

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Dolores Gallardo Luhm

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 16 April 2006

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is April 23, 2016. My name is Therese Strohmer, and I'm at the home of Dolores Luhm in Jacksonville, North Carolina, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dolores, go ahead and state your name the proper way, and the way you'd like it to be on your collection.

DL: Okay. It's Dolores—Do I say my maiden name?

TS: Yes.

DL: Dolores Gallardo Luhm.

TS: Okay, excellent. Thanks, Dolores, for having me come and visit you today. Why don't we just start out by having you tell me a little bit about where you were born, where you're from?

DL: I was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. Lived there all my life until I decided to join the Marine Corps, which by that time I was twenty-one years old.

TS: Okay. Before we get to the Marine Corps, tell me a little bit about growing up in El Paso. Did you have any siblings? What did your parents do?

DL: Oh, yes, definitely. I had—I have two brothers and three sisters. My mom was a homemaker and my dad was a pharmacist. I don't know what else—

TS: Okay. So there's six siblings in your family?

DL: All of us total, yes.

TS: Where do you fit in that?

DL: I'm in the middle. [chuckles]

TS: You're in the middle, okay.

DL: Yes.

TS: You said there were four girls?

DL: Three sisters. Yeah, one of them was being—was living with my grandparents.

TS: Okay.

DL: So there was five of us at home.

TS: At home, okay.

DL: So it was three girls and two boys, and I was in the middle.

TS: You were in the middle. Where did the boys fit in that?

DL: One of the boys is the baby and the other one is the second oldest.

TS: Okay. Are you pretty close together?

DL: Yeah, we were all, like, two and a half years apart. [chuckles]

TS: Okay. Yeah. That's not super close.

DL: No, but it was alright. Yeah, it was okay.

TS: But you played together, then, probably.

DL: Oh, yeah. We were very close siblings, and as siblings do, we fight and everything, but.

TS: Sure. So your mom's taking care of you?

DL: Yes.

TS: Your dad's a pharmacist?

DL: Yes.

TS: Okay. Tell me a little bit about growing up in El Paso in the sixties and seventies. What kind of stuff did you do for fun?

DL: I just remember—because it's been a long time [both chuckle]—that for the most part, like, going to school all year—for nine months—and then in the summertime, in El Paso it's very, very hot so it's no fun to go outside and try and do anything, but my dad would sign us up for the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] and us four younger children would go. The oldest one was always working in the summer, but all four of us would go to the YMCA, and we took swimming lessons. The girls—My sister and I took gymnastics; the brothers and I took archery, table tennis. We did a lot of stuff at the Y.

TS: That's pretty neat.

DL: It kept us busy from, like—We'd leave the house at 8:00 in the morning and come back at 5:00 in the afternoon. So that gave my mom a break. [chuckles]

TS: I'll bet she was happy for that.

DL: Oh, yeah, she was. And we didn't—she didn't have to worry about us being out and about or anything like that, so.

TS: Yeah. Now, in El Paso, were you in town or were you on the outskirts of town?

DL: Probably, like, in the outskirts.

TS: Outskirts.

DL: Yeah, one of the suburbs, if you want to say.

TS: Say the suburbs.

DL: Yeah, because El Paso's a very, very big city.

TS: Is it kind of spread out?

DL: Yes, definitely. It's out in the middle of the desert. [both chuckle] But it's huge; there's a lot of area there. So we were out in one of the suburbs.

TS: Yeah.

DL: That's basically what we did a lot of the [unclear].

TS: So it's too hot to play outside a lot.

DL: Yeah, in the summertime, definitely. And then once we got into high school I guess we stopped; as we got older we stopped doing that kind of stuff. I think my high school was the most memorable because our mascot—it was called Bel Air High School—and the mascot they had was the Highlanders and we had a bagpipe band.

TS: Oh, nice.

DL: So I was in the bagpipe band.

TS: Did you play the bagpipes?

DL: Oh, yes, I played the bagpipes.

TS: Did you really?

DL: Yes, I did, for four years.

TS: I am totally jealous.

DL: [chuckles] It was a lot of fun.

TS: I've always wanted to play the bagpipes.

DL: Yeah, it was very interesting, and we were always invited to parades. Out of town as well, so we went to a couple out of town ones and stuff.

TS: That's cool.

DL: But it was a lot of fun. I mean—and the people would say either you love it—you love it or you hate it.

TS: Right. Who doesn't love the bagpipes?

DL: Oh, my God, some people did not. [both chuckling] Especially when I practiced in the carport at home.

TS: Well, okay.

DL: Because they are loud.

TS: They are, yeah.

DL: But that was a lot of fun, and my high school years were pretty good. We had a lot of fun.

TS: Did you like school, academically?

DL: Oh, yeah, yeah. I was good academically; A's and B's.

TS: A's and B's.

DL: I liked school; I liked my school.

TS: Did you have a favorite teacher or subject?

DL: I guess English was my—I excelled better at English, believe it or not. [chuckles]

TS: You liked English? I believe it.

DL: Science was my worst.

TS: Oh, yeah.

DL: And favorite teacher, not really, but I think the one we got really close to, a lot of us, was the band director—our pipe band director.

TS: Oh, sure.

DL: Yeah. He was really good with all of us considering he was—being a male with all these females, because there was hardly any—there was no males in the pipe band.

TS: No?

DL: No. No.

TS: They're off doing other things?

DL: Yeah. They thought it—They didn't like wearing the kilt. That's what it was. [chuckles]

TS: Oh. that's interesting.

DL: Because they'd have to wear the kilt.

TS: But that's a real manly outfit.

DL: I know, but they didn't think so.

TS: They didn't know it.

DL: No, no. I come from a town that—especially in that school—was predominantly Hispanic and African-American, and the Hispanic men, they think they're so macho, they won't do things like that. [both chuckle] So it was interesting; it was very interesting.

TS: That is interesting.

DL: Yeah. So I made a lot of good friends, of course. And then, of course, when you graduate everybody goes in different directions.

TS: When you're going through school did you have a sense of what you wanted to be? What kind of aspirations did you have as a young girl, if you had any?

DL: Yeah, well, at that time I wasn't sure if I was going to be able to go to college. My parents divorced when we were real young.

TS: Okay.

DL: So none of us knew. My brother ended up going to the Catholic high school there—Jesuit High School—but he knew from a long, long time—I think from sophomore year or something—that he wanted to join the military; he wanted to join the Marine Corps. So he did that, and my older sister, she got married, and so then it was my turn. And I do remember with the bagpipe band, we got invited to go to Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico.

TS: Okay.

DL: And we got to see some of the air force women—I guess, if you call it—in their uniforms and stuff, and from that moment I thought, "Gee, I'd like to do something like that."

TS: Oh, yeah?

DL: Yeah, and that was my sophomore year. So I always knew I wanted to.

TS: It planted a little seed.

DL: Yeah. And I thought it was the navy that I wanted to go into. And, I mean, I did go check it out, the navy recruiter.

TS: What was it about the navy that attracted you at first?

DL: I don't know. I just—It was just—I don't know what it was. I just thought the navy for some reason.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Why not the air force?

DL: I know I did not want the army, because my home town is an army base and I didn't want to be in the army.

TS: Okay.

DL: And the navy I thought would be okay. And then I knew my brother—Of course, my brother was in the Marine Corps so I thought, "Maybe that would be another choice. Or the air force." I don't know. But we did meet—A friend of mine and I went to go speak to the recruiters and the navy said they had a waiting period of about two years. Air force had a waiting period of about one year. We did talk to the army recruiter and they said probably three months. And then that's when I told you about the Marine Corps recruiter.

TS: Talk about that, go ahead.

DL: When we spoke to the Marine Corps recruiter, he did not want to speak to us at all because he felt that women have no business being in his Marine Corps; we should be in the kitchen barefoot and pregnant. So he dismissed us and we walked away. And so, little did I know that the army recruiter had told the head recruiter about this incident, so the head recruiter decided to get in touch with me, but he wasn't aware that my brother was in the Marine Corps, so he showed up to our house and my mother saw him coming up the walk and she started to really get scared and nervous. And I asked him what—I said, "Can I help you? What are you doing here?"

And he said, "I came to see Dolores Gallardo."

And I said, "Oh, me." I said, "Oh, my God." I said, "My mom's all worried here because my brother's in the Marine Corps and she thought you were coming to tell us that there was—something had happened to him."

And he's, like, "Oh, no, no, no. I'm so sorry. I'm sorry I got you all scared."

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DL: And so, that was an interesting scene there.

TS: Yeah.

DL: And so, yeah, he talked to me about the Marine Corps and everything and, yes, I decided to go back to his office and talk some more, and then went and took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] test. And in that time frame I don't know why, and I don't know if they still do it now, the women—for the Marine Corps at least that I remember—we had to score twice as high on the ASVAB as the men, and I think we had to score, like, a sixty-two and the men had to score a thirty-one. And I didn't think that was fair at all but, I mean, I passed; it was no problem. I can't remember what the score was but it was—it was nice. It was high.

TS: Right.

DL: Enough to get into the Marine Corps of course.

TS: Now, was this in '77?

DL: In 1977, yes.

TS: Okay.

DL: So that—

TS: What year did you graduate from high school?

DL: I graduated in 1974.

TS: What did you do in between there?

DL: In between I was able to go to the University of Texas at El Paso for a year. But the money situation didn't turn out well, with my dad and all, and so I ended up having to quit college, and then I just started working full time at a store, like Gibson's [Discount Center]; kind of like a big Walmart or something like that.

TS: Yeah.

DL: And I worked there for a while and I knew that that's not what I wanted to do. And so, the more I thought about it, the more I said, "No, I want to go to the military," and then that's when that all started.

TS: Okay.

DL: When I went to speak to the recruiters a friend of mine and I went.

TS: Gotcha.

DL: And in the end my friend didn't want to go.

TS: Oh, really?

DL: She did not want to go. She decided she wanted to stay home. I think I was a little bit more adventurous. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, yeah.

DL: I was ready to try and go do something; something different.

TS: You were twenty?

DL: I was twenty when I started the process, yeah.

TS: The process. Okay.

DL: Yes. And I think I had a six month waiting period, but the only way I could go in the six month period was if I went in on an open contract, which would be three years, and that

meant that they—my MOS [military occupational specialty] would be decided for me once I got to boot camp.

TS: Did that bother you? Were you worried about that at all?

DL: No, because as far as I was concerned, with women, I thought, "Okay, they're just going to stick me in an office job. It's no problem."

TS: Right.

DL: "Secretary, I can handle that." But, no, they gave us those ASVAB tests again, I guess— or some other kind of test at boot camp.

TS: Right.

