

**WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT**  
**ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

INTERVIEWEE: Deanna Secore Magee

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 24 April 2016

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is April 24, 2016. My name is Therese Strohmer. I am at the home of Deanna Magee in Jacksonville, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical collection at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Deanna, could you state your name the way you'd like it to read on your collection?

DM: Deanna Secore Magee.

TS: Okay. Okay. Well, why don't we start off a little bit then, Deanna, by having you tell me a little bit about where you were from and when you were born.

DM: I was born in Flint, Michigan, [6 March] in 1974. Seems like a long time ago. I lived there for sixteen years. We lived in Davison, which is kind of on the outskirts of Flint and—

TS: Okay. Now, did you have siblings?

DM: I did. I had three other siblings. I had a twin sister, an older sister, and an older brother.

TS: And an older brother?

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay, so twins were the youngest?

DM: Yes, we were the youngest.

TS: So of those two, which one's older?

DM: I believe I'm older. I don't really remember—

TS: You don't know? Alright.

DM: I don't really remember. I just know six minutes. I just don't know which one came out first.

TS: Which one? [chuckles] Okay. What was it like growing up in Davison, in Michigan?

DM: It was a suburb town kind of, like, on the outskirts. It's a fairly good size. Me and my sister—my twin—we ran cross country, we played ice hockey.

TS: You played ice hockey?

DM: Yes.

TS: How was that?

DM: It was very fun. I enjoyed it.

TS: Was it like a bruising kind of game?

DM: Well, we played until, I think, my mom decided we were getting too close to puberty and—

TS: Oh, yeah?

DM: Because we played on a boys team, and then where we played there was really no locker rooms.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: So we kind of, like, changed in the car, and since we hit that age, my mom was finally like, "No, you're going to go play ringette [a winter sport, like hockey, that is played on an ice rink] now. Me and my sister spent most of our time in the penalty box on that sport because we were used to ice hockey.

TS: What was the other game?

DM: It was called ringette.

TS: I have never heard of that.

DM: I didn't either. I was just like, "What is this?" Basically, it's—they take a hockey stick, they cut the end off of it, and instead of a puck it's a plastic ring.

TS: Okay. So did just girls play that?

DM: Only girls played that.

TS: Oh, okay. I never heard of that. That's interesting.

DM: But, like I said, me and my sister were used to ice hockey with the boys so we spent most of that season in the penalty box.

TS: In the penalty box when you're playing the ringette? [chuckles]

DM: Yeah. We played it like hockey, so there were different rules apparently. No one told us that.

TS: What else did you guys do for fun?

DM: Basically, just—We hung out. We just did stuff outside. We did a lot of camping. We did [Girl] Scouts. A lot of camping.

TS: A lot of camping?

DM: A lot of camping.

TS: Where'd you go camping at?

DM: All over the place. I can't even remember the names. All I know is my mom would load us up in the car and we would be gone.

TS: Did you go up to the U.P. [Upper Peninsula of Michigan] very much?

DM: We did. We went up to the U.P., and it was quite funny because that was when my mom decided to teach my older sister how to drive a stick shift.

TS: Oh, yeah? How did that go?

DM: It was quite interesting.

TS: Why?

DM: She kept stalling. There's hills in the U.P., and no, they're not little hills. They're, like, actual steep hills and there's just—if you drive a stick shift you know there's just certain places you really don't want to come to a dead stop.

TS: Right.

DM: But that would always seem to be where they'd put the stop sign at.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah. So that was kind of a fun experience.

DM: It was interesting. It was.

TS: Now, where'd you go to school at?

DM: We went to Davison Middle [School] and Davison High School when we were there, but we moved my junior year.

TS: Oh, okay. That's when you went down to Ohio?

DM: We went to West Virginia first.

TS: Oh, West Virginia? Okay.

DM: We were in West Virginia for one year, which was quite interesting. It was a completely different culture shock.

TS: Where were you in West Virginia?

DM: Huntington. And compared to Davison, Huntington was more like Flint so it was—

TS: In what way was it the same?

DM: It was more city. It was more like one way streets, a lot more people. More people and a smaller amount of area.

TS: Okay. More condensed.

DM: More condensed, yes.

TS: And so, you weren't in West Virginia very long?

DM: We lived there—Well, we were in a big house in Michigan, and when we went to West Virginia it was a two-bedroom apartment.

TS: Oh, goodness. Now, how many were there at the time?

DM: It was my mom and me and my twin sister, and even though it was the three of us we were all used to our space.

TS: You were all a lot older, too, right?

DM: Yes. And the only reason I can tell we moved was simply so we can get space again. And we weren't no city people; we didn't like people right next to us; we liked our space. So my mom found a farm in Ohio, right across the river from Huntington, and that's where

we moved to Ohio from, and, like, my job—I still worked in Huntington as a waitress and lived in Ohio.

TS: Okay.

DM: So yeah, we moved but we didn't move that far away, even though it was two different states. We just went over a bridge.

TS: Yeah. When you were growing up, back in Michigan, what did your folks do for a living?

DM: My mom was an occupational therapist. She worked for the state. My dad did something with lights. I think he sold lights, installed lights. I don't know. My dad would get up in the morning and he would go to work and I would see him late at night. So he worked. What he actually did I—

TS: Not sure.

DM: Not sure.

TS: Okay. All right. Now, when you were going to school, did you like school? Did you have a subject that you liked or a teacher that you liked?

DM: I couldn't stand school.

TS: [chuckles] No?

DM: I couldn't—If sports was school, then, you know what, keep me in sports.

TS: Yeah. What kind of sports did you do?

DM: I did cross-country and track.

TS: Oh, okay. So you're a runner.

DM: Yeah.

TS: How'd you do?

DM: I did okay.

TS: Yeah?

DM: I'm not no speed demon but I could keep a pace and keep going, so that's why cross-country was better suited for me because I could do distance.

TS: Endurance-wise. Okay, yeah.

DM: That's the only reason I did okay in school, is because I wanted to do sports. That's the only reason.

TS: Yeah. You've got to keep your grades up to be able to stay on the team sort of thing?

DM: Yes.

TS: Now, did you have any teacher that you liked in particular?

DM: No.

TS: Not really? You were just going there to play and socialize.

DM: Socialize and have fun. I wasn't the book worm or anything. I did what I had to do to pass and moved on.

TS: Well, now you're growing up in the eighties, right? So what kind of—did you have—like, Prince [American singer-songwriter] just died, right?

DM: Yes.

TS: Was there any kind of music that you really liked?

DM: I liked—At that time, I was big into, like, AC/DC, Metallica, and all that.

TS: More the Michigan hard rock kind of music, right?

DM: The hard rock, yeah.

TS: Alright. So you didn't really like school but you liked sports. Did you have an idea, as a young girl, like, "I think this is what I want to do when I'm older?" Do you have any vision about that?

DM: I had no idea what I wanted to do when I got older.

TS: Did you ever think about it?

DM: I did. One time I was like, "I'm going to do law enforcement." And then, one time I was like, "I really want to do some sort of business;" I don't remember what it was. And I was like, "I don't know if I want to do any of that."

TS: Yeah. Now, did the school advisors help you at all? Did you think about college? Any of that stuff?

DM: The high school advisors—They put me in—it's kind of like occ. prep [occupational preparatory] course.

TS: An "op"?

DM: Occ. prep course.

TS: Occupational prep?

DM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DM: And it was law enforcement centric, but that was the year I moved. So I got the first part of first aid. So I was in the first aid part of it and then I moved, and then that's when we went to Huntington.

TS: And then you ended up just graduating and—

DM: Well, when you move from different states, not all your credits always transfer.

TS: Oh, really?

DM: Yeah.

TS: So what happened there?

DM: I ended up in summer school to make up a credit, and then we moved that summer and I lost some of the credits because I moved to a different state. It was frustrating.

TS: Yeah.

DM: But that's probably one of the reasons I wasn't so big on school because I was always in school.

TS: Yeah. No kidding. Did you finally graduate?

DM: I did.

TS: Where'd you graduate from?

DM: I graduated—It was from Crown City, Ohio.

TS: Crown City? Okay. That's the town you were living in?

DM: That's the town, yeah.

TS: Across the river.

DM: It was interesting. My graduating class was twenty-three.

TS: Very small.

DM: I went from classes of six hundred in Michigan to, like, three hundred in Huntington to twenty-three, so it was a culture shock.

TS: I bet.

DM: It was interesting.

TS: Yeah. Well, how did you like living and working in that area then? Ohio, West Virginia?

DM: I enjoyed the manners, just the way the people acted. It was different.

TS: In what way? What was different?

DM: My friend—she's one of my best friends, she still lives in Huntington, West Virginia—she laughed[?] the first day. [unclear] I hadn't met her yet. I mean, I seen her but I hadn't really met her yet. And this guy was holding the door open for me and I'm like, "Why are you holding the door open?" And I refused to go in. I was like, "No, dude, don't hold the door."

And she's like, "He will get beat if he doesn't hold the door. He's going to stand there because he knows he's going to get beat if he doesn't hold the door."

And I'm like, "What?"

So to me it was, like, just the way they were raised and brought up. It was completely different from the way the people in the city that I was exposed to was raised.

TS: Okay. Yeah.

DM: You're smiling but, yeah, that was—I was like, "All right."

TS: No, I get it. I understand what you're talking about.

DM: Complete different culture. I'm like, "This is going to take a while."

TS: But did you get used to it?

DM: I did, I did. And then when I go other places and they're not like that, I'm like, "Well, where's your manners?"

TS: [chuckles] Right. Now you want it, right?



DM: I was like, "Come on."

TS: Well, so at what point did you start thinking about the service?

DM: I decided to go to college after I graduated. And I went to college, but I was working two full time jobs and a part time job, trying to go to college, and just got tired of barely making ends meet. I mean, the college, I did good. I was getting great grades in college but I didn't like the subject.

TS: What were you studying?

DM: Electronics.

TS: Electronics, okay.

DM: And I didn't care for the subject. I was like—I was so over it, especially—I was like a toothpick because I never ate because I was always working or school. So I was like, "You know what? Forget this. I'm done. I'm joining the military." And that's how I ended up joining the military.

TS: How did you even think of the military as an option?

DM: I don't even know.

TS: No?

DM: Honestly, I—

TS: Did you know anybody who'd been in?

DM: Well, my dad was in, my uncles were in, and a couple of my cousins were in.

TS: What services were they in?

DM: Most of them were navy, some of them were army.

TS: Okay. How did you decide on the Marine Corps?

DM: They were the only ones that answered the phone.

TS: Really?

DM: That's literally how I decided.

TS: So you just called them up? You didn't even walk in—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DM: I called them up. They were the last ones I called too.

TS: Yeah?

DM: I was like, "I'm just going to call them." I was like, "Whoever answers, that's where I'm going."

And my sister thought, "No, there ain't no way." She was like, "Nobody answers the phone."

I was like, "Well, if they can't answer their phone—"

TS: [chuckles] Then you're not going to do it.

DM: Yes.

TS: So you called up the marines and then they obviously answered the phone.

DM: Right.

TS: Then did you go in and talk to them about it?

DM: I did. The following day we had agreed to meet at the office. And so, his office was on the other side of Columbus, Ohio, because that's where I was when I was going to school. And I had left early because you never know with Columbus traffic; it may take you twenty minutes, it may take you an hour. So I left a little early, and apparently he had called my house and talked to my sister. He didn't think I was coming in. He thought I was pulling his leg. And my sister was like, "No, she already left." So I beat him to the office.

TS: [chuckles] So he had to get there.

DM: Yeah, because he—I guess he thought I was joking that—"There ain't no way this girl's coming in to sign up." I guess I was his first female to ever sign up.

TS: Really?

DM: Yes.

TS: How did that conversation go? Do you remember it at all?

DM: They was like, "Are you sure this is what you want to do? Are you really—"

TS: He was really skeptical.

DM: He was skeptical. He was a real nice guy but he was kind of skeptical about it because, like I said, I guess I was his first female and he wasn't too sure about it because I came too easy. I didn't need any waivers, I just—And so, he was skeptical. He really, seriously thought I was going to back out.

TS: But you didn't.

DM: But I didn't. Nope.

TS: Now, did you sign up for a particular job at that time or did you—open-ended?

DM: No, I just went in open. I was like, "I'm ready to go."

TS: So how long before you talked to him before you actually went in?

DM: About six months.

TS: Oh, six months. Was it delayed a little bit?

DM: It was delayed, yeah.

TS: Why was there a delay? Do you remember?

DM: No, it was just spots.

TS: Openings?

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay. Did you prepare in any way to go in or did you feel like you were ready?

DM: Well, I didn't prepare because I ran cross-country. The only thing they were concerned about—well, back then it was a mile and a half, and since I ran cross-country they weren't worried about me finishing a mile and a half.

TS: Right, right.

DM: And I could [bar] hang forever and do sit-ups so there wasn't really much preparing. He said, "Keep doing whatever you're doing and you'll be good."

TS: What did your family and friends think when you joined?

DM: I got a lot of picking on from the men because they all joined the navy; the majority of them, except for my one grandfather who went into the army. So I started laughing. I was like, "What do you want?"

TS: Right. Okay, do you want me to pause?

