: Oh, man. The food in the barracks—I don't know—I like military food.

TS: Do you?

DE: I mean, I'm strange. [chuckles]

TS: You're not the only one.

DE: I like military food. The only thing that they tricked me with one time, I didn't eat it but—

TS: [chuckles] They tricked you.

DE: Yeah, they tricked me.

TS: Okay.

DE: Frog legs. They told me that it tastes just like chicken. I didn't try it.

TS: You didn't try it?

DE: No, I didn't try it. They almost got me.

TS: [chuckles]

DE: But other than that, I loved military food.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I liked the rations when we were in the field.

TS: You had the C-rats [C-rations] then, right?

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Not the MRE's [Meals Ready to Eat] yet.

DE: No. Yeah.

TS: Yeah. What was your favorite? Do you remember?

DE: Man, I liked them all.

TS: Yeah.

DE: The snacks especially. Yeah, but I didn't have a problem with any of that stuff.

TS: No.

DE: Yeah, I mean— I'm pretty much of a simple person when it comes to certain things. I don't have to have such extravagance.

TS: Right.

DE: Except for going to the woods, I need my shower. Whatever they'd given me in my survival package, I'm going to survive off of it; it's okay.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you weren't playing ball, what was, like, a typical day?

DE: When I wasn't playing ball and I was waiting for a season—If I wasn't playing basketball, and I wasn't playing softball, I bowled.

TS: Oh, yeah. Okay.

DE: I bowled. If I didn't bowl, I played racquetball. I was always doing something with sports.

TS: Okay.

DE: Then if I wasn't doing all of those things then I would go to the warehouse and do—actually do my job—

TS: Yeah.

DE: —with 76th Delta. [76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team?]

TS: Did you like your job?

DE: I loved my job.

TS: Yeah?

DE: Yeah, I loved my job. I loved my job so much that when I got out of the service and I went into the reserves, I went in the reserves full time.

TS: Okay.

DE: At Fort Totten—I think it was Fort Totten—yeah, in Queens [New York]. Yeah, I went full time, and I worked—I worked full time doing that.

TS: The same job?

DE: The same job, and it was—I got—I received awards for—because what I would do is—they brought me in to actually—I created some—some requisition forms and things—ways to do things—

TS: Streamlined it.

DE: —so that we could keep accountability of the supplies and things like that. So I got awarded for that.

TS: Do you remember what kind of award you got? A commendation or—

DE: A commendation; recognition for my excellent service; things of that nature. I have those things too. I'm going to find them.

TS: Okay, don't worry, you don't need to find them today. That's no problem.

DE: Yeah.

TS: I was going to say, what'd you do in your off time? It sounds like you did all the sports stuff.

DE: Yeah, on my—

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

DE: On my off time, other than sports, I went out. I went out, I danced. I had one friend that was in the military with me, his name was Anthony Green, and he was my dance partner, and we entered in a lot of dance contests. Back then it was the Hustle.

TS: I was going to say, you had disco and—

DE: Yeah, we did the Hustle, and we came home with trophies and stuff. So I danced a lot. I socialized. I had a good time.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I had a really good time.

TS: You were telling me about the one time you guys took a bike ride.

DE: Oh, yeah, yeah. We would—We actually—Being in the military is not what most people think. Once you get through basic training, once you get through your AIT, it's a 9:00 to 5:00. It's pretty much a 9:00 to 5:00. You got to get up. You might have to get up and run, do your basic training, because you have to—regardless of whatever your job is—

whether you're working in a warehouse, whether you work in the hospital as a nurse or whatever—you still have to stay in that condition, because in the event something happens, you have to be able to know how to take a weapon apart, put it back together; you have to know you to put your—all of your equipment on. You have to know all of these things, but on the outside of that—when you're not doing that—you're working, like, a 9:00 to 5:00. You get up in the morning; you go to work; you come home; you have lunch; you come home; and you go out and do whatever it is you need to do unless you're called to be on duty for security or something like that; be on guard or something like that.

TS: Did you ever have to do any guard duty?

DE: Yeah, I did—one time they locked down the whole post for, I think, seventy-two hours. And—

TS: Had something happened or—

DE: I don't remember what it was.

TS: Okay.

DE: But we were locked down for about seventy-two hours. And you had to—you were two on, four off. So you were on duty for two hours, off for four. On for two, off for four. So you was like a yo-yo for seventy-two hours.

TS: Tough.

DE: That's three days. Yeah, I learned how to stand up and sleep.

TS: Did you?

DE: [chuckles]

TS: Well, there were some terrorist activities in Germany around the time you were in Germany; the late seventies/early eighties.

DE: Okay. I don't remember all of that.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But that's good to know. [both chuckle] Yeah.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: So you were able to get out and you did things. You danced, you bowled, racquetball.

DE: Yes.

TS: You're very active.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, what was the hardest thing that you really had to do while you were in the army?

DE: The hardest thing that I had to do—

TS: Either emotionally or physically or both, maybe?

DE: —was being away from my mom. That was the hardest, being away from my mom. Because my mom took sick when I was fifteen, so that's all I knew from fifteen up, of her being sick all the time. And she had a couple of strokes, a couple of heart attacks—minor heart attacks. She had diabetes. She lost the use of her kidneys. She was going blind. She had glaucoma. I mean, she had—she had it all. And unfortunately, she passed all of that down to me.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I don't have to—I didn't lose the use of my kidneys and all that, but I have diabetes, high blood pressure.