DL: And right before recruit—the training was over, the senior—I mean, the CO—the commanding officer—called two of us up. We were all in a circle sitting on the floor and she called two of us up. And we went up—my name was one of them—and she says, "You two are going to supply and you're going to be issued utes and boots [the utility uniform without the normal uniform blouse, typically used for PT]." [laughs]

And we both looked at each other like, "Why?"

And she told the one other girl that she was going to be going to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to learn to be a forklift operator, and that I would be going to Aberdeen, Maryland [Aberdeen Proving Ground, Marine Corps Detachment], for hygiene equipment repair school.

And I'm, like, "What is that?"

She goes, "You know, I really don't know. I just know that's what your MOS is going to be, and I'm sure when you get there you're going to find out."

TS: Oh my.

DL: So that goes to tell you women weren't in the men's field that much, or hardly at all—

TS: Right, because she didn't even know.

DL: —at that time frame, because she didn't even know.

TS: Right. This is at the time, especially in the Marine Corps, because they were a little slower about opening up traditional jobs, right?

DL: Yes, yes. Definitely, definitely. And it was just really interesting to learn this, to have to do that. And I was like, "Okay, this is interesting."

TS: What did your friends and family think about you joining?

DL: They were shocked.

TS: Were they?

DL: Because they didn't feel any women should be in the military.

TS: Oh, really?

DL: Especially my father. When I did finally tell him he was very, very disappointed. He had hoped that I would stay and go to college and become a teacher or something, and I said, "Well, you know—" I didn't have any money to go to college with, and I wanted to do this. I wanted to go off and hopefully travel a little bit.

TS: Right.

DL: And see other parts other than El Paso, because I never went anywhere besides in El Paso. [chuckles]

TS: Except for New Mexico for the band.

DL: Yeah, right, exactly. And so—And my mother, she wasn't very happy about it, but in the end she relented because there was nothing she could really do. I'd already signed the paperwork, I'm going, and that's that.

TS: Yeah. What was your mom concerned about?

DL: Being in a man's world.

TS: Okay.

DL: That's what she was worried about. And then she—I don't know—At some point I think she thought I wasn't going to be able to handle it.

TS: Okay.

DL: But I had always been—Growing up I had always been independent anyway; being the middle child.

TS: Right.

DL: Being ignored a lot or whatever. [both chuckle]

TS: Yeah.

DL: I just had that in me all the time anyway; just wanted to go off and do something different.

TS: So kind of a drive to—

DL: Yeah.

TS: —have an adventure.

DL: It was scary; it was really scary. [chuckles]

TS: Tell me about going to boot camp, then; the experience of it.

DL: Yeah. Well, my best friend back then at the time, she was very—How did she put it? She goes, "I admire you, you're brave. You're going to do something totally different that I would have never thought you'd done—you'd do."

TS: Yeah.

DL: And I said, "Yeah, I guess so, right?" But it was, it was kind of scary, I had to get ready to go, and of course my mother being that she wanted me to make sure I was true to my values and the morals and everything, and she had the priest come and give me the blessing and everything.

TS: Did she?

DL: Oh, yeah.

TS: Oh my goodness, okay.

DL: She had the priest come to the house and give me the blessing and he gave me the little talk. [chuckles] I thought it was hilarious, but it was cute in a way. It was; it was.

TS: What kind of talk was it?

DL: Just basically, "You're a young, respectable lady. Don't forget about your upbringing, and don't do anything that you would be ashamed of," and things like that.

TS: Little hints about, like—

DL: Yes, because—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: —sexual boundaries and things like that.

DL: Yes, all this kind of stuff. But he was very careful how to word things at the same time.

TS: Right.

DL: And I was, like, "Yes. Yes, sir. I know, I know." [chuckles] It was kind of cute.

TS: That's great. That's a great story.

DL: Yeah. And then, of course, I'd never been on an airplane before.

TS: Okay.

DL: So I had to leave, like, at 0600 [6:00] in the morning or something.

TS: Okay. I'm going to back this up a little. Keep talking.

DL: And so, I guess I had a layover in Atlanta, I believe—or Dallas—Dallas—and then I went to Atlanta, and then I ended up in Charleston, South Carolina. And there was a liaison there, and he was picking up some other young men—potential recruits—that were going too.

So—Well, actually, we were all sitting there in Charleston and you get to know—Okay, we're going to [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] for recruit training and so on and so forth, and as time went on these buses kept leaving with these guys on there and I'm still there, and I'm still there, and I'm still there. And finally, I guess the last bus I got to get on. I don't know why they held me back so much. I mean, they just kept holding me back.

So we get to recruit training command there at Parris Island, and I'm the only female on the bus, and the bus driver made sure I sat up front right across from him so he could keep an eye on me. [both chuckle] It was funny, but it was scary when that marine drill sergeant came on and started yelling at everybody, and I'm, like, "Great. Okay, that's alright. My mom used to be like that." We—My brother even says it, too, that it was just like being at home with mom yelling at us. Because she was tough on us.

TS: Yeah.

DL: She practically had to raise us by herself, too, so she was very tough, very strict. But the only thing I wasn't used to was the cursing.

TS: Okay.

DL: Because we didn't—We weren't brought up like that, so.

TS: Right.

DL: And he got all those young men off that bus and on those yellow footprints and everything.

TS: Yeah.

DL: And I'm like, "Okay, phew. Take a deep breath. Is this how it's going to be when I get over there? But I'm the only female, I don't know."

TS: Right.

DL: So, okay, we go. He shuts the door and he says, "Now I've got to take you to the women recruit training command." And it was a few minutes later and we show up, and there was this crusty old gunny sergeant out there smoking a cigar waiting for me, and I get out. And the bus driver had gotten my suitcase out of the bus, and I'm thinking, "Okay, a gentleman; he'll probably pick it up." Oh, heck, no,

He goes, "Get your suitcase and follow me."

I'm like, "Okay." [chuckles]

So he took me in this room, handed me a postcard, and said, "Put your loved one's name on here, we're going to send it to them, let them know you got here and made it okay."

I said, "Okay."

TS: [chuckles]

DL: Okay, so I put my mom's address and everything.

TS: Right.

DL: And then he had me put my suitcase up on a table and he opened it up and went through everything. Him, personally—the man—going through my undies—

TS: Right.

DL: —and all this stuff. And he says, "I'm looking for any kind of contraband: cigarettes, booze," this, that or the other.

And I said, "Okay." I just wasn't really saying much because it was late. It was already after midnight.

TS: Right. You were probably tired.

DL: I was tired.

TS: All day travelling.

DL: Yes. I was tired, and my brother had already told me, "Do not talk back. Do not—Just do what they tell you to do. Please." He says, "Life will be so much easier for you."

TS: Yeah.

DL: I said, "Okay."

TS: Were you kind of a "talk back" person anyhow?

DL: No, no.

TS: Yeah.

DL: I wasn't the one who talked back.

TS: So your nature was just to go ahead.

DL: Yeah, just to go ahead and follow the rules.

TS: But he was warning you that if you did there could be consequences.

DL: Yes, definitely.

TS: Okay.

DL: And so, then he had me walk with him, it felt like two blocks, I don't know, and then finally a female drill instructor met us, and then he goes, "Here you go."

And so, then she took me into the barracks and led me to a bunk with some sheets on it, told me to make the bed, get in there, and go to sleep, because we were going to get up real early. And sure enough, we did. I went to—I could hardly sleep at all again.

TS: Were there any other people—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DL: Oh, yeah, the whole barracks—

TS: You were the last one to come in.

DL: Yeah, as they called me "the straggler" because I was, like, the last one, like it was my fault. So I was the straggler, and then of course in the morning, you know how they yell and bang on those tin trash cans and whatnot? Everybody's getting up and doing what they're doing, so I'm like, "Okay, I'll follow them—the lead." I'm making my bed real quick and doing whatever.

And then I heard, "Where's my straggler?" [both chuckle] It was the senior drill instructor, and everybody's pointing at me. So she goes, "Follow me." And then I guess that's when she took me somewhere to get issued the uniform and the shoes and the whatnot.

TS: Okay. Because they all had gotten—

DL: They—Everybody already had everything.

TS: I see.

DL: And I didn't have anything. So she told me, "Hurry up and change into—" the certain uniform which was the utilities, which was crazy because back then it was like a skort [a skirt with a pair of integral shorts hidden underneath], I think? Like, blue—

TS: Oh, right.

DL: Yeah.

TS: They show, I think, some of that in [your book?].

DL: Yeah, and then, like, a light blue shirt. And then, like, the old kids' Keds shoes or something like that. [chuckles] Totally different from today's running shoes or whatever, right? And then she took me to the chow hall, and so—and then by the time I got there it was almost through. They were—Almost everybody—

TS: Oh, right. So you had to hurry?

DL: I had to hurry, and then we got back, and that was a bathroom break to go brush your teeth, do whatever, and I threw up, [both laugh] because I had to rush my breakfast, and I'm like, "Okay, this is not—" But once I did that I was fine, and then I got into the groove of everything.

TS: Right. Well, you were just exhausted.

DL: Yes.

TS: And hadn't slept, and you ate so fast.

DL: Yes. I did, I did. And the unknown.

TS: Yeah.

DL: The unknown always makes you nervous.

TS: Sure.

DL: But once I figured out everything, because I was observant and I was watching everybody, I'm like, "Okay."

TS: Well, you were a little older, too, probably than all the other recruits[?].

DL: Yeah, and that's the other thing too. Yeah, because throughout boot camp—or in the very beginning, so many of the girls were crying, and they didn't want to be there, and they wanted their mommy, and they wanted to go home, and I'm like, "Oh, not me. I'm fine. [both laugh] I wanted to leave, so I'm here. And I know this is temporary."

TS: Right. Exactly.

DL: So it was really interesting.

TS: You had to get your mindset, right?

DL: Yeah. Yeah, definitely, because I knew it was going to be tough. I knew. And of course my brother—but the male boot camp is so much different from the female. Well, yes and no. The thing that they stressed with us in the female boot camp was, we couldn't refer to each other as guys. Like somebody would say, "Hey, you guys," and they'd go, "There's no guys here and if there is they're in trouble."

TS: Oh, really?

DL: And things like that. And we had to be very respectful, and we had to keep our tone ladylike. They stressed ladylike more than anything else.

TS: Really?

DL: Yes; that we had to act like ladies at all times.

TS: Okay.

DL: I mean, we had the hair care and makeup classes. We had a class even on tea time; how to stand and hold your tea cup and your little finger out like this.

TS: Really? How did you do on that one?