DM: If you don't mind.

TS: No, I can pause. Alright.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay. So you weren't really too worried about what you had to do. And your family was okay with it? They were just teasing you?

DM: Teasing me because, like I said, they were all navy.

TS: What did your twin think?

DM: She just shook her head. She was like, "Okay,"

TS: Now, when you talk about twins, sometimes you guys are very much different, very much the same, different—

DM: We love each other but we—because we were living together, we have come to the conclusion we are—we get along great for a few days, but anything over a couple of days we get on each other's nerves because we both are used to doing things our own way.

TS: Right, right. Independent.

DM: Yeah, yeah. So she was happy I was moving out of the apartment, but she wasn't happy I was moving out of the apartment. That whole, "Okay, well, she's leaving. Now, what's going to happen—Now, what about me, type—"

TS: Oh, right. Gotcha.

DM: Because we had moved out of the house to go to college together.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: So that's how we were saving—It was cheaper for both of us to split rent in an apartment than for us to go into dorms.

TS: Okay. So then she had to make some decisions based on you going into the Marine Corps.

DM: About me leaving, yes.

TS: I gotcha, okay. What about your friends?

DM: They were excited, for the most part. My best friend, Sarah[?], she was just, "As long as you come back after four years." Yeah, she yells at me every four years when I sign up for another four. She goes, "I told you to come home after four years."

TS: [chuckles] That's too funny. Well, why don't you tell me, then, about getting into boot camp and what that was like for you?

DM: It was different, because when we got to boot camp I was worried about my hair, so I had to cut my hair to a bob. And then I get there and all the girls had long hair. I was so mad because I cut off my locks. So I was a little frustrated. And they did the first day there, like, depriving of sleep. And I think that was more annoying than anything, just because when I'm cranky I'm just—I'm evil. I don't like anybody when I'm tired. So that was the hardest part, is biting my lip not to say something with somebody yelling into your face, because they'll find anything to yell at you for—not to tell them, "Hey. Back off. Give me my space." That was the hardest part, was getting used to people in my personal bubble.

TS: Right. Now, had anybody prepared you for that at all?

DM: No. There was no—

TS: Not even your recruiter?

DM: No, he wasn't concerned about it. He was like, "You're going to be fine. You can run. You're fine."

TS: He didn't set you for the emotional part of it at all?

DM: No.

TS: So what was it like, then? How'd you do?

DM: I did alright. The hardest part for some reason—and to this day I was like, "I'll never be a board marine, I can't go—"

TS: What's that mean?

DM: A board marine is—you have marines, they go up on board for, like, meritorious corporal, sergeant, whatever.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: And, for some reason, every time when I get up in front of a reviewing panel and they'll ask you questions, well, for some reason, the answers always leave me, and then I'll walk

out the door and I'll be like, "Why did I say that? This is the answer." And that was the hardest part. For some reason, I can do my general orders to my rack mate, everybody, but when that drill sergeant got in front of my face and asked me, "What about this one?"

And I'd be like, "Uh." I got real stressed out because I would always—it would leave, and then as I'm doing my push-ups or flutter kicks I'm like, "It was this."

TS: So just you're stressed a little bit to—

DM: The stress. I would forget the whole answer. That was my thing. That was the hardest thing for me. It wasn't the PT [physical training]. The PT part was easy for me.

TS: Physically you were fine.

DM: I was fine. It was just the other type of stressors. And I didn't get homesick because I was already out on my own, and my family was always writing me letters, so it's like I didn't really get homesick. I just—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did you—Go ahead.

DM: The stressors just—

TS: Right. It was a different kind of stress and you weren't used to that, right?

DM: Yeah. It was like, "Dude." I would have just quit and walked away. That was the hardest thing. It was like people yell at you in civilian life as a waitress or—I'm like if you're having a bad day or you really don't like working for a certain person you quit and you leave; you find a new job. You can't really just quit, so that was like the whole different type of stressor that I had.

TS: Right. So you had to get a different kind of mentality about how to deal with that sort of in your face kind of—

DM: Yeah.

TS: But you figured out a way to do it apparently.

DM: Yeah. I didn't realize it's really—That type of mentality is only really in boot camp. You'll have some of it throughout my Marine Corps career where people would try getting in my face, but for me it was real minor compared to the amount that I was exposed to in boot camp.

TS: Oh, really? Okay. Well, did you guys do the Crucible?

[The Crucible is the final test in Marine Corps recruit training. It is a fifty-four hour field training exercise demanding the application of everything a recruit has learned until that point in recruit training, and includes as total of forty-eight miles of marching. It simulates typical combat situations with strenuous testing, hardships, and the deprivation of food and sleep]

DM: Didn't exist.

TS: Didn't exist yet?

DM: MCT [Marine Combat Training] didn't exist for women either at that time. Our boot camp was extended a week.

TS: So you did the running? You said a mile and a half?

DM: It was only a mile and a half then.

TS: Okay. And then, did you do weapons training?

DM: Rifle range.

TS: Rifle, okay. [unclear] just talk.

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay. So basic training you did rifle range training, the running, book stuff?

DM: Right. A lot of classroom, Marine Corps history and everything.

TS: Now, did they have the grooming stuff?

DM: They had stopped the make-up class the series before me.

TS: Oh, they had? So you didn't have to have that?

DM: I didn't have to do it. I couldn't—They gave me this red lipstick and I got yelled at because I'm like, "I am a white girl. I cannot wear that." [both chuckle]  
And they're like, "You're wearing the lipstick."

TS: Oh, they made you put it on?

DM: Yeah, for our pictures. And I'm like—I got yelled at because I smeared it all over my forearm, because I was not taking a picture with that red lipstick.

TS: [chuckles] Well, we have to see that picture, then, I think.

DM: It was—Well, most of it is wiped off but my lips are still red in it.

TS: Right.

DM: I was like, "I can't do this."

TS: I didn't realize that they had you put on lipstick for that.

DM: For the pictures? For my group they did. Some of them—like I said, they stopped the make-up class, which I was happy because I wasn't much of a heavy make-up person. I mean, I wore make-up but not bright colors, not—

TS: Right. Suited to you, not necessarily suited to what the Marine Corps thought was appropriate, right?

DM: Well, and I was told for the Marine Corps at that time our lipstick was supposed to match the red cord on our covers.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: And that's a bright red so—

TS: Yeah, that's pretty bright. [chuckles] I can see why—

DM: Not everybody can pull that off.

TS: That's right. That's right. Well, so now, at what point did you know what kind of job you were going to be doing or training for?

DM: Because I didn't do MCT, when you were in our last phase is when they told us. They told me I was going to be an engineer and that I had the welding MOS [Military Occupational Specialty].

TS: Okay. What'd you think about that?

DM: I was happy because I'm a hands-on person. "Okay, cool, I'm going to be working with my hands. I'm good."

TS: Yeah. So then, where'd you go to for your—[dogs barking] Alright, you guys. Where'd you go to for your MOS training?

DM: Courthouse Bay [division of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina]. Courthouse Bay, it was the engineer school at the time.



TS: Okay, and that's at Camp Lejeune?

DM: Yes.

TS: How was that?

DM: It was fun. I enjoyed it. I got there, it was me and one other girl, as far as girls being there, and—

TS: About how many men?

DM: In our class? About thirty guys in our class.

TS: Okay. And then two women?

DM: And two women. But that was just—The welding class was much smaller than the rest of the other classes in the engineering school. You would have one platoon. The other courses would have, like, two to three platoons.

TS: Oh, okay. So it's a small knit group?

DM: It's a small group. So we had fun. The only bad part was it was hot, and we welded in metal boots, wearing all leather—heavy leather pants, heavy leather coats—and it was Lejeune in the summer months, so we sweat.

TS: Sweat. Sticky. Yeah, that was not the fun part.

DM: That wasn't the fun part.

TS: But everything through that was okay, like, as far as how you were treated for your training?

DM: I was treated—I thought I was treated fine for the training. We had—Because it was only two—Both of us were very active, physically fit. We could run with the guys, we didn't fall out, because that was—which I didn't understand what the issue was when I first got there because they were like, "Okay, more females. We got to prepare for fall outs."

And I'm like—Well, that's when we find out the guys are running three miles, we're joining them. They expected us to fall out at a mile and a half, but we are now PTing with them. And both of us, like I said, we are both physically fit and we both could run the three miles. Neither one of us fell out. We actually ran better than some of the guys because we had ran cross-country during our school years. So I think if we would have gone there, and if the mile and a half was the only thing I was ever exposed to, I would have issues.

TS: Okay.

DM: Whenever you start falling out of any type of unit PT, you get flagged. You have to do all the extra remedial PT during your free time and, no, we didn't have that, so we had all of our free time.

TS: So they were expecting because you were women that that's what was going to happen.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DM: That we would automatically fall out. Yeah.

TS: And then, you exceeded those expectations, and so then you fit in a little bit better?

DM: It was easier. It was weird because some of the rules were different.

TS: In what way?

DM: Like in the barracks, all the—Well, okay. For all of engineering school, there was only, maybe, ten women; for all of them. And we had five rooms. All of the barracks that are three decks. Our rooms had to be next to the duty hut [office for drill instructors in a platoon's squad bay]. It was like—That was the part that got annoying. It was like, "Who cares? Just put me in room. Why is this a big deal?"

And they're like, "No, no, no. We can't have nothing happen to you."

So it was kind of like I had way too many big brothers. It's like, "Alright guys, I understand what you're doing but y'all need to stop. You're getting on my nerves."

TS: So they were really protective?

DM: They were protective. "Please don't go out running by yourselves. Don't do this. Don't do that."

And then I'd just laugh because I'd be like, "Alright. Don't want us to go anywhere by ourselves, but if we go anywhere with anybody you automatically assume we're dating that person." And they'd just give us that look. [dogs barking]

[Recording Paused]

TS: [unclear] Alright, sweet puppy dogs.

DM: Oh, yes.

TS: So you're in your MOS training, and so did you think it went pretty well for you?

DM: I think it did. I do.

TS: Yeah. And then how long was that training? Not very long? I guess you told me [unclear].

DM: A few months.

TS: It was about six months?

DM: Yeah. It went by quick though.

TS: Did it? And then you got an assignment—

DM: [Marine Corps Base] Camp Pendleton [Southern California].

TS: Camp Pendleton.

DM: Yes.

TS: Were you excited to go there?

DM: I wanted to travel, so I was upset because I wanted to leave the country and only one person got to leave the country out of my MOS school. I was like, "Come on!" [both chuckle]  
They were like, "Well, we can give you Lejeune."  
I'm like, "No! I want to leave." So I ended up with Camp Pendleton, so that was alright.

TS: Well, that's all the way across the country.

DM: Yeah, but I was hoping to leave the country. [chuckles] I really wanted to travel, and to me, California's not traveling. That's in the country.

TS: Oh, okay. So how was it though? How was that assignment?

DM: It was alright. I enjoyed it. I call it the "single marines duty station" because—

TS: Why do you call it that?

DM: The cost of everything. You have all the parks. It's just the cost of doing stuff was much higher so—I had gotten married and I had my two kids and the cost of daycare was crazy.

TS: At what point did you get married?

DM: I got married—let's see, what year was Cody[?]  
—ninety-eight.

TS: Ninety-eight. Oh, you got married at Camp Pendleton?

DM: At Pendleton—Okay, I was married and divorced.

TS: Okay. Before you went in or during the time?

DM: I got married at Camp Pendleton.

TS: Okay.

DM: And then I got divorced when I got back from Okinawa [Japan] [Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler?].

TS: Okay. Alright. But at first when you were at Camp Pendleton you were single.

DM: When I was single, I mean, it wasn't bad. Because you're single, what kind of bills do you have?

TS: Right.

DM: The whole investment thing? Yeah, I didn't know anything about that until much, much later [both chuckle]. So, I mean, I got to do a lot of stuff, kind of like I was a tourist. But it got old for me because—

TS: Where did you like to go when you were enjoying it?

DM: Well, like I said, we did all the Disney—all the tourist spots so—and the beach.

TS: And the beach. Yeah.

DM: Yes. I'm a beach person. As long as I could get to the beach I was happy.

TS: Okay. And how was the job?

DM: The job was interesting. There was days I loved the job and there was days I was like, "Just get me out of this place." But I put a lot of it to personalities, because there's so many people coming and going. You get there and you're enjoying it, then all of the sudden every—It's all about the leadership. If you—If it's good leadership and you enjoy the leadership, you enjoy the work. But if you get one of those leaders in a position that you don't agree with or don't like the way he runs things, you don't like where you're at. And then they get orders and you get somebody new in.  
I couldn't get out of that platoon. I was in the same platoon for five years and it drove me nuts.

TS: Did it?

DM: I was like, "Dude, I was the little rifleman to the squad leader to the platoon sergeant. I need to go." I couldn't even get out of that platoon and that company. I was like, "Can I go to headquarters? Can I go here?"

TS: Why wouldn't they let you go?

DM: Well, it was just the way it was set up back then. I was a welder and—

TS: This was the welding platoon.

DM: This was the only spot that the welder went.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: And there was only three of us, so you stayed there.

TS: There were three welders?

DM: Three welders, that's it.