TS: Right.

DE: And my brother had the same thing, and that's what he died from. And that's what my mom died from. So, like I said, unfortunately she passed all those things down. But that was the hardest thing, being away from my mother.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, being away from my mother. But—emotionally. And the other hardest thing—physically—really wasn't anything hard physically because, like I said, I was such an athlete for so long.

TS: Right.

DE: So I loved that part.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. One unit that I was in, we would get up five o'clock in the morning, we would run the—we had—what do you call it?

TS: Track?

DE: No, no, no, not a track. There were planes in the air—where planes come in.

TS: Runway?

DE: Runway! [both chuckle] Geez. We would run the runway. Duh! We would run the runway.

TS: Yeah.

DE: And, again, me being a comedian, I would stay in trouble. So what the sergeant would make me do is—like, say we had a hundred people running, and we have four across and everybody behind, I'd had to run around them while they were running straight. [chuckling]

TS: Oh my goodness!

DE: For the whole time. So what would end up happening is, they'd end up letting me carry the flag. They said, "This is not working. This not affecting her. So just give her the flag." [chuckles] I was silly.

TS: That's all right. Well, how do you think—besides that one experience you told me about with the one—

DE: With the sergeant?

TS: —with the sergeant—how were your experiences with your supervisors?

DE: No, never any other problems.

TS: Really, just that one?

DE: Yeah, just that one.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: Well, sometimes when we're looking at women in the service—

DE: Yes.

TS: —and women who are minorities, of other ethnicities and things like that, sometimes they'll say, "I think my experience as a woman was harder than as the minority," or as the

ethnicity or whatever. Like, it was more discrimination based on that—just obstacles perhaps, not even necessarily discrimination.

DE: Yes.

TS: And so, I wondered if you had any experiences with that as well?

DE: See—I don't know, I'm kind of built different. I'm strange. I'm built different. Like I said before, I never—I grew up not looking and seeing color. None of those things really mattered, because in our household was this white man who was my father. And my sister being light [skinned], so I never really—my mother raised us to believe that you're just a person—

TS: Right.

DE: People are people. Even to this day, my nephew—who I raised as my son—is married, and his wife is half-German—half-German, half-Jewish. My cousin is married—I mean, we're all mixed. There's not too many people that actually are the same ethnicity in my family. So I'm always been one to just get along with everybody. I never had anybody treat me different because of that.

TS: Yeah, so even though other people weren't perceiving you any differently than how you were trying to project yourself—

DE: Yeah. Yeah. I never—I didn't really go through that.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I'm not saying it didn't exist, I'm pretty sure it did, but I didn't have to face that.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Even to this day, I don't face stuff like that.

TS: No?

DE: Yeah, I don't have problems with that.

TS: Yeah. Well, when you travelled around in Europe, what was, like, maybe one of your favorite places to go?

DE: My favorite place to go was Italy. Oh, but you know what? Let me—I do remember—I did have one issue.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah.

TS: I'll back it up to the last question.

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: Backing up. This was major.

TS: Okay.

DE: It was when I first went into basic training in Anniston, Alabama.

TS: Okay.

DE: It was—Like I said, it was a group of us. I had a friend—one was from New Jersey—We was the cool crowd. One was from New Jersey. One was from Kansas. One was from Arkansas. One was from—

TS: California, I think you said?

DE: Two from California. And we went out on the town. We got looking all good and sharp and everything, and we were pretty much the city girls of the group.

TS: Right.

DE: And we went out, and I think it might have been four or five—four weeks after basic—into basic when they let you go out. We went out and we went into this place to have steak. Now, this was 1978 and—because I went in in September—yeah, so this was 1978. We went to a restaurant, and soon as we walked in the proprietor said, "We do not serve black people." [chuckles]

TS: How many of you were black, in your group? You?

DE: Man, it was about three of us.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, it was three of us.

TS: I just remember the pictures you showed me earlier.

DE: Yeah, it was about three of us and—

TS: So what did you do?

DE: I'm a troublemaker. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, I thought you were a comedian. [chuckles]

DE: A comedian troublemaker.

TS: Okay.

DE: So what I do was—I said, "Really?!" Because I'd never experienced anything like that; I'm from New York

TS: Right.

DE: We didn't experience things like that. So I said, "Well, I just want to use your bathroom." And I used the bathroom and then we left.

TS: Right.

DE: But years later I thought about it, and I said, "They could have killed us. They could have shot us."

"We said we don't serve black people."

TS: Right.

DE: And here I am talking about how I just want to use your bathroom. That was the only thing that I ever had when I—experience when I wasn't allowed to go somewhere or—

TS: Right.

DE: —to eat somewhere. That was it.

TS: But it was outside the military.

DE: Yeah, it was outside the military.

TS: Right.

DE: It was in Alabama.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: That's interesting.

DE: Yeah, that was my only experience. But in the military I didn't face—I didn't face race problems. I just didn't.

TS: No?