DL: We did great. I think all of us did because it was with the commanding general of WRTC [Women Recruit Training Command] and all the bigwigs. So they came around and spoke to us and we all had to do that with our little pinky sticking out. And our ankles, our legs, a certain way, and we had to sit a certain way. We had our ankles crossed at all times. Things like that. They stressed that, ladylike at all times, but yet we still went through the rifle range, the gas chamber—What is that—chemical, biological warfare training.

TS: Okay.

DL: We went through a lot of stuff and we had to be tough during that.

TS: How were those types of training for you; like, the M16 [military rifle]?

DL: Didn't bother me; I did well.

TS: Did you?

DL: For the most part I kept shooting expert and then at the end I dropped and I got to marksman.

TS: Oh. [chuckles]

DL: But that's okay. I made it up later.

TS: There you go.

DL: So—But—And the gas chamber was tough, but everybody went through it, everybody had the same experience.

TS: Right.

DL: And learning about chemical, biological warfare and all of that, and how to protect yourself in case of attack with our ponchos.

TS: Oh, right.

DL: I don't know if you went through that or not.

TS: Something similar.

DL: Yeah. Of course, we went through water safety survival training.

TS: Oh, you did? What did you have to do in that?

DL: We had to learn how to use our utility pants; we had to wear the long pants at that time. And the shirt—of course we had, like, a swimsuit underneath—and learn how to make it into a flotation device.

TS: Oh, okay?

DL: Did you learn how to do that?

TS: No.

DL: Oh, yeah. They made us learn that, which was pretty cool because—

TS: We fly. [Therese Strohmer served in the U.S. Air Force from 1980-1986]

DL: Oh yes, that's right. [both laugh] I forgot. I forgot. But it was very interesting that we were taught this and made to learn all this because you never know where you'd end up, what would happen.

TS: Right.

DL: And they wanted us—the women to be prepared as well, which was—I thought that was very good. I thought that was a very good thing. I mean, they taught us about the rifle, how to take it apart, clean it, shoot it. That was great.

TS: It's almost like you were kind of at a period of a crossroads, because the woman I talked to earlier today, Donna, they didn't have the weapons training.

DL: Yes.

TS: But they had the kind of training you talked about, to be ladies.

DL: Yes.

TS: So they were kind of at a crossroads when you're in where they're like, "Okay, you've got to be a lady but we want you to shoot a rifle."

DL: Yes. [chuckles] Right.

TS: What kind of identity do they really want for you?

DL: Right, right.

TS: Maybe they weren't sure.

DL: And that's okay because—and I'm going back to where I grew up because I did not mention this earlier—I grew up in a neighborhood—in an area that was gang-infested. There was gangs all over.

TS: Oh, really?

DL: And that's one of the things my mom was very adamant about; she was not going to allow that to happen to her children. And it was interesting because she made it be known somehow—in the neighborhood—because we lived a block away from the high school.

TS: Okay.

DL: And it happened at least once, twice a week that there'd be a fight at our corner, right at—we lived on a corner and there'd be fights there all the time. Chains, knives, whatever.

TS: Oh, my.

DL: And my mom would be brave and get out there and run them all off and everything.
[chuckles]

TS: Oh my goodness.

DL: Yes, she was—That's why my brother said it was easy to go to boot camp.

TS: [chuckles]

DL: My mom was so tough [chuckling] and, I mean, she would stand up to them if they tried to say something to her or whatever, and she would tell us all, "You're not going to join these gangs," because more people in our neighborhood were in the gangs, whether the female gang or the male gang.

TS: Oh, there were female gangs?

DL: Oh yeah, yeah, definitely. And so, no, she was adamant we were not going to be going through that. But it was kind of interesting, because especially the kids in our neighborhood who were in gangs, they respected that. They respected that we didn't join because of our mom. We respect her—We're more afraid of her really but—[both chuckle]

TS: Maybe so.

DL: Yeah. And it was really neat. They left us alone. I mean, see them at school, talk to them in the neighborhood or whatever, but when they went to go do their gang things they were off in their own world and we were at home with my mom.

TS: Okay.

DL: So that was—So a lot of things didn't really bother me, you know what I'm saying? Or I wasn't afraid.

TS: Was that part of the reason you wanted to go somewhere else too?

DL: Yeah, it could be, yes, because I just didn't want to stay there at home anymore. I wanted just to get away and go and do something different.

TS: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, definitely.

TS: Well, that's interesting.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, was there anything during your boot camp that was especially difficult, emotionally or physically?

DL: Yes, because during the water survival safety training—This bothered me a lot because I—Well, first of all, I had hurt—I had slipped on the grass after a run and—it had rained the night before, and everybody took off to go in to go shower, and as we're running, somehow I slipped and fell and hit my knee really hard and I heard something pop. So after I took the shower and I told the drill instructor, "Something happened to my knee," they sent me to sick bay, and it turned out that I had sprained some ligaments in the left knee and it was really bad. It was swelled up really bad. I had to get crutches and the whole nine yards and I had to—when I slept at night I had to use a towel and elevate the leg and all. But we still had to go to this water safety survival training, and we all had to jump off the ten meter board.

TS: Oh my goodness.

DL: And I—

TS: And you're injured.

DL: Yes, and I'm injured. And I don't remember if I was told I couldn't or they wrote a note from sick bay, I can't remember. I just know that the drill instructor's telling me to get up there and take my turn. So I go and jump off the board, and of course the impact of the—when I hit the water it aggravated the knee all that more.

TS: I'm sure.

DL: But fortunately I was a strong swimmer because I used to be on the high school swim team.

TS: Okay.

DL: Things like that.

TS: And you went to the Y[MCA] all the time.

DL: Yeah, the Y all the time, that's right, because we swam for the Y, too, on their swim teams. And I was able to get myself to the edge okay, but one of the male drill instructors that was there with their platoon, he saw me—He knew that I was hurt and he came up to me as I was getting to the edge and he asked me, "Recruit, what's your problem?" And then I told him. He goes, "And why did your drill instructor let you get in the water like this? Why did she have you jump off the ten meter board like that?"

I go, "Sir, I don't know." You know how you're supposed to answer them?

TS: Right.

DL: I said, "But I did it and I'm here and I'm getting ready to get out."

He goes, "Yes, get out. And go sit over there on the edge at the wall."

I said, "Okay."

And he goes, "Who's your drill instructor?" And I told him, and then the next thing I know he's talking to her, and the next thing I know I'm being sent to sick bay again. And this time it was worse; it was a little bit more damaged.

TS: Yeah.

DL: And so, I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to graduate boot camp, because you have to pass your PFT [Physical Fitness Test] before you can graduate. And it was very close; I was given the okay towards the end there to go ahead and exercise and run.

TS: Yeah.

DL: And it hurt like heck but I made it. I passed. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. You weren't going to not do it.

DL: No, I wasn't going to let it get me, but.

TS: Couldn't they have set you back?

DL: Yes, they would have retread[?] me, as they called it.

TS: Yeah, but you didn't want to do that.

DL: No, no, I wanted to graduate with my platoon. I did. I was like—and that kind of bothered me at first but I dealt with it. I walked on my crutches for a couple of weeks, and I did everything they asked me to do, and fortunately, thank God, I was able to graduate.

TS: Wow.

[Speaking simultaneously]

DL: I mean, the PFT wasn't—

TS: I'm surprised it didn't set you back.

DL: Yeah, I was a little—

TS: To take care of you.

DL: I'm telling you, it was something. And for some reason, our platoon—I know that they go through twelve weeks now, I think? Twelve weeks?

TS: I'm not sure.

DL: Ours was a trial basis. We only went through for nine weeks.

TS: Okay.

DL: Just to see—Because the other platoons went through twelve weeks and then they got to go out on a tour to Beaufort, South Carolina, and do some other things and I forget what else, but ours was rushed through really quick. We didn't get to do the tour, didn't get to meet—They let the family come and meet you a day or two before graduation and all this. No, everything just happened so fast.

TS: Oh, my goodness.

DL: Yeah. And I guess they decided not to do that anymore and they drag it out now. [both chuckle] I remember that, I was—I remember them saying, "Yours is going to be a short platoon. It's going to be a short time here."
And we're like, "Okay." Fine, the sooner the better.

TS: Works for us, right?

DL: Yes. [chuckles] Yeah. That was the only thing that bothered me the most about—physically. Mentally, I just had to get myself so I knew that I could do this. I was just more determined now that I was going to graduate with my platoon.
And then we had one young lady who tried to commit suicide. Somehow she had been given some medication through sick bay and she had not turned it in to the drill instructors, because you had to turn in your medication.

TS: Oh, you did?

DL: And then when you're supposed to take it, you go up to the DI [drill instructor] hut and you take it in front of them. Somehow she managed to keep it and then she took an overdose. So she was being watched, and since I was the one on crutches and not being able to go PT and all, I had to sit and watch her for a while. And it was hard because she was just so sad and miserable and wanted out. And I thought, "Okay, why don't they just send her back to sick bay and to a psychiatrist or something."

TS: Right.

DL: And help her.

TS: What finally happened to her?

DL: I think they did. They finally did send her back to get some help, but it took a while, and I was, like—

TS: I'm watching her.

DL: I didn't want to be responsible in case she did something.

TS: Right, right.

DL: But I had to babysit her for a couple of days during PT time, so I was like, "Oh, no." That was interesting. I saw so many girls drop, just get—they just didn't want to be there, they'd do everything in their power to try and just get kicked out somehow, and it was horrible.

TS: Yeah.

DL: It was sad.

TS: But some of them just weren't cut out for it?

DL: No, they weren't. And then there was one in there, and it was interesting because she had been prior air force, and I guess if you're prior anything, if you want to join the Marine Corps you still have to go through the Marine Corps boot camp.

TS: Oh, really?

DL: But if marines get out and they want to go to another branch of the service they don't have to go through their boot camp. I don't know why, but that's what we'd been told. And all she did was complain about the Marine Corps boot camp and how—"That's not the way we did it in the air force." And I guess the drill instructors were getting really tired of her saying this.

TS: I'll bet.

DL: And I don't know what happened but she ended up leaving.

TS: Did she?

DL: She ended up leaving. She wanted out. She didn't want to stay, so. Wow. It's pretty interesting.

TS: Yeah, that is interesting. Did you get to go home on leave before you went to [Marine Corps Air Station] Cherry Point [North Carolina]? Is that where you went first?

DL: Yes, I did, yes.

TS: Oh, Aberdeen. I'm sorry.

DL: Yeah, after boot camp I got to go home ten days leave, and the drill instructor—the—my recruiter was trying to get me on that program where you do thirty days at home and you're, like, helping the recruiter.

TS: Helping the recruiter?

DL: Yeah, but they wouldn't approve it because they said I had to go to class.

TS: You had a certain start date.

DL: Yes. Well, very interesting, when I reported over there they had me sit out two weeks before the class actually started. But that's the Marine Corps.