TS: Okay. So in that environment, at Camp Pendleton, it would seem the ratio of men to women would be really high.

DM: Yeah. I was—it was like, me—I was the only female in that platoon, and for the company I was, like, one of three.

TS: Okay. And so, did you have that brother relationship there, too, or was it different?

DM: It was like half and half. Some of the guys were like, "Female."

TS: Like they didn't want you there?

DM: "There's a female here." And other ones were like, "Hey, okay, as long as you can do it, alright." And then there was other ones that were just trying to date you.

TS: [chuckles] Okay, so you had three sets, right?

DM: Yeah, so it was crazy. So I was like, "What?"

TS: How did you handle all that?

DM: I ignored them for a while. I did. It was like after work I would just go to my room, do whatever I would need to do, change, get in my truck and leave and leave everybody behind, because I was like I—

TS: You didn't have a group of females that you could go out and do stuff with?

DM: No, it was just me and the two other girls, and they were married so they weren't in my barracks.

TS: Did you feel isolated at all?

DM: Not really.

TS: No?

DM: But I've never been one to have to have people with me to do stuff.

TS: Okay, so you're real independent and not so much—

DM: I didn't need to have that person with me. Now, if I'm going somewhere I've never been, like a downtown area and I know it's a bad area to be by yourself, then I try to grab somebody with me.

TS: Okay. Well, tell me a typical day on the job.

DM: For me, when I was in Pendleton, I would just leave my barracks, and then the barracks—I don't know if it's still like that—but then the barracks was right across the street from the company. So literally you got up, got dressed, walked across the street. We did PT, and the first thing they try to do is get me to fall out, but I lucked out because I've already been around them so I was good.

TS: What do you mean by they tried to get you to fall out?

DM: That was their goal the first—"We need to get her to fall out."

And I'm like—And of course, the staff sergeant who was leading it, he goes, "I'm just going to keep this pace until you fall out."

Of course, I'm just like, "Okay." I mean, I wasn't going to say anything because I didn't want to see how fast he could run or anything. And he would just run at that pace, and he was getting mad because I wasn't falling out. Now, if he would have done sprints, he probably would have dropped me.

TS: But he just kept a steady, long pace.

DM: He kept a steady pace, thinking I'm going to fall out at a mile and a half, maybe two miles, but why am I still here at five miles? He was getting a little upset. I was used to it.

TS: Right. Did that end? I mean, did that attempt to get you to fall out, did he try it for a while or—

DM: He tried it for a while but I was used to it, and then he realized that, "Okay, she ain't going to be the one to fall out at the mile and a half. She's not—" Because I was willing to do the same thing they were.

I guess a couple of the other females that had been in the company, at the mile and a half they would just stop running and they would be like, "No, we're going back," because they were only required to run a mile and a half.

And so, I was like, "Oh." I didn't even know that existed, because in my platoon I was like, "What are you talking about, they just stopped? Is that an option?" I was, like, totally flabbergasted when they finally told me why they were doing it and I'm like, "Okay. Didn't know that was an option."

TS: Well, you probably wouldn't have done that anyhow.

DM: Yeah, but it was just—like I said, it was just [unclear] because that's where they got it. They had a couple of bad females that—"Hey, I'm good. You can't do nothing to me." And that's why they got that sour taste.

TS: I see, okay.

DM: So as soon as they realized I wasn't going to be like that they were like, "Oh, okay. Now we'll take you in." And then, I had too many brothers.

TS: Yeah, you had a lot of brothers, I'm sure. So you say you got married at Camp Pendleton and divorced in Okinawa, or a different—

DM: Divorced when I came back from Okinawa.

TS: Okay. Did you have your kids by then?

DM: I had my two oldest; I had Cody and Iris.

TS: At Camp Pendleton?

DM: At Camp Pendleton.

TS: Okay. And how was that when you were pregnant there? How were you treated? How did that experience go?

DM: It was different. It was—Because I was welding, and when I found out I was pregnant I wasn't allowed to be by the fumes. So I got put in an office job and I was like, "Oh, this is, like, different for me," because I was never a secretary, I never did—

TS: Right.

DM: So it was interesting trying to understand the rules and what I was allowed to do, what I wasn't allowed to do. And it wasn't just me trying to understand the rules. I was the only

female in the platoon so my staff NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and all, they were like, "Well, we got to look up the rules too," because they didn't know what they were allowed to do and not allowed to do, and we were like, "Well, this is going to be interesting." Because we didn't know. All I had was my duty chit [request for special permission] that said "Okay, here and here and here."

I'm like, "This is all I know. This is what the doc [document] says."

TS: Did you feel like you were treated fairly?

DM: Yeah, I think I was.

TS: Yeah. They gave you some time off, too, for the Marine Corps, I think. They had a longer time.

DM: Well, when I was in, I didn't have that—

TS: No?

DM: —three—There was one that was almost six months. That wasn't me; I didn't get that. I got six weeks.

TS: Six weeks, okay.

DM: Which I'm glad I had six weeks because both my kids are—well, both of them were big so—that was the only thing they were—because when I came in and—I mean, I blew up; I had huge kids. And they're like, "Just whatever you do, do not go into labor at work." That's the only thing they asked of me. I could—

TS: Oh, the guys? [chuckles]

DM: They're like, "Just do not go into labor."  
I'm like, "Okay."

TS: As though you can control that.

DM: I was like, "How am I supposed to—I don't know what's going to happen."  
That was the only thing they—"Just please don't. Please."

TS: So you had a couple kids there. You're married. Now, was your husband in the Marine Corps?

DM: He was.

TS: And then you got orders. Was that when you went to Okinawa?

DM: I went to Okinawa.



TS: Now, did your husband also get orders there too? Did you go on a joint assignment?

DM: No, he—my ex-husband—We got married, he ended up getting out for a medical discharge, and then when I got orders to Okinawa he went back home and got around his friends that weren't such of a good influence. So I came back home from Okinawa to that and that's when I took the kids and said, "Oh, okay. We're done."

TS: Okay. But when you went to Okinawa, it was a single tour?

DM: Yeah.

TS: Was it a hardship tour [a tour at any overseas duty station where command-sponsored dependents are not authorized] or something?

DM: Nope, at that time they were only doing one year unaccompanieds [unaccompanied tours]. Because I wasn't a sergeant yet I didn't qualify for an accompanied tour. I had to pick up sergeant to qualify for accompanied tour.

TS: And so, what's the difference?

DM: Unaccompanied tour, at that time, was one year. Accompanied tour was three years, but you bring your family.

TS: Right. But you had to be without your family for that whole year?

DM: I had to be without them for a whole year, unless I picked up sergeant, and then I can request to have my orders modified.

TS: I see, okay. Alright. So then, how was it? If you're away from your kids and—

DM: It was—I think the stressful part was because I didn't have my kids, but it was different because the only thing I was worrying about was just work. I just did my job. I did a lot of sightseeing.

TS: Where'd you go?

DM: Everywhere.

TS: Where's everywhere? I've never been to Okinawa.

DM: Oh, you've never been to Okinawa? Okay, well, there's this little book that says *Where to go in Okinawa*, and me and my roommate literally took that book and stopped at every single place.

TS: Oh, really?

DM: We didn't like sitting in the barracks. It was—They have the war memorials they have up there, the old battlegrounds. They had some more traditional tourist sites for them. It was just—They have playgrounds, which I don't see us having playgrounds like this. These playgrounds were like obstacle courses.

TS: Really?

DM: And it was frustrating because you would go out over there and you're like, "How in the world do you do that?" Next thing you know, you see a seven year old—and of course, they're all small, so their seven year olds are like the size of a three year old—jump up, do this obstacle, and get to the end, and you're like, "I can't even reach that." It just—So we found all sorts of stuff to do.

TS: Yeah. That's cool.

DM: So we had a lot of snorkeling. But I mean, it was just work, and then go see what's on the island and come back.

TS: How'd you like the culture there?

DM: Oh, I loved the culture there.

TS: Yeah. What was it about it that you were attracted to?

DM: Same thing like in West Virginia, if you were polite to them, they were polite to you. I mean, some people don't like Okinawa because they had a bad experience. I've never had a bad experience. Don't know why. I just never had. And then, it's really if you're polite to them, you respect—because you have to take a little bit of time, you have to read up on some of their traditions, and learn what you shouldn't touch and what you can touch, because they have their little memorials and stuff where they do their prayers and their incense. You just respect that area. You don't goof around in there. That's out of respect, and if you respect their traditions and respect them, they're nice to you.

TS: Yeah.

DM: I mean, I just enjoyed it because I always like seeing different things and doing different things.

TS: How'd you like the food?

DM: Oh, I love food. I love all sorts of foods, so if it's different I was willing to try it at least once.

TS: Okay [chuckles]. Alright.

DM: At least once. Don't like all stuff but—

TS: Right. But you try it.

DM: Yeah, I make an attempt.

TS: So your work environment, how was that?

DM: It was busy. I wasn't welding. They put me in a customer service role because they had too many welders. So I was sitting behind a computer, answering phones, and logging in maintenance tickets.

TS: How'd you like that?

DM: It got monotonous.

TS: Yeah.

DM: Just kind of got old.

TS: Yeah. So it was like get in, get out, go play around Okinawa.

DM: Yeah, that's probably why I never stayed in the barracks because I was like, "I'm done. I need to move."

TS: Yeah. Where did you want to go after that? And so, now it's like you've been in—ninety-three? So you had to have reenlisted at some—

DM: Yeah. That's how I got Okinawa. Because I needed to move and I wasn't moving anywhere.

TS: So you reenlisted at Camp Pendleton to go to Okinawa?

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay. Did you put in for your next assignment or did they just give you a place to go?

DM: Well, I asked for Lejeune because it was cheaper in childcare.

TS: Okay.

DM: The cost of living—Once I had my kids and I was paying two [hundred] fifty [dollars] a week in just childcare, that adds up real quick. So I was like, "Let's go to Lejeune. It's supposed to be cheaper," and that's how I ended up at Lejeune.

TS: Was it cheaper?

DM: Oh, God, yeah.

TS: Oh, yeah? What was the difference?

DM: About a hundred bucks a week.

TS: Yeah. Why was it so different?

DM: The economy. In California you charge a lot more.

TS: Oh, okay. Was it off-base childcare or on-base?

DM: On-base.

TS: The on-base was different?

DM: Yes.

TS: Oh, that's interesting, because it's not like you're making any more depending on where you're at.

DM: Nope.

TS: Okay.

DM: Well, your housing's more in California if you lived off-base.

TS: Oh, your BAQ [Basic Allowance for Quarters]?

DM: Yeah. But that's the only—

TS: Right. Now, you've divorced. You divorced—

DM: I came back and I started the divorce process.

TS: Okay. And then you got your kids and you're at Camp Lejeune.

DM: Yes.

TS: And so, how was your experience at Camp Lejeune?

DM: I had a good experience. Like I said, I came back from Okinawa, got my kids, filing for divorce, so now I'm the single parent. And I made really good friends in Okinawa that came to Lejeune, and then the people I worked for worked with me to help me get everything taken care of, set up to where I was able to still be in the Marines and still take

care of my kids, find that balance. I mean, I still came to PT and everything like that, but they helped me find that reliable babysitter, that—those individuals, they gave me the tools to succeed.

TS: Okay. So you had good mentors helping you on that one.

DM: Yes. Now, I mean, they didn't do it. They'd just say, "Hey, this is where you need to go." So they gave me the tools, and I think that's why I enjoyed it the most because they didn't hand walk me, but they didn't leave me with nothing. They were like, "Hey, here, here—" They led me.

TS: Now, were they men or women or both? Or just a mix of—

DM: Well, there was more women there, but my immediate office where I worked was all men.

TS: All men. And you're in the maintenance battalion?

DM: I'm in maintenance battalion.

TS: Now, are you working as a welder again?

DM: Nope.

TS: Okay.

DM: Because I decided—I had found out when I was overseas that welders, after they pick up sergeant, to pick up staff sergeant, we merge with engineer, mechanics, and operators. I know nothing about how to fix an engineer piece of equipment and I don't know how to operate any of them. So for me to pick up staff sergeant, I have no knowledge of 75% of that staff sergeant's ability.

TS: Okay.

DM: So I'm like, "I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to set myself up for failure. I'm not." So I was like, "Let me do a lat [lateral] move." And that's when I looked at maintenance management because I did it when I was pregnant. I did it in Okinawa. And I was like, if I get this, I can move forward in an area that I knew.

TS: Okay. Even though it was a little more boring for you?

DM: It was boring. I had to learn a lot more out of it. It wasn't boring towards the end because I was like, "Oh, that's why we do this." But back then, all you did was fill out paperwork and you're like, "Oh."

TS: [chuckles] Because you're hands-on and you want to be doing the job.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Well, let me ask you about this then. Are you thinking about long-term staying in or are you still just going from four year enlistment to four year enlistment?

DM: I was—Once I came home and I realized I was going to be a single parent, my whole focus changed. It was like, "Okay, yeah, I can get out at the end of this enlistment but what am I going to do? How am I going to feed the kids? What—" All this other stuff started to come into play, I'm like, "You know what, maybe—" That's when I started looking at long-term.