DE: And I think maybe a lot of that has to do with—even in high school—for high school, I went to Christopher Columbus High School, and Christopher Columbus High School was 3% minority, and in that 3% was African American, Asian, and Latino. Ninety-seven percent. The year I went in, they just allowed us to come in there. They were chasing some black children back to the bus and on home. They were chasing them on a daily basis. No one ever bothered me, and it could have been because I was the star in there, playing basketball.

TS: Right.

DE: I was known as Niecy—

TS: You were popular and—

DE: So that could have been the reason for that, and maybe that was the reason why I didn't face things throughout my life, because I've always been that stand-up person—the stand out person that—known for my athleticism.

TS: Right, not seen as really vulnerable.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, did you ever have any good mentors in the army?

DE: No.

TS: No?

DE: No.

TS: Not on the job or even in the—

DE: No, pretty much my peers, we all worked it out together.

TS: Nobody was really saying—

DE: No.

TS: —nothing like that—

DE: No.

TS: —at that time. In the warehouse that you worked in, were there many women that worked with you or was it mostly—

DE: Yeah, there was a few women. It was not a lot.

TS: Yeah.

DE: We definitely was a minority. It wasn't a lot. If we had twenty-five workers, five were women and twenty were men.

TS: Yeah. I remember you showing me the picture of, like, the little backhoe and the little—

DE: Yes, and they were—they was assigned—we were assigned certain jobs only—now, only the men were allowed to drive the forklift.

TS: Yeah.

DE: And I always wanted to drive it but—they gave them licenses to do that, they didn't—

TS: That was a male job.

DE: Yeah, that was considered a male's job.

TS: Yeah.

DE: So maybe that was a little bit, but even in that—I didn't pay that no attention either.

TS: Right, because you're just doing whatever. Whatever else.

DE: Yeah, it was whatever.

TS: Yeah. Did you ever get to supervise anyone?

DE: By the time I got in the reserves I did.

TS: Did you?

DE: Yeah, I was supervising, because by then—of course, I came out as a sergeant, so by that time I was.

TS: Yeah.

DE: But when I wasn't working also in the warehouse, I also worked in the gym.

TS: Okay.

DE: Off season for whatever sports I was playing, if my unit was out in the field or whatever, they would stick me in the gym to give out supplies.

TS: So then you could continue to play on the All-Army teams, or something like that.

DE: Yeah, play sports or whatever.

TS: Okay.

DE: I was doing that; that was just the job that they just gave me.

TS: Like a secondary job to fill as—

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's interesting too. Did you feel you were treated fairly with pay, promotions, things like that? Assignments?

DE: I really didn't pay no attention.

TS: No?

DE: I know we weren't paid a lot of money, but I was young—

TS: You were just taking what you were getting.

DE: Yeah.

TS: You didn't have an ambition to stay for twenty years or anything?

DE: No.

TS: No?

DE: No.

TS: What was your intent upon going in? How long did you expect—

DE: I was just going in to get up enough money so that I could go to college.

TS: Go to school.

DE: Yes, that's it.

TS: That was the goal.

DE: That was the goal. So I did my three years and that was it. My three years was—time was up, I was done. And then what also helped is, I had a full basketball scholarship at Georgia State University waiting for me.

TS: Waiting for you.

DE: So that helped me—

TS: You had incentive to get through.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: How did you end up getting that scholarship?

DE: My best friend from childhood—her name was Denise as well, and Green—so when we were growing up they used to call us the two Niecy's, and we started basketball together, and we were a power house on that court.

TS: I bet.

DE: Put the two of us together, boy, forget it; it was unbelievable. But she ended up going to Georgia State University.

TS: Okay.

DE: And she was there, and she told the coach—it was a new coach—and she told the coach all about me. And I guess the coach started looking into what I was doing.

TS: Right.

DE: And by the time—I got out in August, and I stayed home for a week or two, and went straight to Georgia State University. I had a full scholarship. I had a two-bedroom apartment. I had my books and my classes paid for. Everything was paid for; my meals. The only thing that I had to do was take my money and buy whatever I wanted to buy.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, a full basketball scholarship.

TS: Yeah.

DE: We—

TS: But then—go ahead.

DE: We were ranked eighteenth in the nation.

TS: Yeah.

DE: We were doing it.

TS: Yeah, this is Georgia State?

DE: Georgia State University.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, we were ranked eighteenth in the nation.

TS: But you had to leave, right?

DE: I had to leave. I had to leave because my mother and my father took sick. Even though my mother was sick all along, but my father took sick at the same time. He—They ended up being in the hospital on different floors at the same time. And my sister was running around doing whatever she was doing, and my nephew was left home alone, and he wasn't being taken to school, and he wasn't being cared for.

TS: Right.

DE: So I came home and ended up staying.

TS: Right.

DE: Taking care of my parents, and then raising my nephew.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, who never gave me a problem.

TS: No.

DE: Who I'm so very proud of.

TS: Yeah. Aww, that's great.

DE: Yes, so very proud of.

TS: That's good.

DE: Yeah.

TS: So when you got out, was that about the time that you went back in the reserve then; when you went back to New York?

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay. Was that part of the reason why you did or—

DE: Probably, yeah, because I needed a job.

TS: Yeah. Right.

DE: Yeah, I needed a job, so yeah, I went to the reserves. Yeah.