TS: So you could have done that.

DL: Yes. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, got you.

DL: Yeah, but I showed up there at Aberdeen on October 31, 1977; Halloween. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, yeah.

DL: It was interesting.

TS: Why?

DL: Yeah. Just for the mere fact that it was Halloween and it was late at night. Once again, here I am reporting late at night.

TS: The straggler.

DL: There was supposed to be somebody—and we—I landed in Baltimore and there was supposed to be somebody there on leave who was in my platoon and she said she'd come get me and take me to the base. Well, when I called her she wouldn't answer and she wouldn't answer, and I'm like, "Okay, what am I going to do? I guess I have to find the liaison here." But fortunately, when I was flying I was sitting with this couple, a man and a woman, who were from Fort Huachuca, Arizona. They were civil service people from Arizona, and they were being sent TAD [temporary additional duty] to Aberdeen, Maryland. And so, they stuck around.

TS: Made sure you were okay.

DL: Yeah, and when they learned that this other person wasn't going to come get me I said, "Well, I better go find the liaison, then, because I know there's always a liaison at the airport, I'm sure."
And they said, "Well, we've got a rental car, we'll take you."
And I'm like, "Okay." [chuckles] I had to put my trust in them and pray that it was going to be okay.

TS: Right.

DL: But, yeah, they got me there. They got me right to the hut where I needed to report—

TS: Oh, good.

DL: —and everything, dropped me off there, and it was great.

TS: That is good.

DL: Yeah. And then they took me to the barracks that I was going to be in and there was two other female marines there but they were in different MOSs, and I can't remember what they were in. But the rest of the barracks was filled with army.

TS: Army?

DL: Army and a couple of air force girls. So—

TS: I didn't realize there were different services there at Aberdeen.

DL: Yeah, for the schools I guess.

TS: Oh, okay.

DL: Because there was different schools there.

TS: Oh, okay.

DL: And then I come to realize when I finally did start the school—and I did ask the CO—or the sergeant major from [unclear], "What's this school all about?"
And he says, "Well, it's hygiene equipment repair." He said—Back in that day they still had those big huge laundry and dryer units that went out in the field; when troops went out in the field they had to wash their clothes somehow. I don't know if you remember it from *M*A*S*H*, in the shower units, the way they'd set up shower units.

[*M*A*S*H* is an American television series that ran from 1972-1983, about a team of doctors and support staff stationed at the "4077th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital" in Uijeongbu, South Korea during the Korean War]

TS: Okay.

DL: And water purification, refrigeration, electricity. Learned how to repair generators. Don't ask me if I know how now.

TS: But you did then?

DL: But back then I did. [chuckles]

TS: Alright.

DL: And then the army went a little further. Our school lasted, I think, ten weeks and the army's lasted twelve weeks because they had to go through something called parachute repair.

TS: Okay.

DL: But—Oh, and the other thing we did, too, in my school there is learn how to weld, to get—Fix things, so that was really interesting. And there was three of us marines—two male marines and myself—in that class, and the three of us were always top; one, two and three. I was number one in the class, the other two—It was so funny because the instructors would say—they're beginning the class and they'd say, "You might see this on a pop quiz."

TS: [chuckles]

DL: So here I am taking my notes.

TS: Right.

DL: The other two marines taking their notes. Okay. And they said, "Okay, close your books. Put them under your seat. You're going to have a pop quiz."

And there'd be—The army guys would be, like, "Why? Why? We don't know what you're talking about." [both chuckling] We'd laugh so hard. It was so funny. But—

TS: So marines are good at following instructions.

DL: Yes.

TS: Okay.

DL: I don't know why these guys just—and the army instructors would say that: "You should be embarrassed. These marines are putting you to shame," and blah, blah, blah. But it was true, we did always—and for all intents and purposes, when we finished the class I was number one and then the other two marines were two and three.

So when I reported to Cherry Point, because of that I got meritoriously promoted to my next rank.

TS: Oh nice.

DL: Yeah. E-1 [correction: E-2] PFC [private first class].

TS: Excellent.

DL: So yeah. But it was interesting; the class was interesting. The army instructors were really good. I mean, they were really nice to us.

TS: What made it so interesting?

DL: Because it was a lot of stu—In other words, I was like a grease monkey, especially working on the equipment with tools and whatnot and my hands.

TS: Did you ever do anything like that?

DL: No, never. And they said I was good at it, too, so I was like, "Okay, great." That's what my testing was when boot camp—that's what—I scored high mechanically or whatever it was.

TS: Oh, okay. Right.

DL: But I got sent to this MOS.

TS: Interesting.

DL: And the other interesting thing during the school, one day the commanding—the general—the office—the head commander there of the base of the schools came to our class because he wanted to meet me. And I thought, "Whoa, what did I do?" The army instructors—everybody was getting all nervous and stuff, and then they found out it was because he wanted to meet me. And I said, "Why?" [chuckles]

And then they said—then the general I guess—I guess it was a general—he said, "You're the second woman marine to come through this course now. I did not get to meet the first one, but this time I wanted to meet you and see what you think and how you're being treated," and so on and so forth.

TS: Okay.

DL: I said, "Oh, okay." And I said, "This is great. I like this class; the army instructors are great; I'm being treated well."

TS: Right.

DL: He said, "Well, I'm glad to hear that. I hear that you're, like, top of the class."

I said, "Yes, sir."

He goes, "Wonderful. Congratulations."

I said, "Okay." So it was really nice.

TS: Was he a marine or army?

DL: No, he was the army guy. He was in charge of the schools there. So it was really interesting that that happened.

TS: Yeah.

DL: I thought, "Oh, my God. What did I do? I didn't—I don't recall doing anything wrong."
[chuckles]

TS: Right. It's not usually the generals that come after you if you do something wrong.

DL: Right, right. But because I was the second woman marine to go through that school he told me.

TS: Wow.

DL: And then I inquired about the first one, and I think I was told that she did finish, but she ended up getting out shortly thereafter because she was pregnant.

TS: Okay.

DL: And back then you could get out when you were pregnant. I guess they told you you had to. I don't know; I can't remember.

TS: Well, '75 I think was the cutoff date that you—

DL: You could stay in if you wanted to.

TS: Well, that's like when you had to get out, up until '75, and then after that—I mean, there were some waivers and stuff, but I'm pretty sure for the Marine Corps it was '75, because there was a suit at that time.

[*Crawford v. Cushman* was a federal case decided in 1976 in which the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit held that the Marine Corps' regulation requiring the

discharge of a pregnant marine as soon as pregnancy is discovered violated the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution]

DL: Oh, okay. That's what I was told; I don't know this to be true or not.

TS: It sounds very feasible.

DL: Yeah. And because there weren't very many marines—women marines in my field. And so, yeah.

TS: I guess not since you're the second one to go through the class.

DL: Yeah, that's what I thought. And I never really gave it that much thought.

TS: No? You thought, "This is what I'm doing."

DL: Yeah. This is what I was told I needed to do, and this was my job, and so on and so forth, and, okay, alright.

So then I head out to Cherry Point, and again, kind of scary because they put us on a bus. I didn't go home on leave before that.

TS: I don't think you said this on tape, but can you talk about how your brother's in [Marine Corps Air Station] El Toro [Irvine, California] and the other marine in your class was going there.

DL: Oh, yeah. And at the class, when we finally got our orders where we were going to have to report to, one of my classmates was being sent to [Marine Corps Base] Camp Pendleton [Oceanside, California] and my brother was stationed at El Toro, California, and I was being sent to Cherry Point, North Carolina. And Morris wanted to go to Cherry Point and I wanted to go to Pendleton, and we went into the office and asked if we could switch—if our orders could be switched—and they said, "No."

And I said, "Why?"

And they said, "Because of a quota. We need to send a female marine out this way, to the East Coast." They have female marines, not necessarily in this field—

TS: Right.

DL: —but I was going to be going to an engineer—

TS: Right. Unit.

DL: —battalion, platoon, whatever. And I'm like, "Okay." So I was really bummed out about that.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But, like I said, it turned out well, because when I got to Cherry Point I met my future husband. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, there you go.

DL: So it was a—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, talk—go ahead.

DL: No, what were you going to ask?

TS: I was just going to say, so you've been just a few months, really, in the Marine Corps.

DL: Yes.

TS: What are you thinking about? I mean, are you liking it?

DL: Yes. Well, at that point—and once again I'm going to stress, because my brother kind of helped me a little bit through this.

TS: Right.

DL: He says, "You're going to be a nobody [chuckles] for the—during boot camp and during your MOS training." He says, "Once you get to a permanent duty station and you're settling down and you get settled and you know what your job is and what you're going to be doing, it's going to be a lot better."

TS: Okay.

DL: He said, "You'll feel a little bit more comfortable and better at being where you're at."

TS: So he was preparing you for that.

DL: Yeah, he prepared me, and he was a big help there. I just really appreciate the fact that he helped me through this.

TS: Yeah.

DL: Because he'd been through it. [chuckles]

TS: How long had he been in by that time?

DL: Probably about two and a half years; three years, maybe. He was already a sergeant, so it'd been about three or four years.

TS: Okay. So you get to Cherry Point.

DL: Yes.

TS: Did you stay in the barracks there?

DL: Yeah. Once again, I reported at night because the bus got there real late. [both chuckle] First of all, they—We stopped in some little town here in North Carolina—I don't know where—because they had to transfer some that were going to go to [Marine Corps Base] Camp Lejeune on another bus.

TS: Okay.

DL: Oh no, they stayed—The ones at Camp Lejeune stayed on that bus. They had to transfer me off of this one bus to go to Cherry Point. The sad part was, I was the only one getting off that bus and it was like 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

TS: Oh, no.

DL: The bus station was closed, looked like there was a vagabond sleeping on one of the benches out there, and the bus driver's saying, "Geez, I don't know when your bus is going to get here." And he felt bad, and he's like, "I really don't want to leave you." He goes, "I'll tell you what. I'm going to sit here and wait for a good twenty, thirty minutes, okay? But that's the most I can do."
I said, "Okay. Thank you." Thank God that bus showed up in twenty minutes.

TS: Did it? Just getting ready to leave?

DL: Yes. And he was so glad that the bus driver was from the one going to Lejeune.

TS: Right.

DL: And so, the bus driver that was taking me to Cherry Point, he goes, "I didn't realize it was a female marine." He says, "I would have come here sooner."

TS: Oh.

DL: I said, "Thank you." [chuckles] So he gets me on the bus there and there's three male marines on that bus and, of course, oh boy, they all wanted to talk to me, and I'm like, "I'm so tired. I want to go to bed." It turns out they were all MPs [Military Police] so I decided to be nice to them.