TS: Okay. So you had new responsibilities to—

DM: Yeah. Now it wasn't me just wanting to travel. Now it's like, "Okay, I need to take care of the family. Let's look at long terms for everything." So that's when it—my whole outlook changed.

TS: Okay. But did you still want to go places and see things?

DM: Oh, I still wanted to travel. My kids have been plenty of places because Mama wants to travel so kids come.

TS: Yeah. So you cross-train into the—

DM: 0411 [MOS code]; Maintenance Management [Specialist].

TS: Maintenance management. But you're still at Camp Lejeune when you did that or was that when you went to [Camp] Geiger.

DM: I was at Camp Lejeune.

TS: Okay.

DM: And I was trying to get on the MEU.

TS: The meal?

DM: The MEU. The Marine Expedition Unit; the floats; get on the ship and go do the different exercises. I was trying to get on the MEU because I hadn't deployed, I hadn't done anything, and it would be a really good experience for a 0411 to get that.

TS: Stepping stone for promotion, sort of?

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DM: And so, they had just finished my paperwork and I got the 0411 and they're like, "Hey, we got a spot on the MEU."

I'm like, "Yes!" Well, while I was doing the work up for the MEU, the 0411 monitor cut me orders to Camp Geiger. He needed a female to be an instructor.

TS: So then you didn't get to go to the MEU.

DM: I didn't get to go, I got pulled off. I was like, "Uh." I was so mad, and my boss, all he goes, "I can't tell them you're pregnant because if you're pregnant you wouldn't be going on the MEU. I can't tell them you're broke because if you're broke you wouldn't be going on the MEU."

TS: Right. You didn't have any way out.

DM: He's like, "I can't help you. You're going to have to go to SOI [School of Infantry]." And I'm like, "Uh. Man!" I was frustrated, because I had moved my mom in with me on base, did the paperwork for that. So she had moved in so I could go on the MEU; to raise my kids for me so I can get that deployment out. And I'm like, "Now I'm going to SOI. What the hell am I going to do there?" Because I never went to MCT, I never—

TS: What's MCT?

DM: Marine Combat Training. Well, now females go to Marine Combat Training.

TS: Right. Because you hadn't gone through it when you initially had gone through your boot camp, right?

DM: Yes.

TS: So now that's what you're going to train?

DM: And that's now what I'm teaching, yeah. I was like—

TS: So how'd that work out?

DM: It was interesting. I got there. I met some really good friends. It was me and four other females, and of course, all grunts [infantry in ground combat units of Army and Marine Corps] in the class.

TS: And this is, like, '99, almost 2000, close to it.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DM: So we—No, it was, like, 2001. Yeah, 2001.

TS: Was it? Oh yeah, I'm sorry. June of '01. Okay, yeah. Alright. Oh, interesting time to be there. Okay.

DM: Yeah. So it was all grunts, and then you had the only ones that weren't grunts were the females. So they would give us classes and the grunts would just get frustrated because we all have to go through the same classes. Well, it was like, how to shoot a .50 cal [caliber], how to shoot a .240 [Weatherby Magnum?], how to go on patrol.

For me, the girls were like, "Okay, this is stuff we don't know so we're paying attention."

And we can just feel it, the grunts are like, "Uh. Let's get over this." They didn't want nothing to do with it because they've already done this stuff. They've already—They're like, "Uh." You could tell the frustration.

And for them, I guess, the different entry units have their own way of doing certain things, so they were told, "Hey, you can't do it that way no more or you have to do it this way because this is how the textbook says it. So get rid of your SOP [standard operating procedure] and do it just the way the textbook says."

It was quite interesting. All we could do was just—I mean, we had fun but it was a whole different level of you need to accomplish this, and physical fitness, which is—when I went through the course, you had to complete everything. You cannot fall out of anything. If you didn't, you got sent back to your unit. So it was interesting because that was how—you did 100%, 110%, you did want you had to do. And we finished it, and then we got assigned to our companies, and it was weird because I'd never gone through MCT. I never even shot the .50 cal or the .240. And the first class I went through, they were like, "Okay, you need to teach them how to clear this and this and this."

And I'm like, "Look—" And then I seriously was like—looked at the guy and was like, "I hate to tell you this but I've never even touched one of these. You gave us book classes and you want me to show them how to disassemble this?"

And the look on his face, it was like, "Oh, crap."

Because they thought we had disassembled them, we fired them. I'm like, "I've never fired this. Ever." So it was kind of like I was a student while I'm teaching them. So they would have their classes during the day and whatever classes they were supposed to have the next day, I would have to stay late—

TS: To learn how to teach them.

DM: To learn it and do it so I can teach it to them the following day.

TS: Wow.

DM: And then, of course, I was the only one that did demonstrations because they're like, "You're going to have to learn how to fire these." So I was the demo girl, because that was the only way I was going to learn how to do it was to demonstrate it.

And I'm like, "Let me mess this up in front of the students. Oh, God."



TS: Right. That's a lot of pressure.

DM: I was like, "Geez."

And they were like, "Yeah, you should do this!"

And I was like, "Dude, I have no idea what that is. You want me to press what button? Where's it located?" It was interesting.

TS: It's interesting. It seems like whoever had assigned you to that would have had some knowledge about what you—

DM: They just needed a female who wasn't pregnant or broke. That's all they were looking for.

TS: Now, is that when combat training started for women or was it—

DM: It was after. Combat training started for women—It was before it became a B-billet.

TS: What does that mean?

DM: B-billet, basically, it's your drill instructors, your recruiters, and everything. It was only—  
The only people who were allowed to teach, at that time, was grunts. And then we had females there because it was basically like babysitting. You had to have a female on deck, if there was ever an issue with a female.

[A B-Billet allows marines to look for career opportunities outside their regular military occupational specialty (MOS)]

TS: So the grunts were actually mostly the instructors too?

DM: We mixed in.

TS: Okay.

DM: The majority of us mixed in. There's a few female instructors that didn't mix in. They just—They didn't learn, so it made it interesting.

TS: Wow. That is really an interesting story. And then even more interesting as I look at this, is you were there when 9/11 happened.

[The September 11, 2001 attacks, or 9/11, was a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the United States on the morning of 11 September 2001. The attacks killed 2,996 people and injured over 6,000 others]

DM: I was at maintenance battalion when 9/11 happened.

TS: Were you?

DM: Yeah. Did I mess my dates up?

TS: Maybe a little bit, because it says June '01 through May '05 at Camp Geiger. So September 2001 would have put you at Camp Geiger, but you were at Lejeune?

DM: I was at Lejeune.

TS: Okay. So maybe—

DM: I messed my date up.

TS: That's okay. So maybe just went a little bit later here. So can you tell me about that when you—

DM: September 11. Oh, that was crazy. I worked in the MOS, the maintenance operation section, and it's just a small, little office inside of maintenance battalion. It's kind of like the head shed [a command or control center] for all the different maintenance commodities, because it's broken up by Motor T [Motor Transport], Engineers, Comm [Communications], and Ordnance. So it's kind of like the little bubble, and that's where I worked.

When 9/11 happened I was in that office, and all we could do was look at each other like, "Oh, shit." Because we were like—we went to make a phone call—I had to call somebody, and then it was like couldn't get through. I'm looking at my boss and I'm like, "I can't call these people. I can't get through."

And then that's when they called a formation, was like—announced, "Hey, there's a bombing."

"What?" We're all like, "What are you talking about?" And it hit hard because all the sudden they're like, "Who do we have on leave that's in New York? We need to get ahold of that person."

And we're like, "Oh, crap, we have two people."

So we spent the entire day trying to just get ahold of them. They were fine but there was just so many phone calls going in and you couldn't get through. And it was just kind of like base pretty much went on lockdown and we're like—what do you do? We're all just kind of—We were waiting. We were waiting for somebody to say, "Hey, pack your stuff, do this." But it was just—the waiting part was just—it killed because your mind just kept wandering. All the what-ifs; "Where are they coming next?" So it was just—the wandering part was going on.

TS: Did you feel like there in the Marine Corps there was a before 9/11 and an after 9/11, in the way that the operations worked for the Marine Corps?

DM: There is. There's a big difference. For the ones that were in before 9/11, we remember money crunches. "Hey, you can't do it on that bill because you spent all of it. Sorry. Make it happen with what you got." And then 9/11, it's like an endless amount of money but you were always training.

TS: Training?

DM: Training. Everybody was training. Even if you weren't a grunt you were training. And that was the big focus. Everybody did the exercises, everybody was just doing multiple training, trying to figure out what's going to go on. Who's going to leave? How are you going to support it?

TS: And maybe that's why you went to Camp Geiger, then? They needed somebody—

DM: They needed females.

TS: Right, but to train the females—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DM: But to train them.

TS: Yeah.

DM: So it was different. And that might have been why there was so much—"Hey, you're not a grunt but, yeah, we have to take you in because—" The men were still scared of females.

TS: I need to get you on video because when you talk, it's like—

DM: Oh, I got facial expressions? Yeah. I'm sorry. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, because there's a little bit of eye rolling going on. [chuckles]

DM: Yeah, there is. There is. They were so scared of females. It was—

TS: They were scared of females?

DM: Scared, because you always hear the horror stories. And I'm a firm believer it was beat into the male head that female marines were bad. "No good. Don't trust them. Stay away."

TS: Bad, as in not capable or bad—Bad in what way?

DM: Everything. Everything. "Don't trust them." Some of the male [unclear] were like, "I don't know."

I'd be like, "Well, you don't know about what?"

And they'd be like, "Well, if I have you do this, are you going to turn around and say I harassed you?"

I'm looking at him like, "What?" And it's all because they ran up against one that there was issues. So they assume that one out of the forty that they've dealt with, that the rest of the thirty-nine are like that.

TS: So for a woman, if they mess up, it's a reflection on all women.

DM: Yes.

TS: But if a guy messes up—

DM: It's only on them.

TS: It's only on them, right.

DM: So it was kind of like trying to get over the typical stereotype. It was just frustrating.

TS: Yeah. Did you have that your whole career?

DM: I would say mostly the beginning part because I was young. I hadn't—I think once you pick up sergeant to staff sergeant, people realize, "She's been around for a bit and the only way she was going to make it here was if she was able to do these things."

TS: Okay. So rank makes a difference?

DM: It just shows time and experience, and I really think it does. Because stuff that they would think that would happen, and you know it wouldn't happen, and you're like, "You wouldn't even be worried about it if I was a sergeant or a staff sergeant."

TS: Right.

DM: But they're worried about it.

TS: That's interesting. So your time at Camp Geiger when you're doing the combat training, at the beginning you're really learning?

DM: Yeah. I felt bad for the poor guys. I'm like, "Dude. I have no idea what you're asking me to tell them to do tomorrow." So we would be there until midnight just—I wouldn't even have duty. So it would be some poor guy, because you can't take the instructors off the students; you have to have so many instructors with the students at all times. So it would be this guy that would get stuck staying—Instead of going home to his family, he would

get stuck having to tutor me all night. And I'm sure the wives probably didn't appreciate the one day their husband can come home, he's stuck teaching me how to do this.

TS: But by the end of the time you were there—

DM: Yeah, I already—"Okay, I can—" I was doing it, but it was like the first couple of classes, I'm like, "I know you said this is how you do it but, alright, that was a couple weeks ago and I only did it for that thirty minutes."

TS: "I need a refresher."

DM: And they were good about it because I didn't want to go up there and show my butt.

TS: Right, they didn't want you to look bad either.

DM: Because if I looked bad, they looked bad in that situation. Because you weren't up there just teaching females how to do it, you're up there teaching the guys how to do it; the male marines.

TS: That's true, yeah.

DM: And you don't ever want to lose credit in front of a student, because once you lose that credit, you're not getting it back, even if it was a simple mistake. Okay, you mix the two and the one up, you do not want to lose your credit. So they were all about, "Hey, let's do this." Like I said, it was a learning experience.

TS: Yeah, I guess so.

DM: Had fun.

TS: Did you put in for something that you wanted to try to do differently, then? I mean, like, go to some different place geographically after that?

DM: When I left MCT, they basically asked me where I wanted to go. Well, at this time, because all the deployments because of 9/11, I hadn't had a deployment yet.

TS: Right.

DM: So I'm like, "Well, send me someplace they're going to deploy me."  
"Well, I can send you to 10th Marines." Okay, so I went to 10th Marines.

TS: That's at Camp Lejeune?

DM: That was at Camp Lejeune. So I'm expecting to deploy. Well, hang on, they sent me to 2nd Marine Division. I went to Comm Battalion for two days on their manifest, and then

2nd Marine Division had to change my orders and sent me to 10th Marines because they were shortfall[?].

TS: Okay, I didn't follow all that.

DM: It was frustrating, because my mom was still living with me. So they're like, "You're going to the 2nd Marine Division."

I'm like, "Alright." They sent me to Comm Battalion. I was there for two days. I was on their manifest. I was supposed to leave in, like, two weeks.

TS: Oh, you were on the manifest to deploy?

DM: To deploy. And then something happened and 2nd Marines was like, "You're going to 10th Marines now." And they pulled me from Comm Battalion and sent me to 10th Marines.

TS: But you don't know why?