TS: And then you said you did that full time?

DE: Full time.

TS: For how long did you do that?

DE: I did that full time for maybe a year or two.

TS: A year or two.

DE: Yeah, a year or two. And then I did it part time.

TS: Right.

DE: And then after doing it part time, then I switched over the National Guard and I did that part time.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah.

TS: How was the reserve different—even full time—from the army? Was it or did it seem the same?

DE: Oh yeah, it was—this is a big difference. The reserves from the army was like—full time reserves was like a corporate job.

TS: Okay.

DE: You had people there, they were in uniform, but it was somewhat of a relaxed situation. As far as being militant, it wasn't—maybe 40%.

TS: Not hooah.

[Hooah is military slang, originally HOOA, used by U.S. Army Airborne in World War II, meaning "Head Out Of Ass," and was a spin off of Radio Operators HUA "Heard Understood Acknowledged." As the term spread throughout the army, it came to have more of a general meaning of "anything and everything except 'no'"]

DE: Yeah, maybe 40%.

TS: Oh okay. The other sixty were showing up?

DE: The other sixty was—yeah, just show up.

TS: Okay.

DE: Sloppy in the uniform, and—I mean, not like the military. In the military when you active, and you got that uniform on, you care about how you look. You got the creases. You're standing out. But in the reserves, they just—

TS: Did it drive you a little crazy?

DE: No.

TS: You were just like, "Their doing their thing, I'm doing my thing"?

DE: Yes. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. Then after a couple years you went into the Guard?

DE: Yeah.

TS: How—

DE: A big difference.

TS: Okay, how was that different? Because I haven't really talked to many in the Guard.

DE: The Guard was a big difference. The Guard made me realize that I need to get out, and leave this alone.

TS: Really?

DE: Yeah, because they were—now *they*—believe me, they was a big ol' boys club.

TS: I want to note to the transcriber that there was a tone that you used in that [both chuckle] which won't be caught when you're reading the transcript. Okay.

DE: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DE: *They*; now that was a big ol' boys club.

TS: In the National Guard?

DE: Yes, in the National Guard, and—

TS: What was different?

DE: All the men held the ranks.

TS: Okay.

DE: All the men were the leaders that held the positions—

TS: Really not integrated gender-wise?

DE: Not at all.

TS: Really?

DE: Not at all. I don't care if you just came—if you came in there and you were an E-6 [Staff Sergeant]/ E-7 [Sergeant First Class], you was low man on the totem pole.

TS: No matter—

DE: As a woman.

TS: Even if you outranked other men?

DE: You was low man on the totem pole as far as their attitude towards you.

TS: I see.

DE: Legally and legitimately they couldn't really do that, but they did it.

TS: Yeah, they just gave you whatever jobs.

DE: Yes, pretty much.

TS: Were you doing the same job there?

DE: No, I actually was in a transportation unit.

TS: Okay.

DE: And that's when basically I just drove the trucks. Like, I went every week—every—

TS: Every other weekend?

DE: Yeah, every other weekend almost. One weekend out of the month; something like that. And then two weeks in the summer we went away and—

TS: Where'd you go?

DE: I think Louisiana; I think.

TS: Like a training exercise?

DE: Yeah, for training exercise, but we went in a convoy—

TS: Okay.

DE: —from New York.

TS: All the way down south?

DE: In a convoy, and one of the trucks ran over roadkill, so for miles you were smelling this skunk.

TS: A skunk? Yeah.

DE: Oh my God, it was the craziest thing.

TS: What were you driving?

DE: I was a deuce and a quarter [deuce and a half truck?]. I wasn't even driving, I was a passenger.

TS: Yeah.

DE: That was another thing, I wasn't going to be able to drive either.

TS: No, even though you're in that—

DE: The men had to drive. The National Guard, like I said, was the only thing that made me—"Okay, you know what? I've had enough."

TS: "I'm done"?

DE: Yeah. And then I end up having my daughter in '89—in 1989—and I was going away and I was leaving with her father/my husband, but I don't know, I had some—some separation issues or something—

TS: Yeah.

DE: So I ended up just saying, "Okay, I'm done. I'm getting out." And it was perfect timing because the next year in January my unit went to [Operation] Desert Storm.

[The Gulf War took place 2 August 1990 to 29 February 1991. Codenamed Operation Desert Shield for operations leading to the buildup of troops and defense of Saudi Arabia, and Operation Desert Storm in its combat phase, it was a war waged by coalition forces from thirty-five nations led by the United States against Iraq in response to Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait]

TS: Oh, is that right?

DE: Yes, so I got out just in time.

TS: So yeah, you would have had to leave your daughter again.

DE: Yeah, I would have had to leave my daughter.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Yeah, interesting.

DE: Yeah. Yeah, so the National Guard, I guess I'm kind of thankful, at the same time upset with them.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Because I didn't have a problem with being in the reserves; I didn't have a problem with being active duty. It wasn't until I got in the National Guard that I was like, "Oh no, I'm not doing this."

TS: Why did you go from the reserves to the National Guard?

DE: Because it was more of a trip for me. I had to go all the way up to—

TS: Logistically?

DE: Yeah, I had to go all the way out to Fort Totten, and I didn't—at the time I didn't have a car, and I still was dealing with my mother being sick, and still raising my nephew, and it was just too much on me.