TS: Yes. Good.

DL: Talked to them. And so, when we got there some MP car came and picked them up and they said, "Let's take her to the barracks." There's only one barracks at Cherry Point for female marines and that was across from the general's building.

TS: Okay.

DL: So I showed up and they put me in a—What did they call that room?—a transition room. So I stayed there for the night and then the next day I was assigned a barracks room. And then the next day I had to go to the Joint Reception Center and do whatever it is that we had to do.

TS: Process in.

DL: And then they called somebody from where I was going to be going. I was being assigned to West 27 utilities—West 27—the squadron—27th Squadron—and I didn't know where that was or anything, so they called out there to West 27—by the time I got up to the squadron it was already 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon, so they called down to the shop, as we called it, and they said, "We've got a female marine here that you need to pick up. She's going to be with you guys now."

And so, I waited about thirty minutes, here comes this sergeant, and he's going, "Where's this female marine I'm supposed to be picking up?"

I'm like, "Oh, God. He doesn't sound happy at all." [both chuckle]

And they point at me and he goes, "Okay." And I've got all my paperwork and everything. He goes, "Follow me."

And I go, "Okay."

So we get in the car and we do a little chitchat, he's telling me he's from Wisconsin and I'm telling him I'm from Texas. And I didn't really want to talk because I didn't know him well, and I don't know if you've ever been to Cherry Point, but to get out to West 27th utilities it's way the heck out in the middle of nowhere.

TS: Okay. Long drive.

DL: So we had a—We're driving and we're going by this flight line, and then we're driving we're driving, and I'm going, "Where are you taking me?"

He goes, "To the shop."

I go, "But where is it?"

He goes, "We'll be there soon."

I'm like—I've got my hand on the door knob—

TS: Ready to jump?

DL: —I'm ready to try and jump out.

TS: [chuckling]

DL: Because I'm not trusting this guy. And then we get to the shop and there's nobody there. The duty—the duty comes out and he's like, "Where's everybody?"
"They went to PT, remember?"
"Oh, yeah." Well, come to find out, he got out of PT to go get me. And then he goes, "Okay."
And the duty was all, "Oh, hey, how are you doing?"
And I go, "What now?"
He goes, "I'm taking you back to your barracks."

TS: [chuckles]

DL: I said, "Okay." So we didn't talk much at all. And we went back and took me to the barracks and all I said to him was, "How do I get back to the shop tomorrow morning?"
He said, "Well, this deuce and a half [2.5 ton 6x6 U.S. Army cargo truck] comes by and picks people up. Never mind, I'll come get you."
I said, "Okay, thank you."
He goes, "Be ready by zero-six [6:00 a.m.]," or something like that.
I said, "Okay."
So next morning I'm ready, and I was standing in the common area and he comes up to the duty and he's asking—he goes, "I can't remember her name. She's about this tall, she's Hispanic, she's got dark hair."
Then I come out and I go, "I'm right here, sergeant."
He goes, "Oh. Come on."
So I'm like, "Okay." So we get out and he has this Chevy [Chevrolet] Nova.

TS: Okay.

DL: And he had another sergeant with him, and so that sergeant gets out and he says, "Go ahead." I was getting ready to jump in the back, he goes, "No." That's when you could all fit up front. He didn't have a stick—

TS: Right. The bench seat.

DL: So I get up in the middle and we're driving off, and that other sergeant, he just kept staring at me. He kept staring at me. And I go, "Sergeant, is there a problem?"
And he's a good old boy from Kentucky, and he goes, "You ain't half as ugly as Buzz said you was."
I said, "What?"
He goes, "Yeah, he said you was fat and ugly and that nobody should bother you. Nobody—Everybody should just leave you alone."
I said, "Oh, my God." I turned to him and he was beet red but laughing like crazy.

TS: [chuckles]

DL: I said, "Did you say that?"

He goes, "Yes." He wouldn't look at me. He says, "Yes."
I go, "Why?"
He goes, "I had my reasons."

TS: [chuckles]

DL: And he just kept driving. Later on I found out why. He said when he got to the barracks and they heard there was a female coming to the shop—

TS: Right.

DL: —because there was one other female out there and she was, like, the forklift operator, I think.

TS: Okay.

DL: And then I was coming out there. And they all bombarded him—"What does she look like?" this, that—and he said, "If I had told them that you were beautiful they would have all gone to the barracks and bothered you. I wanted them to leave you alone." [both chuckle]

I said, "Okay." So needless to say, same Buzz, the guy who ended up being my husband.

TS: That was Buzz?

DL: That was Buzz. [laughing] Yes.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Maybe he wanted to keep you to himself.

DL: Yes. He didn't want—Yes, he did. That's what he told me later on. He just did not want anybody to be bothering me and he wanted them all to leave me alone. [both chuckle] Oh my—

TS: That's a great story, Dolores.

DL: But I love that one.

TS: That's a great story.

DL: I'll never forget that. Never in my whole life.

TS: No.

DL: No, no.

TS: But it's interesting, too, because you actually challenged him too.

DL: Yes, yes. Yeah, I did. I said, "You said that? Why?" Because I'm thinking, "I don't think I was that ugly or fat," you know, at that time. But it was so funny the way that—and he had that strong Kentucky accent. It was so cute; it was so cute.

But, yeah, so he took me out to the shop and introduced me to the tops and everybody and they're all like, "Hmm," because they weren't sure they wanted to put me out on the lot with the guys just yet so they just wanted me to get used to—and they said, "Can you type?"

I go, "Yes, sir."

And he goes, "Well, we just lost our clerk—our whatever clerk—admin clerk. Do you mind just starting out doing the morning report, this and that?"

I go, "Just show me what I need to do." But I would get out there once in a while but they were all already working and doing what they needed to do, and it was a very interesting—And of course, all the guys there were very nice and friendly and wanted to get to know me.

Oh, but one interesting point I did not mention. I was engaged at the time to a guy back home. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, you were?

DL: So—

TS: What did he think about you going in?

DL: He was very sad about it, but he understood that I wanted to go off and do something different.

TS: Okay.

DL: And he couldn't leave or do anything because his father was very, very ill and he needed to stay home and take care of him.

TS: Take care of the father?

DL: Yeah. But eventually I ended up breaking it off with him because I started liking Buzz a lot too much, way too much, and I didn't want to do that; play with each other.

TS: Right.

DL: So I was true; true to them. It was something.

TS: Well, when you're out at the shop and you were doing the typing, at what point did you get out to the shop? How long did it take you to actually do the job?

DL: Not there. I didn't ever get to do that there.

TS: You never did?

DL: Well, I recall maybe once or twice going out there, maybe working on a generator or getting to do a little something, but it was very, very rare because those guys kept everything up. They took care of everything so fast. But I—And the top, he was very worried about me going out there, and he was just so worried; "A female, amongst these men, and I can't have anything happen."

TS: Right.

DL: [chuckles] He was so worried about it.

TS: It's not that they treated you poorly.

DL: No, not at all.

TS: It's just that they looked at you more like a sister or something?

DL: Yes, definite—And the tops of course looked more at me like a daughter.

TS: Daughter. Okay.

DL: Yeah, because they were all—I was much younger.

TS: Right.

DL: And so—And then I got used to being around them and doing all the morning reports and getting out their—I would go and make the rounds on the lot and talk to everybody and see what was going on and if anybody needed any help and things like that, but. And then before you knew it, it was like nine months later and I'm getting orders to go to Okinawa, Japan.

TS: Okay.

DL: I'm like, "Wow, okay. I'll take them." So I got to go there.

TS: How was Okinawa?

DL: Wonderful. I loved it. It was, once again, very interesting, because I don't know if you know anything about Okinawa.

TS: I've never been there.

DL: Where I was supposed to be going was a place called Camp Hansen, which is on the farthest north tip of the island, and all that's out there is just infantry, and I was supposed to be going out there. And so, when I reported to H&S Battalion [Headquarters and Support Battalion], the CO there was very leery about sending me out there because the few marines—women marines that were out there already—I think there was four or five of them—two of them had already been raped, and he was like—

TS: Did he tell you that?

DL: Yes, he did. And I asked to make sure if it was true and it was. I mean, just like, "Wow." He says, "I'm letting you know this," he says, "because if you go out there I want you to know what to expect. Be very careful." Because they had, like, a little Quonset hut for the women to stay in. It wasn't more like a barracks. It wasn't really like a real nice barracks arrangement, it was real weird. I don't know if you've ever been in a Quonset hut.

TS: I've heard about them; seen pictures of them.

DL: Yeah, because that's where I worked at Cherry Point, was in a Quonset hut, and they just had some racks [beds], and then I think you had to go outside to use the restroom or something. I can't remember how they told me. And one of them, I can't remember if it was the sergeant major and his wife or somebody, wanted—They said, "Look, we want to take you up there. We're going to drive you up there to Hansen and show you what it looks like and what it's like so you can get an idea."

And so, we went up there and I saw a female marine up there, and I asked her if I could ask her some questions and she says, "First of all," she says, "you do not want to come up here. If you can stay down south, stay down there." She said, "It's still not—This is still a man's world and they don't want women up here."

I said, "Wow, that bad."

She goes, "Really. I'm telling you. I'm serious. If I were you I'd stay down south if you can stay down south."

I said, "Okay," and then she showed me the Quonset hut and I'm like, "Oh my God. No." [chuckles] I was not happy with that.

TS: Right.

DL: And then by that time, my brother and Buzz, they were stationed in [Marine Corps Air Station] Iwakuni, Japan, and they—I got a phone call and I was talking to both of them and I said, "They want me to go to Camp Hansen."

And both of them go, "No! Don't go there!"

I'm like, "Oh, my God. You've heard of it?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes." Buzz had already been there before, because he used to be infantry before he went into that field, and he said it's really bad up there. And my brother had just heard things.

TS: Right.

DL: But I said, "That's okay. The CO down here wants me to stay down here." I was, like, company clerk and then I moved up to the headquarters building and then I became, like, a legal clerk up there.

TS: Okay.

DL: So that was okay. It just kind of—a little disappointed that I didn't get to do what I wanted to do.

TS: The job?

DL: The job itself.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But the jobs that I was given to do, they were very interesting, especially when I became—I was a legal clerk and I'd go into office hours and take minutes and do things like that, so that was really nice.

TS: Interesting because you knew what was going on—

DL: Yes, yes.

TS: —in the wider Marine Corps.

DL: Yes. And being up there at the general's building was different, too, but it was okay. I enjoyed it; I did. And I thought, "Okay, but for some reason everybody's telling me, 'you don't want to go up there, you don't want to go up there.'" And when I went up there to see that, I was disappointed but I understood. And then the next time I got to go up there we were—me and a couple other people from the battalion were monitors for PFTs so—and, yeah, it was all predominately men. I don't even recall seeing a female up there at that time. That was like six months later or something. That's about as far as the extent that—

TS: You had with Camp Hansen.