DM: Well, the gunny [informal abbreviation for gunnery sergeant] that was there, something happened and he had to go. So then I'm like, "Alright."

TS: So you're filling in for the other place?

DM: So now I'm at 10th Marines. I'm like, "Okay. This is a deployable unit, maybe I'll deploy." So went there for a year, got about six months into that tour of duty and I got orders to Okinawa because I hadn't deployed.

TS: Because you hadn't deployed?

DM: Because I hadn't deployed, my overseas [controlled it?].

TS: Alright. And so, then, was that another unaccompanied?

DM: It was unaccompanied because my son has a learning disability, and at that time they were not sending anybody over that had that.

TS: Okay. So your mom stayed behind and took care of your kids?

DM: [coughs] Excuse me. No, my husband—

TS: Your new husband, ex-husband?

DM: Well, we haven't gotten married yet. My husband, my sister, and my mom, between the three of them, took care of all the kids.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: Because he's a grunt and he was deploying and doing exercises.

TS: Okay. So there was a combination helping.

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay. How was your second tour in Okinawa?

DM: It was interesting. I had fun. Well, I mean, I had fun—I didn't have the stress of kids.

TS: Right.

DM: All I had to do was work and to me that was like [unclear].

TS: Okay.

DM: Let me take a drink.

TS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

[Recording Paused]

TS: That's alright. I'm sorry I didn't notice. Okay, so your tour at Okinawa, was it any different than the other one?

DM: It was different because I was now a staff sergeant. So there's like a whole different rule book. I didn't have all the restrictions with being in Okinawa as not being a Staff NCO.

TS: What kind of restrictions did you have before?

DM: You weren't allowed to drive. You had to be back on base by a certain time. Kind of like you're living at your mom's house and you have rules that you got to follow, but you're an adult but you really don't want to follow the rules. So what I come home five minutes after 11 [p.m.]?

TS: Right.

DM: Who cares?

TS: But with rank you get the privileges of not having that.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DM: And I have my own vehicle, which meant I could do whatever I wanted. It was even nice because if I wanted to leave, I could. I didn't have to have a buddy at all times.

TS: Did you buy a vehicle there?

DM: I did, for, like, five hundred bucks.

TS: Yeah. So it's like those ones where you buy it from somebody, leave it, and then you sell it to somebody coming in?

DM: Yeah. I mean, I wasn't looking for no fancy—There's a few marines that got the real nice vehicles. Yeah, but I was not about the payments; not for a temporary—no.

TS: Right. Right. I gotcha.

DM: But it was all new rules. I got sent to a TSB [Transportation Support] Battalion, which was interesting because they went through reorganization; higher headquarters changed them from TSB to CLR-3.

[Combat Logistics Regiment 3 (CLR-3) is a direct support logistics unit of the U.S. Marine Corps, headquartered at Camp Foster, Okinawa, Japan]

TS: And TSB is the transportation? And what's the other one?

DM: Combat Logistics Regiment 3.

TS: Okay.

DM: They did a whole realignment that year, so it was kind of like the amount of people we're supposed to have and the amount of equipment we're supposed to have was always fluctuating, and they were deploying so—I was only there for twelve months so I wasn't deploying with them. [chuckles] It was weird.

TS: So you're getting ready but then you're not actually doing the deployment.

DM: I'm not actually going, yeah. So I was like, "Okay, sounds familiar." Get everybody ready to deploy—

TS: Did you feel like you were missing out because you weren't deploying?

DM: Sometimes yes and sometimes no. I'm a firm believer that there's always a reason and a purpose for something. I may not know what it is and I may not agree with it but there's



always something. So I got frustrated, but then again, I was happy I was not going because maybe—I was really not excited to go to a combat zone because I really didn't feel like being out there in that situation, but then again, I kind of wanted to be out there to do my thing. So it's a mixed feeling. It goes back and forth.

TS: Right. I understand. And then you're in about—what?—fourteen, fifteen years now, and so are you like, "Definitely, this is it. I'm going to have a career."

DM: Yeah. My goal was twenty. "Let me get to retirement and then we'll see what happens."

TS: So you know, then, you've got to do certain things to be able to stay promoted so you can st—

DM: And that was the only reason I wanted to deploy. I was like, "I need to get a deployment." But it was like, every time I got close to it they were like, "No, we're going to send you here." So it was interesting.

TS: Where'd you end up after Okinawa?

DM: I ended up at the school house at Camp [Gilbert H.] Johnson [satellite camp of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune] teaching my MOS.

TS: Okay. Where is that located?

DM: Right in between Geiger and Lejeune.

TS: So back to North Carolina.

DM: Back to North Carolina and—which I kind of chuckled because I never went to the school house to get the MOS, so here I am again, teaching a subject that I never took.

TS: Did you do it by book, by training? How'd you—

DM: All OJT [on-the-job training].

TS: All OJT, okay. So here you go again. Now, you got to study the book to make sure you're doing it the right—

DM: According to the orders.

TS: Oh, okay.

DM: So like I said, it was interesting. All I could do is shake my head. [both chuckle]

TS: And so, how did you like that assignment there?

DM: I enjoyed teaching.

TS: Did you?

DM: I did. It was—Because the material is very dry. It is just dry. So I started out with the entry level students, and I was just amazed at some of the kids coming through that we were putting in the Marine Corps. It was just some could barely speak English, and then others were very book smart but couldn't grasp certain things. It was quite interesting seeing that in a broad spectrum. And then, of course, you have to tailor what you teach to the students, and it was challenging at times because not all of them learn the same way.

TS: Right, right. That's true about learning.

DM: And so, it's like, "How am I going to get you to understand this, and you're bored out of your mind, and keep you in line so you don't get too bored." So it was interesting. I had a good time.

TS: What was your highlight there?

DM: My highlight there? I think when we stood up the intermediate course with the 0411s.

TS: What happened with that?

DM: Well, the 0411s never had an intermediate course. They never had a chiefs course that taught you what you needed to know as a Staff NCO as an 0411.

TS: And what's an 0411?

DM: Maintenance Management Specialist. So there was never, ever any class on it. So me, and there was a couple other gunnies that were at the time, put together the curriculum and developed the course for the intermediate course. So that was—The course we developed was the first course that actually went through. So that I would have to say—because that affected all marines in my MOS—is [to stand up?] the intermediate course.

TS: So that's something you're proud of, for sure.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Now, had you made gunny by then?

DM: I was selected. [chuckles]

TS: Okay, okay.

DM: I got selected and, yeah, and that's when I got my orders. As soon as I got selected they were like, "Here you go."

TS: Yeah. So that's when you got selected to do the training?

DM: No, I got selected while—You get selected and you get assigned a number.

TS: Okay.

DM: And when you get assigned the number—and when that number—they'll put out, "Okay, one, two, four hundred" would get it on this month. Four hundred and one to nine hundred or one thousand will get it on this month. But you won't find out that next group of numbers until the week before that next month, and they never stay the same.

TS: Right.

DM: So I was selected but I hadn't pinned on.

TS: Okay. When did you get pinned?

DM: I got pinned in October.

TS: Of what year was that?

DM: [Two thousand and] ten. [chuckles]

TS: Two thousand and ten?

DM: I had to think. I'm like, "Hang on."

TS: Okay. And so, but you're back at Camp Lejeune then, at the—

DM: Yeah, I'm back at ELMACO [Electronics Maintenance Company].

TS: ELMACO?

DM: Yes.

TS: And what kind of work are you doing there?

DM: I am the Maintenance Management Chief there.

TS: Okay. And so, are you still trying to get deployed?

DM: Well, when I got there they told me, "You're not going to be able to make the manifest for the next deployment."  
And I was like, "Okay." Because at this time I knew I was just going to twenty, and I was three years from twenty.

TS: Okay. So you're just like, "I'm just going to do my time. Whatever."

DM: I'm like, "Alright." And I had gone there and I hadn't gone on a vacation with my family in a while, so I'm like, "Alright, well, I'm going to put in leave since I'm not going on this deployment."

TS: Right.

DM: While I was on leave, they call me and say, "Hey, you just got added to the deployment roster. You're deploying."  
"I thought you said there was no way, absolutely, that I was going."  
And they're like, "Well—"  
I'm like, "That's what I thought."

TS: Right.

DM: Because he looked at my stuff, and I knew as soon as I got there they were going to be, "Oh, she doesn't have it. We're going to deploy her." I knew that was going to happen but he didn't believe me—the first sergeant didn't believe me.  
I'm like, "Yeah, y'all are deploying me. I know this." And came back from my vacation and that started up the workups [pre-deployment training], and then that's when I deployed.

TS: So when you were preparing to be deployed, what kind of different things do you have to do?

DM: For me, because I was at MCT, we had to do the shoots. So it was like, okay, you're firing weapons and a refresher on patrols. And it was kind of weird because we're doing all this stuff and I'm thinking in my head, "That's not what we're going to be doing." So we were doing a lot of training, and then when we deployed, we didn't use it. It was—We were almost—I had more items to my disposal to use in a combat zone than I did in my own office to get my job done. It was strange. I was like—I need something, I just picked up the phone, call, and got it.

TS: When you were in the combat zone?

DM: When I was in the combat zone. When I was back in garrisons, it was like pulling teeth to get a simple task.

TS: Well, there's always the—I don't know—narrative—that the Marine Corps always has the smallest budget, works more on a shoestring, than any of the other services.

DM: Yeah, we always joke about that. Yeah.

TS: Yeah. When you deployed, did you work jointly with other services?

DM: I did, because sometimes they had the parts and we didn't. Because my job, I was the MMO [maintenance manager officer] for the maintenance detachment. Basically, we had to fix all the stuff that got blown up, if it could get fixed.

TS: Okay.

DM: And keeping trucks moving, and all that stuff moving, for the forward units. That was the focus. And a lot of the stuff that we had that we needed to get, the other services had them. They may have categorized it differently or put it in their system differently. So we did a lot of reaching out to them, "Hey, this is what we have." Trying to do a cross reference, and if they had it, it took a little bit of trial and error trying to get the part transferred in the system.

TS: To make it match up to what—

DM: The computerized system. But even if we're having issues getting it to match up in the computer system, I had that part in my hand.

TS: Okay, so you did get it?

DM: I would get the part and give it to the marines to put it on whatever piece of gear it needed to go on. Even if we were still trying to get it to work in the system, they're already installing it. Getting it to match in the system was not a priority. Getting the part on the gear and getting the gear out was the priority.

TS: That was the priority. So it's like you patched the paperwork up as you went?

DM: Yeah. And some of the stuff we figured it out and some of the stuff we just gave up and said, "Here, just give me the part. We'll deal with that on the back side." Where in garrison, there isn't none of that. You don't get it until it's done—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: The paperwork's right.

DM: —until it's done in the system.

TS: That's an interesting way to think of that. Now, when you were preparing to deploy, what kind of things did you—Obviously, you had been to Okinawa twice without your family so you had to do some of the same types of things to prepare for that. What was different?

DM: Well, what was different is I had my youngest, I was married—officially married—with my husband, and he was the one being full time with the kids.

TS: Okay.

DM: I left. My youngest was being potty-trained, my teenager daughter had hit puberty, and my son was just being a teenage boy, so it was like I left home a bag of worms. So it was like, "Sorry, I couldn't plan it." I would call my friends and say, "Go over to the house and help Pete [second husband] because [Iris?] needs the [unclear] bra and apparently now they have grown, and he doesn't feel comfortable."

So it was different because he was like, "Okay, I'm the dad. I'm going to do this. Mom [Deanna's mother?] and sister can—" Because what was going on is my mom would move in—get a new job, move in. Or my sister would quit her job and move in, take care of the kids. And he's like, "So they don't have to quit their jobs, I will do this."

And so, that was the biggest—It was difficult for both of us because it was like, "I've never really trust you." Because it was weird, he was my husband, but it was the first time I'm like, "Here you go."

TS: "Here are the kids."

DM: "You have everything." I did the bills and everything before, and now he's doing the bills, and it felt weird not having that in my control.

TS: Right, sure.

DM: I was like, "I'm not doing the bills."

TS: "Are they paid?"

DM: "Did he pay this? Did he remember this? What about this? What about that?"

TS: Right.

DM: It was a whole different stress level.

TS: Right, because you could pay them in Okinawa, right? You could deal with all that.

DM: Yeah.

TS: So how'd he do?

DM: He did good. I mean, my teenagers, they gave him the run around like, "He's my stepdad."

I'm like, "Oh, nope, wrong answer right there." So they tested the buttons like—

TS: Well, that's what teenagers are supposed to do.

DM: They tested every single button they could, and of course the potty training with— Because he had never had to gone through that yet. It's potty training and day care and babysitters. He had—

TS: Now, had he ever been deployed to this point?

DM: Oh, he's been deployed several times. He had actually gotten out of the Marine Corps because of our schedules. Because it's like, when we got married, when I came back— We got married when I was on leave from Okinawa. When I came back from Okinawa, he was already on a plane going to Iraq. And then when he came back and I was at the school house, he was going to Afghanistan. And we basically—He bit the bullet and got out because I was closer to retirement and I had a less chance of getting shot. That is really how we figured it out.

TS: Okay.

DM: He was like, "I'm getting deployed every—" He's a grunt; much higher chance he goes. So he jumped on that land mine and—

TS: At the time when you were deployed, then he was already out of the service?