TS: Right.

DE: So I found a National Guard unit in Harlem.

TS: Real close.

DE: Yeah, that I could just get on the train and—boom—I'm there. Or even take a cab; it would cost me little to nothing.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Right across the bridge from where my parents were living, and where I was living because I was living with my parents.

TS: Yeah, so that was almost a totally different culture.

DE: Yeah, definitely different; definitely different. If I—If I was asked to do it all over again, the only thing that I would do all over again is go active [duty].

TS: Yeah?

DE: Yeah

TS: Stay active?

DE: Yeah, I would go active, and I would stay active, and I would give my thirty or forty years.

TS: You would? You would have stayed in?

DE: Yes, I would stay.

TS: Well, you couldn't predict what would happen with your family—

DE: No.

TS: —and things like that either.

DE: Yeah, I sure couldn't. Yeah.

TS: No, that's true.

DE: But if anything— if I wanted to do that again, that's what I would do again.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I wouldn't do the reserves again, even though I didn't have a problem. I wouldn't do the National Guard again.

TS: Because you liked active.

DE: Yeah.

TS: You liked doing that.

DE: Yes.

TS: Well, did you have anybody who was like a hero/heroine? Somebody that you looked up to during your time in the army, whether military person, civilian, or family? Anything like that?

DE: Just basically my family.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Basically my family. My brother who died in Vietnam. My oldest brother who—he was—he was something else. Boy, I'm telling you. He used to take me—actually take me to his—because he was in the reserves too—and he used to take me—as a kid, he used to take me to his drills and things like that. He was a chef. He was the cook, so he was large and in charge [idiom for dominating or controlling a situation with confidence and aplomb]. [both chuckle]

TS: Is that right?

DE: Yeah.

TS: Did he teach you how to cook at all?

DE: No.

TS: No, he's, like, showing off.

DE: Yeah, he basically was showing off.

TS: I got that.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, in the time you were in, too, it was a transition away from Vietnam era, and more women were moving into the military, but also there was a drug culture going on too. Was any of that ever around or did you hear about it or know about it or anything like that?

DE: I pretty much hear about it, and knew about it, but I tell anybody and everybody that sports really saved me—

TS: Yeah, you think?

DE: —because I was all around it from childhood; I was all around it. Like I said, my sister was doing whatever she was doing and I could have easily fallen into that, but sports—

TS: Kept you away from that?

DE: Yeah, sports saved me. Even now, today, I talk to children that I coach, and I give them the warning of—I let them know, "With your skills and your abilities, it can take you somewhere," because today—especially for girls—today we have it; it's there. People are acknowledging and recognizing there's women players—girl players—you're getting this now. It took me to be in my fifties before somebody acknowledged and recognized all that we did.

TS: Right.

DE: So you have to be aware of the deterrents and things that's around you that can kind of steer you away from your goal. I have one kid—he's twelve years old—this kid is phenomenal. He is so good. I mean, the skill level that he's playing on at the age of twelve reminds me of back in the day.

TS: Yeah.

DE: He would be able to play with the fifteen and sixteen year olds.

TS: So he's got it.

DE: Yeah, he'd got it. And I found out last night that he is an A student. I went to his middle school, and I talked to his mother. He's an A student. And he's a good looking kid. So I told her, I said, "Listen, this is the only warning for him: 'them little girls.'" [both chuckle] "That's it; the little girls."

TS: "Stay away from the little girls."

DE: Yeah, stay away from them.

TS: Yeah. So when you were in, the Iran Hostage Crisis happened. Do you remember that at all; when the Iranians took over the American Embassy in Iran?

[The Iranian Hostage Crisis was a diplomatic standoff between Iran and the United States, where a group of Iranian students belonging to the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line took over the U.S. embassy in Tehran. Fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days, from 4 November 1979 to 20 January 1980]

DE: I was in during that time?

TS: I think so, '79.

DE: Really?

TS: Yeah.

DE: That's good news.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah, because when did you get out? Eighty? Do you pay attention to, like, politics and what was going on? Nothing like that. You're playing ball.

DE: I'm playing; I'm dribbling the ball.

TS: That's right.

DE: I'm dribbling the ball.

TS: I was going to say, who was the good teams back then that you were paying attention to?

DE: [chuckles] Earl Monroe and Clyde Frazier [professional basketball players].

TS: Oh no. That's right. That's right.

DE: Actually, that was my nickname when I was coming up: "Earl the Girl."

TS: "Earl the Girl"?

DE: Yes.

TS: That's a good nickname to have.

DE: Yes. And it had nothing to do with the fact that my name was Earlene, because most people didn't know that.

TS: No, that's right, because they were calling you Niecy, right?

DE: Yes.

TS: Niece—Denise.

DE: Yes.

TS: Now, how do you feel about women in combat? They just started opening up—Like, the three Ranger [an elite military formation of the United States Army] women got their little Ranger tabs.

DE: Me, personally, I don't want to do it. [chuckles]

TS: I know you don't want to be in the field.

DE: No, but—

TS: Do you think women should have an opportunity to do it?