DL: [chuckles] And there was nothing up there. I mean, there was—if you—there was no towns, just real small little towns out there. Not like down south when I was in—It was called Makiminato [Service Area] then, now they call it Camp Kinser.

TS: Okay.

DL: And it was right—if you went right outside the base, Naha, which is the capital of Okinawa, was right outside the base and there was so much going on there; so much to go and see and do.

TS: What did you like to do?

DL: Go—Karaoke. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, is that right?

DL: Yeah, a bunch of us liked going to karaoke and playing the slot machines, because a lot of places out there had karaoke and slot machines and they were just like—I only played the nickel ones or the quarter ones or whatever. And then going to the air force base—Kadena [Air Base]—go out the back gate there and that's where all the shopping was. There was this place called China Peaks[?], and oh, lord, beautiful china and stoneware and silverware and it was just cheap. I mean, the price. It wasn't cheap quality, it was just the price.

TS: Right, inexpensive.

DL: Very inexpensive. And then buying fresh water pearls and all kinds of neat things. I bought so much nice things and sent them home to family and friends and whatnot.

TS: Right.

DL: It was really nice out that way. So I enjoyed the shopping. [both chuckle]

TS: The shopping, the karaoke.

DL: Karaoke and playing the slot machines.

TS: There you go.

DL: Yeah, and of course going and trying—there are different foods.

TS: Right. How did you like that?

DL: Some I liked and some I didn't. [chuckles]

TS: What did you enjoy?

DL: Their fried rice the most.

TS: Yeah.

DL: Yeah, that was the best thing, their fried rice out there, yes.

TS: Yeah. Did you get to travel at all?

DL: Not from Okinawa, no. I didn't get to go to the Philippines or do anything like that.

TS: No, but within Japan?

DL: Oh, within Japan, yeah. They have this resort up north a little bit south of Hansen. It's called Okuma[? Beach Resort] and it's a resort and it's beautiful. I mean, they have little cabins and you can go out and snorkel or scuba dive or take their boats out—the glass bottom boats.

TS: Oh.

DL: And see all that. And a bunch of us went up there—took a trip up there one weekend and we did that. We tried to do things.

TS: Did you get to see Buzz or your brother?

DL: Yeah, they came to visit me on the island. And that's when Buzz proposed.

TS: Oh, yeah?

DL: So, yeah. [chuckles] So that was cute. And then they both got sent to El Toro, and then when I finished in Okinawa I asked to be sent to El Toro; I didn't know if I was going to or not.

TS: Were you engaged then?

DL: I was engaged.

TS: Okay.

DL: I wasn't married yet.

TS: Okay.

DL: So, yeah, they let me have El Toro. And then before I reported to El Toro, we went to El Paso and I got married, and so yeah.

TS: Oh, so you got married before you—

DL: Yeah, before I reported to El Toro.

TS: Oh, good.

DL: Yeah. And then I ended up at the same shop with my husband. [chuckles]

TS: Did they allow that then?

DL: Yeah, they did, but they didn't let us work together.

TS: Okay.

DL: So once again, here I was, he's out on the lot and I'm in the office. And then shortly thereafter I found out I was pregnant, so I couldn't go out on the lot and work because it required lifting heavy stuff, doing things like that.

TS: Right.

DL: So, no, they weren't going to let me.

TS: So you never really actually got to do your MOS.

DL: No, that was sad. I was really disappointed about that.

TS: But it's on a resume.

DL: Yes, yes. That and the fact that—I mean, even now, like, I could work on my garbage disposal. I can fix my plumbing in the restroom.

TS: You still had to do the training, right—

DL: Yes, yes.

TS: —to qualify for your promotions and things like that.

DL: Oh yeah, yeah. Yes. And so—But I mean, I kept up with a lot of things and stayed— Well, because of my husband. He still—He would explain to me or, like he says, "Or something something broke down," or, "this happened today," and then he'd tell me what they did and I—Oh, yeah, I knew what he was talking about and what would go on and what would happen.

TS: Yeah.

DL: So fortunately. But I can tell you, it was still a man's world then; it was still a man's world. It didn't matter that I went to the school and I was a pioneer in that field but it was still a man's world.

TS: Yeah, so they were still worried.

DL: They were still very worried about anything happening to a female on their watch.

TS: Gotcha.

DL: Definitely. That was the problem.

TS: And apparently things did, when you talked about the rapes.

DL: Oh yeah, especially up in Hansen. Unfortunately that happened. I don't know what to say.

TS: When you got pregnant, that was 1980?

DL: Yes.

TS: You showed me the picture of you where they were going to put you on the fat girl program.

DL: Yeah, they wanted to put me on weight control and I'm like, "Whoa, wait a minute." And so, that's when they started me—they told me they wanted me to go on weight control and the very next day I went to start, because they had to go run on the track, and that's when I fainted and I said, "I know something's wrong." [chuckles]

TS: Right.

DL: And so, they told me I needed to go to sick bay and I did and they took the test right away and, yeah, I was pregnant. [both chuckle] So I called my husband and he was so excited; just so excited. I'm like, "I don't know what to think," because we'd just gotten married.

TS: Right.

DL: And I was like, "Wow, already? I wasn't supposed to get pregnant just yet." It happened; it's okay. And then my three year tour was up when I was about five and a half months pregnant, and of course he was old school, and I—me too in a way, I thought, "Oh, okay, maybe the best thing to do is get out and take care of the baby."

TS: Right.

DL: Because like he says, "If you think about it, you're going to be spending a lot of money—we're going to be spending a lot of money on daycare and all you're going to be doing is worrying and worrying and worrying."

TS: [chuckles]

DL: And I said, "Yes, this is very true. This is so true."

TS: Yeah.

DL: And so, yeah—But when I went to JRC [Joint Reception Center] to go ahead and process to get out, when they handed me my paperwork they gave me—the paperwork said I was being discharged for the good of the service.

TS: Oh.

DL: I said, "Oh, no." I said to the PFC who was a—"Why?"

He goes, "Because you're pregnant."

I go, "I understand I'm pregnant, but I signed up for three years and I'm doing my three years."

TS: Right.

DL: So I should be getting a good—how is it?—a honorable discharge.

TS: Right.

DL: And he said, "Well, I don't know."

I said, "Well, can I speak to the CO, somebody here in charge?" And so, he took me in to see this captain and I explained it to him too. I said, "I'm not signing this because it's not for the good of the service. I'm supposed to be getting an honorable discharge."

He goes, "Okay, well, it's close to chow. Can you come back after chow?"

I said, "Yes." And so, at that time I went back to my—the office—my shop, whatever—and I told my husband and he goes, "What? Well, I'll go back with you."

I said, "No, I think it'll be all right. If not, I'll give you a call."

He said, "Okay."

So I went back and they had the paperwork ready with a honorable discharge and I said, "Yeah, that's what I'll sign."

TS: Right.

DL: I'm not going to sign anything different.

TS: Wow.

DL: Yeah, they thought just because I was pregnant I was getting out for the good of the service. I said, "No, I served my three years. I signed up for three years. You need to go back and look at my paperwork."

TS: Right.

DL: And I guess they did. Somebody did.

TS: Good.

DL: Yeah, because otherwise I would have walked out and not realizing this.

TS: Right. Exactly.

DL: Because it's a big difference to get an honorable discharge and a good of the service discharge. Oh, no, no, no. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, it's a good thing you paid attention to what you were signing.

DL: Oh, yeah. I did. Yes, I did. Thank God. Otherwise I don't know how it would work out now, but.

TS: Yeah.

DL: Somewhere down the line I might have figured it out and then probably gone back and fought it.

TS: I'm pretty sure you would have, Dolores.

DL: Oh, I know. I would have. Definitely. [both chuckle]

TS: I can say that, yeah. How was your transition back into civilian life as a dependent, I understand, because your husband's still staying in.

DL: Yeah, he was still in the military. It was kind of sad in a way because I was used to going to work every day and stuff, but at the same time I was pregnant. I was very ill when I was pregnant; I had the morning sickness for the whole nine months. It didn't matter. And just trying to concentrate on trying to stay healthy about—hopefully, for the baby to be healthy and everything.

TS: Right.

DL: And just getting ready; getting the nursery ready, getting all that—so I got out at five and a half months pregnant so—and then he came along and the baby was born and then I just concentrated on the baby a lot. But it was because he would go to work and then he'd come back and tell me about all the people that I knew and what was going on. It was kind of sad, but.

Then shortly after the baby was born, about eight months later, he wanted out of there. He never liked the West Coast because he's from the Midwest and he likes to hunt and fish, and where we were at—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Kentucky, right?

DL: No, my husband was from Wisconsin.

TS: Oh, Wisconsin. That's right.

DL: And so, he couldn't hunt and fish out there like he wanted to, but being over here, because he'd been this way before, so he said, "No, I have called the monitor and asked them to send me back to the East Coast." And sure enough we got orders and we came back this way.

So yeah, it was—and then I just got into the routine with the baby, and then when he was nine months old I found out I was pregnant with the second one. I'm like, "Oh, dear. Okay." [both chuckle] What can I say?

TS: Then you had the two.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Did your husband retire?

DL: Yes, he did. After twenty-one and a half years he retired. We went back to Okinawa as a family.

TS: Oh, did you?

DL: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Oh, cool.

DL: The kids loved it. We stayed there three years and it was a really good tour for us. And that's where I learned to scuba dive.

TS: Oh, yeah?

DL: And my son, he was only ten years old and he learned to scuba dive, too, and he was much better at it than I was. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, they're fearless when they're ten.

DL: Yes, they are, they are. Now, my daughter didn't want to scuba dive but she did snorkeling. My husband and his friends, they loved it. They were out every chance they could get.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But it was a good tour, the kids learned a lot, it was very good for them.

TS: Good.

DL: Yeah, but he did retire. We came back here after that tour and he was in the corps maybe a year and a half and then he retired. And then we stuck around here because the kids didn't want to go to different schools anymore.

TS: That's one of the reasons that you've stayed?

DL: Yes, yes. Because my son had been through ten different schools by the time he went to fifth grade, third grade, something like that. It was a lot and they just didn't want to move anymore. Because we were thinking about going back to where he was from.

TS: How old were they when you lost your husband?

DL: My son was twenty and my daughter was eighteen. They were in college.

TS: Oh, okay.

DL: He passed away in January of 2007, and my son graduated from college in May of 2000—I'm sorry. He passed away January 7, 2003.

TS: Gotcha.

DL: My son graduated college May 2003.