DM: Yes. He had just gotten out of the service.

TS: Okay. Wow, so that's a lot for him to have to—

DM: Yeah, I gave him all the stressors that he had never had before. He just—

TS: Yeah, interesting.

DM: He was like, "You will never deploy again. I'm not doing that again." He was like, "No, no, and no."

TS: Well, how was your job, then, when you were deployed? And you want to talk about where you were at?

DM: I was on Camp Leatherneck [Helmand Province, Afghanistan]. The grunts call it "Camp Cupcake" because it had everything. It did. It had quite a bit.

TS: And this was in Afghanistan?

DM: Afghanistan, because it was the main hub for us. And I had all the marines there. We were close-knit, and it was interesting. We would walk down—And of course, everything is little bit different [in that?] it's real close, so you would walk because you don't have a vehicle. And you walk, and it'll take you like, fifteen, twenty minutes to walk to the other

compound, or whatever it is, to get the different parts, but the amount of stuff that we had shoved in that compound was crazy.

TS: You mean for equipment?

DM: For equipment; parts, the different types of reach bag that you could possibly think. And then, of course, marines get creative. If you can't get this part but this is what it looks like, we had a machinist. We used him for everything. Special—

TS: He'd just make stuff for you?

DM: Yeah. "Hey, this is what I need." Give him the specs [specifications] and goes, "Can you come up with something?" And he would try his best to be able to come up with something every single time. Not all the time it worked. Sometimes it did. If it kept the items moving. There was—real tight.

And it was weird because all the Staff NCOs that I was at the schoolhouse with teaching, we had all left the schoolhouse, not at the same time, but at all around the same time. And we started laughing because we went to—because we do our [unclear] awareness meetings, and they had pulled all the maintenance management chiefs from the units up to one spot, and everybody's walking in there and they all walk in the room and I just started laughing. It was like the old office, sitting around the desk again. Out of the six people that was at the schoolhouse, four of us were sitting at the table.

TS: Old home time, right?

DM: We were like, "What the hell? What unit you with? What? What?"

TS: Right.

DM: So it was like, well, we all know each other, so there shouldn't be any issue with getting anything done.

TS: And was there?

DM: No, no.

TS: Not really?

DM: My phone was always ringing because I was at the 3rd [Maintenance Battalion?], which is intermediate maintenance. So basically, you have organizational maintenance. They're the ones with the units, so they do basic repairs and everything. But the 3rd shop does rebuild the engines and does the more in-depth repairs. Well, that's where I was at. So they were all calling me because I had all their equipment; the ones that was out of their echelon so—



TS: Gotcha. Now, did you have duties outside of just your regular MOS that you had to take care of when you were deployed?

DM: You had duties but it wasn't—I wouldn't say outside, it was just Marine Corps duties. You had to make sure the marines were accounted for. I can't really say outside the MOS. Kind of like platoon sergeant type duties.

TS: Because you're a gunny then?

DM: Yeah. You have to keep track of the personnel. I only had three marines in my office, as far as my shop, but you looked out for everybody, because some people don't handle the whole deployment thing very well, some do really great.

TS: What are some situations where they don't handle it well? I mean, not necessarily a specific person but just an incident.

DM: We had the tornados. That was the year Camp Lejeune got hit with the tornados.

TS: A tornado? Yeah? What happened? What's that?

DM: You didn't hear about that?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: No, I don't— I actually don't—

DM: Oh, my goodness.

TS: I don't know anything about it actually.

DM: Yeah, when we were deployed that was the year we had the tornados. And no kidding, one of the husband's wives, she was in base housing, and the tornado hit the house, and it was the old housing—

TS: Oh, Camp Lejeune had the tornados?

DM: Yeah.

TS: I was thinking in Afghanistan. Okay.

DM: No.

TS: So when you're in Afghanistan, that there's tornados in Camp Lejeune. Gotcha. I'm following you now. Tracking with you now.

DM: And the old housing had a firewall, like a brick wall in between. Tornado hit it and the wall fell on his kid. So it was like dealing—and there was a couple other—that was the only death, but there were several other houses that got destroyed, and here you have all these individuals who are deployed who feel helpless because they're not there; they can't do anything.

TS: Right. And they don't know, really, the extent of what happened.

DM: They don't have nothing. There's just, "Hey, pull these people now." So it was interesting because that's—and then you have all the other marines who are doing the what-ifs and who haven't heard anything yet.  
"Well, I haven't heard anything. They haven't called. They haven't emailed me."  
And I'm like, "Just relax."

TS: Right. So you have to try to keep everybody calm?

DM: Keep them calm, because you can't do anything. And so, those happen, and then you have some new marines who just got married. The wife has never been by herself before the husband and it's like—she's having issues and—

TS: And you could relate personally to that.

DM: I could understand that because I'm getting the same emails—"Hey!"  
I'm like, "Just stay patient." And it's weird because when you're out there, people that you talk to, you wouldn't normally go and talk to, because there will be just days when you just need to vent, and whoever's there is whoever you vent to.

TS: Right.

DM: And it's kind of like, even if they're a higher rank than you and you're venting to them, it's not looked down on; they don't judge you for that. "Hey," they're like, "you needed to—"

TS: Because you're in a combat zone, it's a different environment.

DM: "You needed to vent. You feel better?"  
"Yeah, I'm better now. Thank you." And they're good with that.  
Or "Hang on, are you're going to be okay? Do you—" So it's kind of like everybody listened to everybody and just—you took care of each other. Even the people you didn't like, you took care of.  
Like, "I can't stand that dude but he needs help. Let's take care of him."

TS: Right. Now, how about being a woman in a combat zone in Afghanistan? Was there any issue with that for you personally? Or did you see it with anybody else?

DM: I just got frustrated because they had—I call it the "double standards". "Hey, you always have to have a buddy with you. You always need to have a woman with you."  
And I'd like look at them like, "Dude, there ain't another woman in my office."

TS: Right. What are you going to do?

DM: "What? What? Well, you can't walk back home by yourself."  
"Alright. And who's going to stay here?"  
"Oh."

So it depend—It was weird because it was kind of like the double standard.  
Because you had the buddy system, but they really enforced it with the women because they were more afraid of women getting hurt.

TS: Hurt in what way?

DM: There was a few rapes on the camp.

TS: So it's fear of the other soldiers, then, or other marines?

DM: Yeah. It wasn't—

TS: It's not so much worried about attacks. It's just—

DM: It was—There was rapes and nobody said anything about it but you knew. And when I got there you weren't allowed to have your weapon loaded. We're in a combat zone and I had to have my rounds in a different pocket from my weapon. If I'm getting attacked, I'm not going to be—I was like, "What's the purpose of that?" We weren't even allowed to have the magazine loaded. We had to have an empty magazine loaded, and we didn't agree with that. That was my hardest thing. I'm like, "Alright. If someone comes at me, you want me to tell them, 'Hey, wait. Let me take this empty magazine out. Let me put the full magazine in.'?" I'm like, "No, that's stupid."

TS: Right.

DM: So those were the type of—They changed some of the rules. Right after I left is when they had the attack on—I want to say it was [Camp] Bastion, which is right next to Leatherneck. And that's when they're like, "Yeah, we need to have the marines—"

[On 14 September 2012, the Taliban raided Camp Bastion, an airbase in Afghanistan that housed troops from the United Kingdom, the United States and other nations. During the raid, two U.S. Marines were killed, seventeen others were wounded, and several aircrafts were destroyed or damaged. The Taliban claimed the attack was in response to the anti-Islamic short film *Innocence of Muslims*. The airbase is now known as Camp Shorabak.]

TS: Armed.

DM: "—armed," because that's what happened. They broke in, they started shooting people, and you had to wait for marines to get rounds, because you weren't given a full—you were given fifteen rounds, that was it, and you weren't allowed to have them in your weapon. So they changed some of the rules; that you have few sentry that have their—the full magazines, but other than that—

TS: Did you feel safe there?

DM: I didn't trust anybody there. [chuckles]

TS: What do you mean by "anybody"?

DM: I didn't trust because you never know. You never know what type of stress that dude's been in, because the convoys come in, some of the guys have seen some stuff.

TS: Right.

DM: And so, you don't know. You don't know if someone's just going to have a bad day, or if that national [citizen of a particular country] that's cleaning out your Porta-Johns [portable toilets] is putting something in there. You don't know.

TS: So you're always on guard, I guess.

DM: You're always on guard. Yeah. It's just—

TS: That's very stressful.

DM: You just have to look around. It's like, "Okay, that guy's going in a different routine. He normally goes that way but today he's going this way." Because it was tons of nationals out there. It's like, "You look like the guy that was shooting at them."

TS: Right. So you don't know who to trust, like you said.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Was there anything in particular about that assignment that was especially memorable to you?

DM: I have to say it's just all the people that you work with. It's just—I may not remember all their names, but you remember them, because I think everybody was pushed to their limit. When you think something couldn't happen, somebody was able to say, "Hey, I got it," or, "We did this." So I have to say it's just the personalities that just kept everything moving. I laugh—My sister would send me care packages and I'm like, "I don't need all this stuff." Because we were on Camp Cupcake. We got everything.

Well, I would just leave it out for the convoys and the convoys were like, "You're giving us your stuff?"

ICEEs. Who would think push-up pops, ICEEs—little frozen in the tubes—would be a hit? They would send me that, I'd put them in the freezer, and a convoy would come by, I would just give it to them because it was so hot. And if it melts, it's Kool-Aid. I was like, "Really? They're excited about ICEEs? If that's what they're excited about—"

TS: Yeah.

DM: So it's just the expressions on the different people when you're able to help them out in little ways. Or especially if you can get the A/C [air conditioning] fixed in their truck that hasn't been working for three months, they're really excited about that.

TS: Excited about that. Sure. Why not?

DM: They're like, "It works!" I'm like, "Don't jinx it. Don't jinx it. Don't jinx it."

TS: What was the most difficult thing for you there?

DM: The most difficult thing—it's because we were on Camp Leatherneck—I have to say it was doing inspections. I totally disagree with inspections. I could care less if they filled out their paperwork correctly. Did they get the item they needed? Yes. But they wanted me to do inspections when I was out there and I'm like, "I could care less." That was the most difficult thing. We're having a uniform inspection. Are you kidding me? Really? Come on. So that's the type of stuff that I didn't agree with. I hated that part. I was like, "We're really having a uniform inspection?"

TS: Did you feel there that you were treated fairly?

DM: Oh, yeah.

TS: Yeah. And you said you were working with a group that you had worked with before.

DM: Yeah. Well, that was just—It wasn't planned, it just happened.

TS: Right. Right. It just happened. You happened to run into them all.

DM: Yeah.

TS: Is there anything else you want to talk about with your deployment that we haven't covered?

DM: Just made a lot of friends. Like I said, you get really tight.

TS: Yeah. Are you still friends with them today?

DM: Oh, yeah.

TS: Yeah. Well, then, after that deployment you went back—

DM: I went back to maintenance battalion.

TS: Maintenance battalion. And so, you just got how many years left, did you say? Now about two years left?

DM: About a year and half.

TS: About a year and half. So now you're just trying to get to the end?

DM: Well, when I got back—because I already knew I was planning on retiring at twenty, I got back, and right when I got back it was actually the time frame for me to submit my package for retirement.

TS: Oh, was it? Okay.

DM: And that's basically why I stayed there. It just—

TS: No reason to go anywhere.

DM: Package is submitted, it got approved, and now it's trying to get everything done that they say, "Hey, you were supposed to do—" throughout your career to help you retire. Yeah, I didn't do none of that till then. I wasn't focused on that part so—

TS: [chuckles] But you took care of all that?

DM: Yes.

TS: Well, was there any memorable award or achievement that you received during your time in the Marine Corps that you're especially proud of?

DM: I have to say the one that I like the most that I received, I received a navy commendation medal when I was at transportation battalion. It's over [unclear]—

TS: That was in Okinawa?

DM: That was in Okinawa. And I chuckled because that was the first personal award I'd ever gotten, and I skipped all the little ones and I got that one. I was like, "Oh, okay." So it kind of felt weird. I'm like, "Alright." And then the sergeant major of the base came down and awarded it to me. It was the day I was leaving.  
They were like, "We had to get it to you before you got on that plane."  
I'm like, "Okay." And I didn't know I was getting an award so that made it even—

TS: Nicer.

DM: I didn't have to provide bullets [award achievement statement] or anything. I didn't know I was receiving it and I think that's why I liked it the most.

TS: Right. It was really meaningful in that way.

DM: And they wanted to make sure I received it before I left, so that was, to me, the most meaningful one. Because I didn't know about it and—

TS: They definitely wanted to make sure you had it.

DM: Received it. So yeah.

TS: That's pretty cool.

DM: And like I said, it was my first one, and the rest of them it's like, "Okay, I know I'm getting an award because you just asked me to give you the bullets for it."

TS: [chuckles]

DM: I couldn't stand that. Don't ask me to give you bullets for my award.

TS: Yeah. Describe what bullets mean for people who may not know what that means.