DE: I don't see why not, because the reality of it—if it comes down—see, I'm watching this picture called *The Walking Dead*, and there's a lady—she's one of the leaders there—and there's a group that comes on, and they found them, and they're there with them, helping them to survive. This lady literally has to admit, "I don't know how to defend myself. I don't know how to do this. I don't know—" And she's pathetic, because now we're—if you could have three people out fighting—walking the dead—you got to have two fighting and one protecting her. So as far as that, I don't see a problem with it because we need to be able to protect ourselves; we need to be able to defend ourselves. Like I said, bullets don't have no gender on them.

TS: Right.

DE: It really doesn't. So I mean—I don't think that any—because of their sex—their gender—that they should be held back by that.

TS: Yeah. So you think if a woman can do a job, she should be able to do it?

DE: Yeah, definitely.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Definitely. If she can do it, she should be able to do it.

TS: Okay.

DE: She should be able to do it. It's just like firefighters. If a woman can lift this big body up, let's go for it. You know what I mean?

TS: That's right. Well, this controversy started after you were in, but the existence was there, this issue of homosexuals in the military. You had "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" that got implemented after you left.

["Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was the official U.S. policy on military service by gays, bisexuals, and lesbians. The policy prohibited military personnel from discriminating against or harassing closeted homosexual or bisexual service members, while barring openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual person from military service. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed 20 September 2011]

DE: Yes.

TS: But you had homosexuals in the military at that time. What do you think about that particular topic? Should they be in? Should they be—

DE: Listen, let me tell you something about my feelings on homosexuals. First of all, I'm heterosexual, and I personally have no interest. But as far as homosexuals are concerned, they should not be denied health care. They got a partner. They should not be denied that, because at the end of the day they're still human. They have physical needs. They have—They have medical needs, and it should be supplied to them, applied to them—all of that—all because you—you—two women, and two men together, you cannot get healthcare? It's bogus and it's stupid, because at the end of the day they still are human beings. So should they be in the military? Why not? What does that—What does one have to do with the other?

TS: Well, some of the argument against that is that they are a drag on cohesion of unit or—

DE: They what?

TS: They would not help the cohesion in a unit, right, if they were openly gay or lesbian; that it might make some people uncomfortable, and so the cohesion would be a problem. That's some of the argument against it.

DE: Yeah, I—I ain't got a problem with all of that; to each his own. I've been around homosexuals all my life playing basketball. Playing basketball, if you have a team of twelve people, ten of them are probably gay. Ten of them are gay, and that does not

prevent them from taking that ball and dribbling it down the court, and it also does not enhance it; it doesn't make them a better player either.

TS: Right.

DE: So one has nothing to do with the other.

TS: Well, that's interesting, because you would have kind of been in that. Since you were so much into sports you probably were aware of the sub-culture going on with lesbians in the army—

DE: Yes.

TS: —at that time just because of—

DE: Yeah.

TS: And the stereo—

DE: And I was aware of it but then I—I've always taken this attitude where it don't bother me—

TS: Right.

DE: I'm not involved with it.

TS: Can you shoot [a basketball]? Can you—

DE: Yeah! Can you shoot? [chuckling] Can you dribble? Can you pass me the ball?

TS: Right, these are the important questions.

DE: Yeah, I just—I just get along with everybody. I don't care what nobody does.

TS: Right.

DE: Just my feelings, like I said, I am heterosexual, I'm not interested, just as long as you don't sit down and try to convince me to do something. Then you're offending me. Why are you trying to convince me to do this, and I'm telling you, "I don't care that you're doing it. Me and you can still be best buds [short for "buddies"]."

TS: Right.

DE: Don't try to convince me to do it.

TS: Right.

DE: That would be the only—

TS: That's your thing, right?

DE: Yeah, that's your thing.

TS: Yes.

DE: That's just how I feel. I'm a Christian. I believe that they should be able to come to church too. Some people would probably beg to differ, they should not be able to come to church. Why? What does one thing have to do with the other? Whatever anyone is doing—heterosexual, homosexual—whatever you're doing in your lifestyle that's between you and God.

TS: Yeah.

DE: You and God. I ain't got a heaven to put you in or a hell to put you in. Just don't have it.

TS: I like that a lot.

DE: You've been here for a minute. Did you see a heaven in here or a hell anywhere around?

TS: [chuckles] Nope, I just had to take my shoes off. That was it.

DE: That's it! I'm sorry.

TS: That's it. No. No. No sorry. That's all right. So we talked a little bit about adjusting to civilian life.

DE: Yes.

TS: Was there anything you wanted to add to that about when you got out? And you were talking about how work cultures were a little bit different. Is there anything else that was difficult for you?

DE: It was difficult because, like I said, I think—with my children, they make a joke that maybe I got OCD or whatever, but I just like order, and you're going to find order in the military whether—the one thing about the military is it's "hurry up and wait." We always said that.

TS: Yes.

DE: They make you hurry up, and be somewhere, but you got to wait.

TS: Yes.

DE: But I like order. I've always liked order, and I raised my kids that way. My father raised us that way. Every Saturday we would have to get up and scrub the walls. Every Saturday was get up, scrub the walls, he'd do the bathroom and the windows, and that was every—from the time I was little. I just like order.