TS: Two thousand three.

DL: And then my daughter graduated on May 6—his birthday—in 2005. Yeah.

TS: Okay.

DL: So they were both in college when he passed away. It was really hard on them too.

TS: Oh, I'm sure.

DL: Yeah. It was really hard, but. And I stuck around here because they were in college and neither one of them came home to live so [chuckles] they're both gone. That's okay. I go visit them a lot.

TS: Did you feel like you were treated fairly in the Marine Corps, like for promotions?

DL: Yes. Yes, for the most part, because all my promotions in the three years I was in, I got all of them meritoriously.

TS: Did you?

DL: I went before boards and passed and got promoted meritoriously, and that was three years to get E-4 [corporal] so that wasn't bad.

TS: No, it's pretty good.

DL: And I think if I would have stayed in I would have gotten E-5 [sergeant] right away, too, but I decided to go ahead and get out by the time I was pregnant.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But yes, I was—For the most part, there was always going to be—like, there was a little bit of harassment at Cherry Point when I got there from a captain, but I went and spoke to the—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Like sexual harassment?

DL: Yes. And I spoke to the sergeant major about it right away, and then the colonel called me in the next day and I explained to him what was going on, and they moved him out of the office.

TS: Oh, they did? Okay.

DL: Yes. They believed me because apparently other women had had problems with him.

TS: Complained about him.

DL: Yes. And then there was one other time when I got to Okinawa as a single marine. We used to have block training. I don't know if you know what that is. We'd have to go for a whole week of training and it was like talking about sexual harassment.

TS: Right.

DL: Kinds of things that you got to remember to get trained on. And at one time we had a break, and there was a gunny and he made the comment about, "Well, I don't believe women should be in my corps;" this thing again.

I said, "Oh, no, not another male chauvinist." [chuckles]

TS: Did you say that?

DL: Yes, I did.

TS: [chuckles]

DL: And he didn't say anything back to me, but you know what? He had the audacity to ask me to go out with him later on. And I knew he was married, he had a ring, and I said, "Oh, no. No, no, no. I don't play those games." I said, "You're a male chauvinist and so you think you can just do just whatever you want even though you have that ring on your finger. I don't think so." And I wasn't ever worried that they were going to report me or bring me up on charges because fortunately I had—There was people around who would hear this stuff.

TS: Okay.

DL: So I knew in this case especially—

TS: They could back you up.

DL: Because we were all in a break. And some of the male marines were like, "Hey, what the—" [chuckles] "Wow. He's brave."
I said, "No, he's stupid, is what he is."

TS: You never really had a problem speaking your mind.

DL: No, no. And that was interesting, because when I went to the VA [Veterans Administration] they wanted to talk to me, if I ever had any issues like that.

TS: Right.

DL: I said, "Well, I always stood up to them. If they tried anything, said anything, I would always just stand up to them. I didn't take anything."

TS: Except for the time you said you were driving out at Cherry Point to the—

DL: Oh, yeah. That's the only time it scared me, but he wasn't doing anything but driving. It just looked like he was driving out in the middle of nowhere. Then finally we saw houses, which was officers' quarters out that way, and I said, "Oh, houses."

He goes, "Yeah, officers' quarters out here."

I go, "Well, where's the shop?"

He goes, "Past the officers' quarters."

I said, "Okay." So from that point on, okay, I trusted him a little bit better. [both chuckle]

TS: There you go.

DL: Obviously; I ended up marrying him.

TS: Obviously, yeah. So would you say overall, then, your relationship with most of the men and women that you worked with was good?

DL: Yeah, mostly. Definitely, yeah.

TS: Did you ever get to work with many women?

DL: No, because—and everywhere that I went there—I didn't get to work with many women but I lived in the barracks with all the women.

TS: Like you were telling me earlier, you knew everybody because it was so small.

DL: Yes, yes. Like when I was in Okinawa, the women at H&S Company—H&S Battalion there—we were all on the third deck of one building and that's it. All the women were right there, so.

TS: Right.

DL: And the same at Cherry Point; all the women were in one barracks right across the street from the general's building. And at—By the time I got to El Toro I was already married so we had our apartment. But mostly we were all confined to just one little area there together. We were all together.

TS: Right.

DL: Yeah, it was interesting.

TS: Even though you didn't get to work in your MOS, did you feel like you had mentors from the guys who did work with you in the jobs you were doing?

DL: Oh, yeah. Well, my husband was the biggest mentor. I mean, because if anything happened at home that needed fixing he'd just make sure I watched and learned. [both chuckle]

TS: Oh, he did? He made sure you paid attention.

DL: Especially like—Right before he passed away something happened to the garbage disposal and he goes, "Come over here, I want you to see this." Because that's one thing I had not worked on very well with, was the garbage disposal, and he showed me exactly what I needed to do.

TS: He wanted to make sure you knew what you were doing.

DL: Yeah, to pay attention and stuff like that. Yeah, I mean, I'm not an expert at anything by any means.

TS: No.

DL: Like he was. [chuckles] Because in the end he was a utilities chief.

TS: Right.

DL: Me, I was just learning all that stuff for my MOS school and things like that. And they don't use a lot of that stuff anymore.

TS: Right.

DL: They don't use, like, those washer and dryer units out there. The shower unit and stuff like that, I think, are a little bit different now, I'm not sure. I've got to ask somebody.

TS: Yeah. You'll have to find out.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

DL: I'm going to have to ask what they do when they go out in the field again. Well, I remember one time when the kids were little and we got to go out to Combat Town to see how they live out there when they're out in the field and things like that. And when a couple of the female marines learned I was his wife they would just, "Oh, he's so cool. He's so neat. He set us up with electricity in our tent. We can use our blow dryers and our curling irons," and all this. And in turn, because they were with food service, they made sure he got good steaks and whatnot. They knew what to do.

TS: Oh, trade-offs.

DL: Oh yeah, he knew what to do. [laughs]

TS: Sounds like he did.

DL: Oh, yeah. He was a wheeling-dealing kind of guy. [both chuckle] But yeah, they live much better out in the field now and that's what—the top always used to say, "This is the best field to be in if you're ever out in the field."

TS: Yeah.

DL: Because electrician, refrigeration.

TS: They need you.

DL: Yes, yes. I mean, they could even make water for purification. They could even make—they knew how to make ice cream. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, nice.

DL: Yeah. The guys would get out there on a hot summer days at Cherry Point and make ice cream.

TS: That is pretty good.

DL: Oh, my God. Yes, yes. It was a good field. I mean, I was glad I was in it. Like I said, that's how I met my husband, and I'm not dis—I'm a little disappointed I didn't get to work at it as I would have liked to, but I'm glad I was in the field.

TS: Did you feel like a trailblazer at all?

DL: Well, I really didn't get to—

TS: Not necessarily the field, but as a woman marine at that time?

DL: Oh, yeah. Yeah, definitely. Because where I worked I was, like, just one or two of the females out there. In the squadron I think there was only four of us at that time.

TS: Oh, really? The whole squadron?

DL: In the whole squadron, just four women marines, yeah. So it was really neat.

TS: Yeah, no kidding.

DL: And I didn't really realize the importance of that for a while.

TS: Right.

DL: I just thought, "Okay, this is our job."

TS: It was your "normal" so you didn't really have a view of what [was bigger?].

DL: Yeah, yeah, but it wasn't until much later that I realized that. I said, "Oh, wow, there's not that many women out this way." I guess when—meeting that commander at the MOS school really put it into perspective for me. It's like, "Wow, okay."

TS: Oh, yeah.

DL: And after a while I thought back to that. I said, "Wow. Cool. [both chuckle] That was cool."

TS: When you think about some of the things that were going on when you were in the service, like 1977 through 1980, there was, like, no homosexuals allowed, right?

DL: Yes.

TS: And then after you got out, in the nineties they had the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and now that's been repealed. What are your thoughts on that whole situation of homosexuals in the military?

["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]

DL: Okay, well, that's another thing that would happen, because even though they wasn't supposed to be or—It was very evident. Especially like with our—there were some—wherever I went there was some female homosexuals, and one of them even approached me and told me that she cared about me and I said, "I don't—I'm not like that but that's your lifestyle. If you want to live that, you do that, just don't come to me about it and don't tell me anything about it."

TS: Right.

DL: "Because I don't want to know. The least I know, the less I have to say, okay?"
And she was, like, a little disappointed but at the same time she said, "Well, thank you for being honest."
I said, "Okay."
She goes, "And most of all, thank you for not putting me down."
I said, "Well, that's your lifestyle, if that's what you want to do, just don't involve me, okay?"
She's like, "Okay."
But we would see it. I mean, you would see it a lot. It was very evident. But for the most part we just ignored it. As long as they left me alone.

TS: Right.

DL: I would talk to them because they were in the barracks, but I wasn't like their best friends or anything like that. But I had no ill will towards them or anything like that. I guess, back then I was even, "Okay, that's what you want to do, that's your thing, just don't involve me."

TS: You think it's okay that they lifted the ban?

DL: Yeah, I do, I do. Because there's very many—like, for instance, there was one of them that was a real good marine. But she was always worried about being found out, being found out. It's not good. At least this way they can work and hopefully not be harassed.

TS: Right.

DL: So I think it's good. I really do.

TS: What about the issue of women in combat? Now we've got the women who passed the army rangers course. They're opening up some of the combat arms fields to women. What do you think about that?

DL: I struggle with that one a little bit, because I know, like, with my husband—and then I've know a lot—For instance, there was a young marine who lived across the street from me up until about a year ago, and he's with the infantry, and when they were starting to do this and talk about this, oh, he was very upset. I says, "Well, I understand. On the one hand I remember way back even when I was in, the women in Israel in the military were fighting alongside the men, their counterparts, and other countries have that too." I said, "But here I think these men are mostly taught to think if there's a woman around you've got to watch out for her, too, and worry about yourself."

But if a woman can handle it, by all means. But I think right now, still, the man's going to look at it like she's just going to be in the way. Some men will—some men—like the young man who lived across the street from me, because he was asked when they started doing this if he would go be an instructor and he said no. He didn't want to instruct the women in this.

Now, I'm okay, like, with the field that I was in, in the back, in the rear, that kind—to help out; I'm totally okay with that. But I mean, there's been so many women who've already gone to Iraq and Afghanistan and been through it all. Hey, I applaud them. I mean, I know I would have done it if I had to. I would have; I would have done whatever it is I needed to do to protect me and mine.

TS: So it's maybe more of a cultural shift than—

DL: I think so, yeah.

TS: —the actual reality of doing the work, you mean?

DL: Yeah, yeah. But I think some—A lot of them are coming around because, like I just said, they've gone to Iraq, Afghanistan, wherever, and the women have been right alongside the men.