DM: Bullets. When they [worked up?] an award they need to know accomplishments. How many—How much money did you save the Marine Corps? That's a big one. Put a dollar sign to anything that you do. You start talk about prices and everything. So what was the readiness for the battalion? Where did you keep the unit levels at? So it's like giving them all the numbers and the justification for the award.

TS: I see. Okay. Right. So you're in for twenty years.

DM: Yes.

TS: Did you see relationships between men and women change at all?

DM: Oh, it changed a lot, because I was in when they went from the mile and a half [run] to the three mile. I was in when they made MCT a B-billet and they started sending marines to combat training—female marines to combat training battalion. And then the whole deploying thing, it's—I see a lot of difference in that. Right when I retired was when they started doing the test beds for putting females in combat roles. Changing the PFT [Physical Fitness Test] to pull-ups. There's just been so many different phases, and it's kind of like you see it and you just do the best you can. Make the changes if you can. Some of the changes, I don't want to see.

TS: Like what?

DM: I don't want to see women in combat, but that's me.

TS: Why not?

DM: I physically—Well, physically, yes, I don't think we're capable of some of the stuff. I mean, yeah, we can run, we can do the pull-ups, but just with some of the heavy equipment. Some loading they had tanks. I don't picture me ever being able to lift one of those rounds, and being able to load that in there, and be able to do it within a certain time frame in a multiple—I'm not saying there isn't a female out there that can do it.

TS: If she can, should she have a chance to do it?

DM: If she wants to do it, but she needs to be making that decision. Now, I don't think—This is probably the political part, but I do not think the ones who are not in should be making the decision.

TS: How do you think that they are?

DM: I think it's an extremist[?]. I do. The individuals who've never served, never did this. "Oh, they should be able to do that." Well, have you asked the ones that are in?

TS: Do you think there's any of them that are in that do want to do those things?

DM: There is, out of all the female marines, maybe 2%.

TS: Do you think, though, that if some of that 2% got into those fields that would be a way to have it—a new norm that would encourage other women to maybe want to do it? Like, they set a new standard and then they—

DM: There's going to be—Yeah, I think there's going to be challenges, but I just hope they don't lower the standard to make it happen.

TS: Right. Well, do you think any woman really wants them to lower the standard, that's in the military?

DM: The active military, no. I think most of them want the standard to remain the same.

TS: Right, yeah.

DM: But I think it's all because they want to see more in there. They want to lower it to get their numbers. And it's all about numbers.

TS: Who's "they" though? Who's "they"?



DM: I would say higher ups. Hey, we had—Because I'm retired but I still work on base, and they have females that try to do these different jobs, but only one of them made it because she was the only one physically capable of doing it. And she was like, "I trained for about six months when they told me I was going to do this to get myself in this."

TS: Ready, prepared.

DM: "And I failed it three times." So there is some out there that can do it, and if they can do it at the current standards, okay. But if they can't do it at the current standards, I don't want them lowering the standards. The standards are there for a reason and I think that should remain the same. But there's a lot of talk about lowering the standards, so I'm like, "No!" [both chuckle]

TS: Well, I think, and some of it, too, though, it's making sure the standards fit the role of the position and the job. Instead of saying that it's actually lowered, is it more that you're making sure that the qualifications for this position are really—

DM: Are realistic.

TS: Exactly. Realistic and fit what is being done. So stuff like that. That's what you hear a lot.

DM: There's a whole bunch. Yeah.

TS: Yeah. Well, did you give or receive any mentoring during your years in the service?

DM: Oh, you receive it all the time and you give it all the time. You can't—

TS: You have talked about it on the way.

DM: Yeah. There's tons of it. You're always talking to junior marines and not—Just because your job is to talk to junior marines, it doesn't mean you're always disciplining them. Sometimes it's just give them the knowledge. "Hey, this is what you need to do."

And you try to lead them in the right path, but it's kind of like you can't make the horse drink the water. You can take them there but it's still up to them to do it. So you have a lot of that. There's some marines that your focus is just to make it through your contract because the military life was not for them. I was like, "Your focus is to make it through the contract." And there's other ones and you're just, like, begging, "Please just reenlist because you're awesome."

TS: Oh, yeah. So you got a mix there?

DM: Yeah.

TS: I'm going to pause for a second.

[Recording Paused]

TS: With the mentoring, was there any disciplinary issues that were really kind of, for you personally, hard to deal with, or was that something that you handled no problem? Like, I mean, was there a case of a person where you were like, "Ugh. I really don't—I wish I didn't have to do this."

DM: No. Usually if—When I had to deal with disciplinary issues, as far as for me, it was they usually got what they—they went beyond the normal "you're late". The only one that was really hard was when I was at the school house, we had a young marine. When I'm talking about young, hadn't even been in the Marine Corps six months yet; young marine. And her fiancé had convinced her to go UA [Unauthorized Absence] and she left in the middle of the night—

TS: UA?

DM: She left. Deserted.

TS: Okay.

DM: Middle of the night, just left. And they ended up in Texas, and she called, crying, wanting to come back. That would have been the hardest one because it's like, "You've been gone for so many days. There's already so much stuff—"

TS: Something didn't work already, right?

DM: Yeah. So it was like, if it was only twenty-four hours. It wasn't. It's been about two weeks.

TS: Two weeks? Oh my goodness.

DM: Yeah. But she was young. I don't even know because I ended up leaving around that time. I don't know what happened with her but—

TS: That was hard?

DM: But that was one of those it's like, young and just—

TS: Dumb mistake. You got consequences.

DM: You can't change it.

TS: Yeah. Wow. Yeah. You talked a little about rape and worries about that in Afghanistan. I mean, that's in the news a lot, right?

DM: Yes.

TS: Not just sexual discrimination, but sexual assault and military trauma from that assault. What are your thoughts on that, and what's been your experience or experiences of people around you for that?

DM: It happens. It's always happened. I just think more people report it now. I don't think it's an increase, by all means. To me, I think it's a decrease because it's—I think more people are aware of it and more people take action.

TS: Why do you think more people are reporting it?

DM: Because there isn't a stigma on it like it used to be. I mean, there's still a stigma. Don't take—There isn't as much of one.

TS: Right. No, I understand what you're staying. And so, did you have to deal with any of those kind of situations?

DM: I personally was never in that spot. I know several individuals that were, and I couldn't tell you how they dealt with it because they never—It's just a hard subject to talk about. I mean—

TS: Right. I think somebody once described it to me really well, that if a rape happens in a unit, it doesn't just affect that person, it affects everybody in the unit and beyond. And it was just a really interesting way that she did the domino effect of it, because it really takes a toll on everybody; for trust, for which side you take, and everything.

DM: Well, you can't take sides. That's the thing.

TS: Right. But people do, right? I mean, internally.

DM: I was a UVA, and I can't even talk about any of the cases I had to deal with, but it's very judgmental. And you have to do it a certain way.

TS: You mean you have to be really objective?

DM: They have guidelines. Like, if you're in the military and you're not a UVA—

TS: And what does UVA stand for?

DM: Uniformed Victim Advocate.

TS: Okay.

DM: All units are supposed to have one. And if you're not a UVA, and you think—you think—that there's possibly a sexual assault, battery, anything, you are required to report it. Period.

TS: No matter what kind of rank you got on.

DM: Nope. You're required. If you're a UVA, if the victim comes to you, you are not required to report it.

TS: Because they have the process of either doing it anonymously or not?

DM: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DM: And a lot of people are still uncomfortable, but a lot of times when it's reported, it's not reported by the victim.

TS: By other people who have heard about it.

DM: By other people that heard about it or think something might have happened. If you think, you report it.

TS: Okay. That's a newer sort of attitude about it?

DM: I forget what year that came out but that's now a requirement. If you think something, you have to report it. And that's why I think a lot more is getting reported, because it's not just up to the victim. Now, if I think that individual was assaulted last night, I have to report that. I can't turn a blind eye.

TS: Do you think there's any changes in the process that would make it better?

DM: There's a lot of changes, but I think with that [unclear] item, there's still a lot of bugs to be worked out. There's still—Because it affects everybody. If you move that—[referring to dog] Yeah, she just wants to be petted—If you move that individual out of that environment, now she's not doing that job or he's not doing that job. Who's going to do that job? So it's a domino effect. You can't just send them, or if you don't send—if you move—leave the victim there and you move the person that's being accused of doing this, well, who's going to fill in their job? So it's a domino effect. It is. Because you can't just move one pawn and not affect everybody.

TS: Right. That was an interesting way that it was described to me. Well, let me ask you, then, about the issue of—Let's see when you went in. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," that started soon after you went in.

["Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is 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 people from military service. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed 20 September 2011]

DM: Yes.

TS: And then it was repealed. Was it repealed before or just after you got out, maybe?

DM: Right before I got out.

TS: Right before? That's interesting because you kind of looped through that whole span of it. [chuckles]

DM: Yes.

TS: What are your thoughts on the idea of gays and lesbians in the military?

DM: They were always in the military. They were. I don't believe in it, but I won't hold it against them.

TS: You don't believe in them being in the military—

DM: No, [unclear].

TS: —or just the—

DM: Gay and lesbian.

TS: Okay.

DM: And I think that's where people—Because they were always in the military. You can't say they weren't because they were; they are. But I think that the issue is just how the military is brought up, back then to now, that was not acceptable.

TS: Right.

DM: And you still have a lot of individuals who are still in the Marine Corps, or any service, that that was what they were brought up as, and they're the ones that are having the hardest time because that was what they were taught. So it's changing a whole mindset. And until you get that mindset changed, there will always be issues, be small or large.

TS: Right. Do you think that they should be allowed to work in the military?

DM: If they are doing their job, yes. But if their lifestyle keeps them from doing their job, no.

TS: In what way would their lifestyle keep them from doing their job?

DM: It shouldn't.

TS: Right. Because, I mean, a heterosexual lifestyle could—[chuckles]

DM: Keep you from—That's what I'm saying. If you can do your job, what you're supposed to be doing, you should be fine.

TS: Right.

DM: But if you can't do your job because of your lifestyle, then no.

TS: But that's what I mean. I guess you have the same issues of fraternization and issues of adultery. Those kind of things can happen with any—

DM: Well, they're going to have to rewrite some of the rules, because the definition of adultery and bigamy in the court-martial manual states you can't have two guys together. That's bigamy. That's against the—So have they put something out there that removes that article in the court-martial manual?

TS: I don't know.

DM: I mean, that's—We can't just say pass one rule. We've got to look at how it affects all of them.

TS: Right. They probably are, I would imagine.

DM: Oh, I'm sure they're looking at it. I mean, I'm sure. And how do you do—You can be court-martialed for adultery, but in the definition, it's only stated for homosexuals.

TS: Well, I don't think it is. I think for adultery it's—

DM: No, they have to rewrite it.

TS: Is it? Because I thought it was just if you are married and you are—

DM: No.

TS: No?

DM: No, they had to go back in there and—because we are like, "Well, I'm glad they changed that, but they need to go and change these in the manuals because—" So we only charge adultery for homosexuals?

TS: Huh. That's not anything I've ever—

DM: Or heterosexuals. I mean for heterosexuals but not for—

TS: Oh, right, yeah. Okay. So that makes more sense, because I was like, "I think that it's—" Yeah.

DM: But that's what I mean.

TS: Yeah, yeah. I don't know. Well, gays can get married now so maybe it's a matter of whether you're married or not.

DM: But I think it hasn't changed in any of the law books yet.

TS: Well, that's interesting. That would be a good thing to look at.

DM: We're like, "How do you do that?" I mean, it's like, "Hmm." Or do we stop charging marines for adultery and all that and leave it to the civilian courts for divorces?

TS: Right. Those are good questions. Good questions.

DM: I mean, where are we going with this? A lot of the units that I know have [unclear], if it had to deal with personal life, marriage and all that, we just left that to the civilian courts. We don't get—I mean—

TS: Can be too messy.

DM: It can be. But we still do prosecute for adultery in the Marine Corps.

TS: Right. All services do still. Yeah. That's an interesting question about that.

DM: How do you—I mean—

TS: [chuckles] Well—

DM: That's the thing, it's how do you judge? You can't. So our standards are changing, but our guideline for standards hasn't changed, so there's a lot more—It's a long way for them, for everybody.

TS: Right, true. I guess it's the idea of morale and discipline, when it affects that, and when does that line cross? So I guess that's up to the individual commanders to figure out in their own units, if and when that's crossed. I don't know.

DM: Yes. It's different.

TS: Well, let me ask you about when you left the service, because you talked about you wanted to do your twenty years and you got it.

DM: I got it.

TS: So when you left and you got back into civilian life, was it any different? I mean, was there a cultural shock for you?

DM: I cheated. I got hired back—

TS: You cheated?

DM: I got hired back on base doing the same thing I did in the Marine Corps.

TS: Oh, so you're back in the same environment but without the uniform.

DM: Yeah, I'm in the same environment. Technically, my supervisor is one of the gunnies I used to work with, and several different units that I used to work with. So it's weird because I just—and I just chuckle at them when they get up in their—and they come in and I'm like, "Oh, you [unclear] today. Bummer. I didn't have to be here till 8 [a.m.]."