When you were working in the military things are done in order. Even if you have a complaint, you go through the chain of command. In the civilian world, it's all over the place. Most of the time they bring somebody in to put things in order, and then even they fall into the loop and they start getting out of order. That was—I guess that was one of the adjustments because I like order, and I don't really like working for civilians.

TS: [chuckles] I think I had one woman tell me once that in the military you knew the rules—

DE: Yes.

TS: Even if you didn't like them, you knew them.

DE: Yes.

TS: And then in the civilian world, the rules aren't clear.

DE: Yes.

TS: That there's a lot—

DE: And they're subject to change.

TS: Yeah, there you go.

DE: And they're subject to change.

TS: So that's that disruption of order.

DE: Yes.

TS: The clarity of, "What do I do now?"—

DE: Yes.

TS: —sort of thing. So that was—

DE: Yeah, and see, even in the military, what they teach you—that even if you think—they have rules, and if you don't like them you still do them, and then you go and you complain. You can't do that in the civilian world because sometimes they might be telling you do something that's off the chart [idiom for unreasonable].

TS: Yeah. Yeah.

DE: That's off the charts. Most of the time you want to complain first. [both chuckling]

TS: Well, is there anything you would like to tell a civilian, in this interview, about what you think they don't understand, or misinterpret, about people in the military?

DE: That—I don't know—I mean—they always make little comments, or little jokes, "Oh, I can tell you was in the military," as if that's such a negative thing because I'm disciplined, and because—like—perfect example. When you have a civilian job, if you're supposed to be to work at eight o'clock, you got people walking in there at eight o'clock, 8:05, 8:10, 8:15, and they transfer that over to—even in sports. The children that I'm training, practice is at 6:00. They walk in at 6:15, 6:20, and the later they are the more laps I make them do. They just don't get it. But that right there bothers me, too, because I'm either always early or on time.

So I guess—you asked if there's anything that I would like for a civilian to know. The training, the discipline that we receive from being in the military, is so embedded in us because it gave us ways to survive in war [and] out of war, for life situations. Life situations. Even for the raising of your children. And we don't really want to conform over, so when you look at us and you say—because we arrive on time, or we arrive early, or if we're accountable for things that we do, and you look at us like "Oh, I could tell you were in the military," you say it in a negative way but to us that's such a thank you. [both chuckle]

TS: Right.

DE: I actually really like me.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I like—I like that I'm like that. I like that I'm—even my daughters—the funniest thing—I trained my children to hang their clothes up with the hangers faced in the same direction, and my daughter, when she got a certain age, she rebelled against that.

TS: Oh.

DE: And I would have them—your jeans here, your shirts or your blouses, and your dresses, and your jackets—everything lined up. It didn't have to be in that order, but the hangers placed in the same way keep things in a group. My daughter turned eighteen and—she's twenty-six now—but she turned eighteen, and she called me up and she says, "Mom, I totally understand why you did what you did, and I just want to tell you I apologize for rebelling, and I appreciate what you did." Because she found herself—

TS: Was she in college?

DE: Well, she was in college but she still was—she had her own place.

TS: Okay.

DE: And she said, "What I realized by you doing that is—is helping me keep my life in order, because even with something so simple as a hanger being faced the same direction, it gives me that mindset to put things in order." Because when things are in a disarray you become overwhelmed, and you might have five things to do, and you can't do nothing because you're going, "Let me do this one; let me do this one; let me do this." You're all over the place.

TS: Right.

DE: So it's a mindset. It really is a mindset. So she called me and she said she appreciated it. And I was like, "Ah!"

TS: It only took X number of years, but okay.

DE: Yeah. Yeah.

TS: That's pretty good. Well, you talked a little bit about your pride in being recognized for your time in New York in basketball. Do you see yourself—at the time you were in the military—now, looking back—that you were a trailblazer in anyway?

DE: Absolutely.

TS: Yeah? In what way?

DE: The fact that we went through not being recognized and acknowledged of all our input.

TS: As women, you mean?

DE: Yeah, as a woman. Yeah, as a woman. And we went through all of that, and now it's smoother for you. For those that coming in now, you're just another person, opposed to, "Oh, there's a woman here;" that kind of thing.

TS: Where it was like a magnifying glass on you—

DE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

TS: —if you're going to an office back in the seventies, right, early eighties.

DE: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, you were the elephant in the room.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, definitely a trailblazer. Matter of fact, I used to play against this girl named—what was her name?—Carol Blazejowski.

TS: Okay.

DE: I don't know if you've ever heard of her.

TS: I don't think so.

DE: She's awesome. Look her up; Carol Blazejowski [former women's basketball player].

TS: Alright, I will.

DE: Awesome, she played for the Trailblazers. Yeah, she had black hair—I'll never forget her. Caucasian girl. She was kind of on the same level as Nancy Lieberman.

TS: Okay.

DE: They used to call her "the Blaze."

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yes, real good girl.

TS: Now, was she in civilian or in the—

DE: Oh, yeah. This is basketball.

TS: Basketball.

DE: Yeah, this is basketball.

TS: Okay, back when you were playing in the leagues.

DE: Yeah. When I was playing in the league, yeah.

TS: That's pretty cool.

DE: Yeah, Carol Blazejowski.

TS: I'll have to check it out.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, did you ever use any of your veteran's benefits?

DE: Only benefits I'm using is the fact that I go to the—I have a primary doctor. I get all my medication.

TS: Like the VA [Veterans Affairs]?

DE: The VA, yeah. I go to the VA Hospital in Salisbury [North Carolina]. I go in Winston-Salem [North Carolina]. I'm trying to apply—well, I did apply for disability and—because even now there's certain jobs that I just can't do.

TS: All that wear and tear on your body.

DE: Yeah, and the broken ankle when I was playing led up to—I got bone spurs. I got—I got—I tore my Achilles tendon. I tore my—

TS: Something with your calf?

DE: My calf muscle, yeah. I broke my pinkie. [both chuckle] I got all of these things going on. I still love sports, but when it comes to working there are certain things I just can't do no more.

TS: Right.

DE: I just can't and—

TS: Do you think you're treated well at the VA?

DE: I think I'm treated excellently at the VA, but as far as putting in for my benefits— it wasn't until the Women's Symposium—

TS: Oh, okay.

DE: —that I made a headlight—headway.

TS: Right.

DE: I submitted it—my benefits—in New York; 2010 or something.

TS: Just been kind of in the bureaucracy quagmire?

DE: Yeah. But I submitted it to this lady that was there—I can't remember her name—that was at the symposium.

TS: Oh, yeah.

DE: And she's actually the one that processes it, and she let me know that—because I told her, I said, "I'm here right now, and I have—I'm getting assistance with paying my rent from

the Salvation Army, but they're—November's the last month that they're paying, so if I don't get six hundred and thirty-five dollars up in three weeks I could possibly be homeless." I told her that so she said that she's going to expedite—

TS: Everything?

DE: —everything and get me some help.

TS: That's good.

DE: Yeah.

TS: That's good.

DE: So what I do is I drive Uber.

[Uber Technologies Inc. is a transportation network company. Uber drivers use their own cars to drive other people for a fee. Similar to a taxi service.]

TS: Oh, you do?

DE: Yes, I drive Uber.

TS: Okay.

DE: I'm putting a lot of miles on my car and it's killing me. But I drive Uber so that I can get—so that I can have my money so I can pay my rent because I'm not trying to be homeless.

TS: Right.

DE: I'm really not.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I'm too old to be homeless.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, how do you think you're life has been different because you joined the army?

DE: My life is different since I joined the army because I'm aware of different cultures. I'm aware of—I've been to different places, and met a lot of people, and I probably would have always been a people person because that's just the household that I came out of, but just the fact that I can adapt; I can adapt. Wherever I go, I can always adapt, and I'm never the one that's "I've got a problem with this one", "I got a problem with that". I don't have a problem with nobody.

TS: Yeah.

DE: So I think my life is different because I got a certain pride about me. When—When it's acknowledged and people say, "Who's military?" I get up and raise my hand.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I'm proud that I did that. I'm very proud that I did that. I'm proud that I—I didn't serve during war time, and I was no big hero, but I spent—I spent time in the military, and I learned the discipline, and I learned how to survive. I learned how to defend myself, and I'm proud of that.

TS: Yeah.

DE: I really am. And I played sports in the military, and I'm proud of that, too.

TS: Yeah, you should be.

DE: Yeah.

TS: You should be.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, we've talked about your family who served. Would you recommend service to other young men and women today?

DE: Yes and no. When it comes to family—and I'll speak about my children—my children, I absolutely do not want my children in the service. And the only reason for that is because of the fact of war. Things that's going on, and them being sent away, and the possibility of them just giving up their life and dying in combat or dying—

TS: It happened in your family, too, right?

DE: Yeah. So no for that. I do not; I do not want my children to go in the service. And yes for the experience and the good time that I had, but it's not really good times right now.

TS: Right.

DE: It's not really good times. And yes for the discipline that they'll get. Yes for doing something representing your country.

TS: Yeah.

DE: Yes for that, but no—No.

TS: Well, what does patriotism mean to you?

DE: I don't know. I guess it's—it's—I don't know—I guess that's where my pride comes in. It's an honor. It's an honor to represent and to say that I'm from the United States. That—I think that we have the strongest, the smartest country that there could possibly be. I think—I mean, because think about it, everybody wants to come here. Whether it's to destroy us or whether it's to build themselves up, everybody wants to come here.

TS: Right.

DE: Yeah.

TS: Well, I don't have any more formal questions, but was there anything that we didn't cover that you wanted to talk about?

DE: No, you covered it. It was pretty nice. I enjoyed this. I thank you for considering me.

TS: Yeah. No, it's my pleasure, Denise.

DE: Yeah, I really do; I thank you. I think that this right here was an honor and a privilege. I—Like I said, I played basketball from the age of eight, and I'm fifty-six, and it wasn't until I was fifty-five that I got acknowledged for all of the accomplishments that I did in basketball. But everything is in time, and I believe that this is my time now because God has opened up the doors and He's allowed me to teach and train twelve year olds, and sixteen year olds, and even grown women who completed college, and put something inside of them. So this is good timing.

TS: Yeah, it's been great to be here too.

DE: Yeah, thank you.

TS: And learning a lot. You've been terrific, too. So thank you.

DE: Thank you. Thank you.

TS: Well, I'll go ahead and shut it off.

DE: Alright.

[End of Interview]