TS: [chuckles]

DM: So I think I will—If I ever get a job—I mean, I did taxes when I got out, and it felt hard when I had marines come in and they'd be messed up, or they give some excuse why they don't have this or that, knowing that you only have to go to here or here. Knowing that you can get this stuff. I had the hardest time biting my tongue.

TS: You were wanting to be the gunny [chuckles].

DM: I did. I was like, "You sure you didn't try this?"

TS: Right.

DM: And they're giving me that look. I'm like—I have to look at them and I'd be like, "Hey, just to let you know, green suit came off not even three weeks ago."  
And they'd be like, "Oh." They'd have that look; like, shock on their face. But that was the hardest time because I was just doing their taxes, and it was just weird because I'm like, "Why are you even telling me this?" And I'm thinking that they know I was in.

TS: Right. Because you hadn't made that transition, maybe, internally yet.

DM: Yeah. And they just kind of look at me like, "Why does she know how to do this? Yeah." But—So it was different. I think if I transitioned completely to civilian life, it would be—I think, to me, it would be stressful because there's certain things—I talk to my sister all



the time. She runs a parts store for Mitsubishi and, yeah, she tells me some of the things she deals with and I'm like, "Are you kidding me? You tell them to do it, they do it."

And she goes, "No, it's not in his contract."

I'm like, "Are you kidding me? Because you didn't put that in the—What?"

She's like, "Yes, not in the contract. Can't make him do it."

I'm flabbergasted. I'm like, "No. If you need him to do whatever he needs to do and he's below you, he does it. That's it."

And she's like, "No, it doesn't work that way."

TS: [chuckles] Yeah, right. That's true.

DM: I'm like, "Really? Yeah, I would have been fired."

She goes, "Yeah, you would have. I love you but you would have been—Yeah."

TS: [chuckles] Well, do you consider the time that you were in, especially in the field that you're in—as a trailblazer within the Marine Corps for a woman?

DM: No, I don't consider it a trailblazer.

TS: No?

DM: I don't, simply because I just don't. To me, I don't think I was making anything new, but—

TS: But you're one of the few women—

DM: One of the few.

TS: And some of the times, the only.

DM: Yeah, but it's—

TS: That's kind of what a trailblazer is.

DM: Oh.

TS: [chuckles]

DM: Yeah, I guess if you want to go by sheer numbers, but it didn't feel that way.

TS: No?

DM: It didn't feel that way because I was enjoying what I was doing. I wasn't made to do something that I really didn't like. I don't think I was ever made to do something I didn't like. But I've always been hands-on. I love camping. I love that stuff. So it's not like, "Oh, let's go get our nails done." No, it wasn't like that. [chuckles]

TS: Right, and the way you've described your experience, I mean, I know it wasn't all rosy, but you had a lot of support.

DM: Yes, my family—If it wasn't for my family, I wouldn't have survived. That's the only way I got my PME [Professional Military Education] schools done and all that stuff. My family would either take my kids for that period or come down and live with me. Whatever needed to be done, my family was there to do it. So if I didn't have the family background, like some of these marines that are coming in now that I see that don't have no family, I wouldn't have survived.

TS: So that made the difference for you, you think?

DM: Good family support is—Yeah. It's with anything, I think. If you don't have good family support with whoever job you have, you're not going to survive.

TS: Now, have you had to use the VA [Veteran's Administration] for anything?

DM: I am stalled in the VA process. I got my disability rating back, but for some reason they don't have my dependents yet. I'm like, "It's in my medical record. What do you mean you can't tell that I gave birth to them?" It's funny how that works but—So I'm going through all that and I got out during the recession[?] when they did all the layoffs.

TS: Okay.

DM: That was the time that I retired, so it was like some of my stuff went through and some of it didn't go through, so I'm still playing catch-up. And they're backlogged again, so it's like, alright, it's going to take three years to get my dependents added. What?

TS: Right, [unclear] it's a slow process; frustrating?

DM: To me, it is. And then of course, I'm at Lejeune. They have the open clinic now in Henderson [sic, on Henderson Drive in Jacksonville, NC], but before we had to go to Fayetteville [North Carolina].

TS: Right, that's right.

DM: I mean, I don't—I was like, "You want me to take off from work. That means I lose wages for that day. Drive to Fayetteville. Yeah, you're going to reimburse me the gas. So I can sit there all day for, like, thirty minutes. No, I'll wait."  
 So I probably could have a lot more of my stuff done but I just refuse to take that much time off to go for thirty or forty minutes. It's just—long.

TS: Yeah. Well, do you think there's anything that a civilian may not know or understand about what it's like to be in the military that you would like to express to them?

DM: It's like a society. It's a different type of society. I think as far as the different cultures, a lot of—we are exposed to all sorts of cultures, backgrounds, everything. And the one thing I didn't realize was how much we are exposed to it until my mom had moved in with me on base, she goes, "I have never seen this many different ethics [correction: ethnicities]."

I'm like, "What are you talking about?"

She goes, "You have everything here." And it wasn't until she said that, that I started thinking back to everywhere I lived.

I'm like, "Yeah, there's—"

TS: You mean ethnicities?

DM: Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DM: It was just—

TS: It's a mix.

DM: It's a mix. And I'm numb to it now. It's like, "Oh, they're Indian. Oh, they're—" It doesn't—I don't think about it. And it wasn't until then, she goes, "Why are you doing that?"

"Well, that's because that's how they celebrate—Oh, that's right, you don't celebrate other cultures and—where, we do."

TS: So you mean you're celebrating more of the ethnic kind of issues—

DM: We allow—It's not, hey, if this individual celebrates this holiday, they go celebrate it. Where back in West Virginia and Ohio, well sorry, if it wasn't Christmas or Thanksgiving, I didn't care.

TS: Right, right.

DM: And you're laughing because you know it's true [chuckles].

TS: Right. So do you think you have a wider world view?

DM: I have a wider view, but I think a lot of people don't—It's like a society. We're like our own—We do a lot of things a lot of people don't do; like, our kids stand attention at colors [ceremony to raise or lower the American flag] because—

TS: Right. Whoops, I need to turn that down. Go ahead.

DM: But's that just—that's us. We stand at attention so our kids stand at attention with us.

TS: Right. Going into a movie theater and putting all your stuff down to—

DM: And everybody's like, "Why is everybody stopping? Why are you stopping in the middle of the road?" I forget who I had in the car with me, and the colors was going and I stopped my car, and they're like, "Why are you stopping? It's in the middle of the road."  
"Well, colors."

TS: Colors, right. And your mom is probably more used to that now, right?

DM: Oh, yeah. They're all—My family's used to all of it now.

TS: Yeah, but at first it was more of a change for them, I guess.

DM: She was open minded. My mom's very open minded so—

TS: So it was easier. Is there anything else you think that civilians maybe misinterpret about the people that are in the military, or even in, just specifically, the Marine Corps?

DM: I think about half the civilians appreciate everything that we do, and then half the civilians think that we don't do anything, because they just see, "Oh, you have long holidays, and you're off for this or you're off for that."

TS: They see only the benefits and security of the—

DM: Yeah. But they don't see everything that—they don't see the behind the door stuff; they only see what's thrown out there. "Yeah, I know we have a four day weekend, but this group had a four day weekend, this group is deployed and won't see their family for twelve months."

TS: Right.

DM: So I think unless you've been in, it's just one of those things; it's like I don't think they'll truly know unless they look at it.

TS: Right. Well, how do you think your life is different because you called up that marine recruiter?

DM: I think my life is different because—Me and my best friend used to joke that we were going to get married, get houses next to each other, and raise kids. Well, we definitely aren't in West Virginia, we definitely don't live next door to each other, and I got to see a lot more. I think it opened my eyes a little bit more. I have a lot more experiences, a lot more things to draw from.  
And I think my kids—Well, I think they benefit and not benefit. I don't think they benefit from me being gone, but I think they benefit from their different experiences that they—I think they'll handle life a little bit better because their world has been shaken up and they've had to learn to adjust. Where, if you haven't left your mom's house and you've

always had everything you needed provided, I think it's a difference; the whole, where you come from.

TS: Right. It's changed.

DM: Having to move and restart over again and again and again. I can pack this house up in a day. We'd be gone. [both chuckle] Because I can do that. Unfortunately, I had to do that. Not because we enjoy it, it's just it had to be done. We had a timeline and got to go.

TS: Well, have any of your kids thought about joining the military?

DM: My son is trying to join but he'll see. He's in the process. He has ADHD [Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder] but he doesn't take any meds for it. But because he has it he still has to get a lot more waivers. They're not going to say, "Yes, come on in." They're not going to do that.

TS: Right. What service is he trying to join?

DM: He's trying to join the army. So we'll see.

TS: Okay. Now, what kind of advice would you give him, or one of your daughters? Would you give them different advice?

DM: I might. I think I would give them different advice because each kid's different in their personalities. Not because they're boy/girl, but because they each have their own weaknesses and their own strengths.

So it depends on—If Iris[?] came and told me she was joining the military, I would hope she would say the Air Force because I don't think she could handle the Marines in her face. I really don't think she could. I think she's smart enough, but I just think certain stressors, no. But then again, she may just totally blow my mind and be like, "I got this." I don't know. They're kids. So it would be different.

TS: Have you ever given advice to someone you're not related to about joining the service?

DM: I've had people ask me. It's different, because when they're not related to you all you can do is sell them on it, but I don't try to sell them; I'll tell you the truth. I'm not the person to be a recruiter. I don't say all the good stuff. "Oh, yeah, that's a real good duty station and you get all these benefits. But what they don't tell you, you're working seventy-two hours straight and you get twelve hours off, and then you have to—" They don't tell them all the bad stuff.

TS: Right.

DM: I just give them, "Hey, this is what you get and this is what you're expected to do. Now, to do this you're going to have to do A, B, C, D. If you can't do that, then don't go."

And they're like, "Oh. They just told me about all the benefits."

I say, "Yeah, you get all the benefits. You just may not have the time to use them."

TS: Right, right [chuckles].

DM: That's just—

TS: Yeah. You only get twelve hours off and you're—yeah.

DM: And they're like, "Oh, I didn't think—" Yeah, there's different stuff out there. It depends on what your job is. Now, a recruiter is like a used car salesman. They have a goal and they're going to make it sound great. And some of it is great to some people, and some of it, they're like, "Oh, no, I ain't doing this."

TS: Right. Well, what does patriotism mean to you?

DM: Oh, well, I think that changes every week. With everything that goes on in the world, there's times when I get frustrated. One would be loyal to your country and to your family. But there's times when I just get frustrated when I see people doing things that I feel they shouldn't be doing.

TS: Like what?

DM: Oh, I hate the protests. I hate elections. I do.

TS: You hate elections?

DM: Elections. Because I get so tired of the demonstration. "Well, they did this and they did that."

I'm like, "Okay." There's never going to be the one perfect candidate, because everybody has their set opinions, and you're not going to like one person all the way.

But I just get tired of all the trash talking. I just hate trash talking. I don't want to do surveys. Don't ask me to do a survey. [both chuckle] It just—It's different.

And I believe we need to take care of our country first. I hate providing aid to other countries. That is my pet peeve. We can't even feed our own kids, but yet we're sending all this money to feed other children. Let's take care of our own and then take care of other kids. But that's me. Let's protect ourselves and if we're able to, yes, provide support, but it should never be at the expense of somebody else. I'm all about protecting the country first and then we'll spread the love.

TS: Right. Gotcha. Well, would you do it all over again?

DM: Oh, yeah.

TS: Would you do anything differently?

DM: See, I don't know if I would. I truly believe everything happens for—I mean, I made mistakes. Don't get me wrong. But I truly believe those mistakes, yeah, I made them, but I think what I learned from them, there would be no other way to learn.

TS: Right. Well, how would you come out on the other side if you didn't make those mistakes, right?

DM: I don't know. I don't know. I mean, you'll never know. You change one thing, it's a ripple effect all the way down.

TS: It sure is.

DM: You never know.

TS: That's true. Well, I don't have any more questions, but is there anything that you'd like to mention or talk about that I haven't asked you about?

DM: I just—For me, I would have to say get in the different organizations to get information for any of the veterans. There's—And talk to the other veterans, because there's stuff that I didn't know until I talked with somebody else. And there's stuff that they didn't know until they talked to me. So I would just say communication.

TS: You mean as a veteran?

DM: As a veteran.

TS: See what you have available to you?

DM: Because you don't know. I mean, I don't know everything. And then come to find out, "Oh, you did this? Well, how'd you do that?"  
           And they're like, "Oh, this is the steps you need." And then they're like, "Well, I can't—For some reason I can't get this."  
           And then you're like, "Oh, this is where you go." So it's communication between them.

TS: That's a tip that you would say.

DM: Yeah. I'm all for—I use the Women's Marine Association all the time because—I won't say we all have the same personalities, but we all respect what each other's done. So if there's a way I can help her, I help her. And there's a way she can help somebody else. It's kind of like you take care of me, I'll take care of—

TS: Right. You give it back.

DM: Yeah. It may not be that day, it may not be that month, but you never—

TS: Right. Yeah.

DM: You never know.

TS: Right. Well, do you have any last words you'd like to say?

DM: No, I think I'm good. I talked for quite a while [both chuckle].

TS: You did great. Well, thank you, Deanna. I appreciate you talking with me today.

[End of Interview]