TS: They train with them.

DL: But the Marine Corps is still a little bit behind on that because the army has already done that. I don't know. Miss Shirley [John?], the president of WMA [Women Marines Association], she's gone to the graduations, and I think she said finally one female marine finally graduated the school.

TS: Okay.

DL: So she went to the graduation to see her, but where she's at I don't know; I really couldn't tell you.

TS: Right.

DL: I'll have to ask Shirley about that, if she knows. But it's still—You see it, you still see it. But honestly, if she can do the job as well as the man, let her do it. Let her do it.

TS: Do you think there's any misconceptions that civilians have about people who are in the military, or the military itself, that you'd like to say to them, "Here, let me correct you"?

DL: Right. Well—

TS: Maybe not correct you, but give you a better understanding of it.

DL: Before Iraq and Afghanistan and all, yes, people would look down on the military and think, "Oh, you get to live on base housing and you get this and you get that." That kind of thing. And it wasn't until then, especially in this town—We were in Okinawa at the time but I heard back from all my friends over here when—What is it?—Enduring Freedom.

TS: Enduring Freedom.

[Operation Enduring Freedom is the official name given by the U.S. government for the Global War on Terrorism between 2001 and 2014]

DL: When that broke out and they sent all these troops out of here—and see, because a lot of these businesses were all these darn marines—"They're just causing more problems, and we don't like them here, we want them out of here." Well, when that happened and this town became a ghost town, oh boy, they were all eating their words. They were all hoping these marines would all come back and make their businesses function again. And so, from that point on, I really haven't heard that from the civilians out in town anymore. Of course you're always going to hear when there's fights and whatnot.

TS: Sure.

DL: Everywhere—Every military town has that. And right now I don't hear—all I hear is, "Thank you for your service," and this and that.

TS: Well, you're in a military town.

DL: Yes, yes, right.

TS: And you work on—

DL: Yes, and I work at the military base, but I really don't hear anything—well, very derogatory unless—I mean, even when I've been up to Asheville or down to Florida to visit my daughter I don't hear much of the bashing on the military, but just—when you hear people talking and stuff. But I don't know if they have a misconception right now of the military. I don't think so. I think more and more people are proud of the military and what they do for this country.

TS: Yeah.

DL: I mean, they're putting their lives on the line for us. And I even have to tell you this one thing that really gets me—my son laughs, he shakes his head—we went to the shoe store. I want to say it's DWS or—

TS: Yeah, DSW [Designer Show Warehouse].

DL: Yeah, DSW or Rack Room or something. And so, I'll always ask—wherever I go shopping outside of this military town, I'll ask, "Do you take a military—will you give a military discount?"

TS: Right.

DL: And some people will, surprisingly.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But then they tell me, "Oh, we don't give a discount to the military except only on Tuesday."

And I go, "Excuse me?" I said, "The military doesn't work just on Tuesdays. They work seven days a week, 24/7, defending this country, defending your boss so he can keep this place open."

And the one girl said to me, "It's not me, ma'am, it's corporate."

"I understand, honey, but this is ridiculous. The military works all the time. How come you only designate one day for a discount? They should get a discount every day of the week."

And she goes, "I agree with you, I agree with you."

TS: [chuckles] Did you write them a letter, Dolores?

DL: I should, huh? My son just shakes his head. But that one time with my son, this was up in Raleigh several years ago, the young man who was listening to me this time, he happened to be the store manager and he said, "But you know what, ma'am, you're right. Military works 24/7. I'm giving you the discount. [both chuckle]

My son says, "You fight for what you want."

TS: You do. That's great. Did any of your children want to join the military or think about it?

DL: [coughs] Excuse me.

TS: Want me to give you a pause for a second?

DL: Yeah.

[Recording Paused]

TS: You ready?

DL: Okay, go ahead.

TS: Okay, we're back here for a minute. So none of your children wanted to join?

DL: No, actually, that was very interesting. Neither one wanted to join. Well, if there was ever any mention of it, my husband would always tell them, "If you ever do join the military, I want you guys to finish college first. And then if you want to, then by all means." But—Because he never got to finish college—I never got to finish college—and that was a dream of ours both, that they'd both go and finish college.

And so, we always just said to them, "If you do, just go through college first and then decide."

TS: And they did.

DL: So they did, but neither one of them joined the military. But my son came really close to doing—He, as a teacher—because he was a teacher in the public school system up in Raleigh—and they had this program that the state of North Carolina paid for. They sent a bunch of teachers down to [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] to boot camp for a week because they wanted them to see what it was like because they felt that these teachers going through this and seeing this, when they got back and they taught new classes, they could tell if a student was going to—if he was college material or not. Then they could try and say to them, "Well, maybe you might think about joining the military. It's a good paycheck, you get taken care of," this that and the other. So my son went down, and he told me he was going to go to Parris Island and I said, "Oh, my God. Take a bunch of bug spray. The sand fleas are really bad."

He said, "Okay." Yeah, the first night he's calling me and he says, "I forgot the bug spray and they ate me up." [both chuckle]

I said, "I told you, son."

And it's really cool because he said they got to do a lot of things. They got to go to the rifle range; they got to go through the gas chamber; they got to sit in the chow hall [unclear] interview a lot of students and ask them, "Well, why do you—why did you join? Was this your only option?" or this, that, and the other. He said he got in trouble because he was starting to take pictures somewhere and some staff sergeant—female staff

sergeant actually—started yelling at him and telling him he shouldn't be taking those pictures, and he goes, "Okay." [chuckles] And they sat in on meetings with all the bigwigs and everything.

TS: Oh, neat.

DL: He said his—one of his people that went with him is another coach—because he was also coaching football at the time—and the other guy says to the female colonel that was talking to them—He wanted to be a real jokester and he says, "Yeah, I understand the Marine Corps is part of the Department of the Navy."

And without hesitation she goes, "Yeah, the men's department, okay?" And she kept talking. [both chuckle]

My son says, "Oh, she got you good. She got you good." I even have a picture of my son there with him shooting the rifle. And I asked him, I said, "Yes, and did you do sharpshooter?"

He goes, "Yes, ma'am."

I said, "Because I know your dad's going to be laughing at you from heaven if you didn't."

TS: That's right.

DL: Because that's all my husband ever did, was sharpshooter, all the time, with the rifle and the pistol. He says, "Wow, Mom," he says, "I got a feel for what you went through, what it was like." The only thing that he got to see that I didn't get to go through was the Crucible. My husband, either. But we still did a lot of stuff.

[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]

TS: Right.

DL: He really enjoyed it. He goes, "The only funny part about it is I'm sitting there talking to these young people," and he says, "I feel so old next to them."

And then they'd say, "Sir, this recruit blah, blah, blah, blah, sir."

He goes, "Oh, my God, they kept sir-ing me to death." Because they're all college graduates who went down there, teachers and [unclear], and they look at them like officers, so to say.

TS: Right.

DL: And so, everything was, "Sir, this," and "Sir, that." He goes, "Oh, my gosh." [chuckles] He says, "I understand." But he said it was a really good experience for him.

TS: Good.

DL: And he totally understands a lot more. He said, "Even though I didn't go through the full scope I understand a lot of—"

TS: Got a taste of it.

DL: —"a taste of what you and dad had gone through."

TS: Yeah. That's pretty neat.

DL: And then my daughter, the only thing that—she's in the—her and her husband own a strength and conditioning gym. They graduated with degrees in exercise physiology—exercise science or whatever—and so they've got their own gym now and they teach athletes—or work with athletes, for strength and conditioning. But she also gives a Spinning class at, like, LA Fitness or something, and there's a seventy year old retired army colonel there and he loves—because she took—she wears her USMC stuff, she always—they always—they'll wear that. And she had a USMC water bottle, and he says, "Were you in the Marine Corps?"

And she goes, "No, sir, I wasn't. My parents were."

He goes, "You have—You must have had a tough upbringing."

She goes, "Well, yeah, it was tough love. But you know what? My brother and I are really grateful for that because we both turned out really good."

He goes, "I'm glad to hear that."

TS: That's a nice compliment.

DL: She does, she says that to anybody who will listen. And the other one who's very, very proud of the fact that I was in the Marine Corps, my husband was in the Marine Corps, is my son's wife. She didn't—she only got to meet my husband, which was unfortunately when he was in the hospital and it was his last days, and—but she always—she always wants to wear the Marine Corps stuff, and she talks about us both being in the military. And my little granddaughter, she's four years old, and any time she sees a Marine Corps emblem, "Look at the marines, the marines!" She goes everywhere. And then when they come here and they go on the base, oh my God, she gets so excited.

TS: Excited, I see.

DL: And then I pointed out—I said to her, "Look, honey. There's a female marine over there."
"Where, Abuela [Spanish, meaning "grandmother"]? I want to see her."
I took her by the hand and I went up to her and I'm like, "Excuse me, young lady—" or whatever, she was a corporal—I said, "This is my granddaughter and she would really like to say 'Hi' to you because you're a female marine and I used to be one."

She goes, "Okay." So she said, "Hi," to her and shook her little hand and everything.

TS: Well, that's really adorable.

DL: Evie[?] thought it was just great that she saw a female marine. "Like Abuela," she says. But they're so cute, they really are.

TS: Oh, that's adorable. If a young woman came to you today to say, "I'm thinking about joining the Marine Corps or the military," what would you say? What kind of advice would you give?

DL: Oh yeah, a lot of them do that. Not a lot, but I've gone through this, and what I do say to them first and foremost is, "Well, what is it that you want to do? Do you have a specific job you want to do in the military? And if so, this—like, the air force has the medical and the navy has the medical and so does the army." I said, "So if you want to get into the medical field don't look to the Marine Corps because they don't have that. They rely on the ar—on the navy for that." I said, "And then there's other things you have to take into consideration. If you're thinking about trying to travel the world, the Marine Corps doesn't go very many places. We only have East Coast, West Coast, and a couple in the middle somewhere." It's not that I'm trying to throw[?] them from the Marine Corps because I'm very proud of the fact that I was in the Marine Corps, but just trying to figure out what they want to do.

TS: Let them know the possibilities.

DL: Yeah. You've got to be smart about what you want to do first and then think about it. A lot, a lot of friends whose children have gone on to different branches of the service because the Marine Corp's not going to be what they need; it's not the field they wanted. Like I have these really good friends, both of them were in the Marine Corps, one son is in the air force and the other one's in the army. Because of the fields they wanted to do, the Marine Corps didn't have it or something. I can't remember.

TS: Very interesting. Well, the army of course probably has more jobs—

DL: Opportunities, yeah.

TS: —than any other service.

DL: Yes, the Marine Corps is very limited. As I said, I went—

TS: Well, it's a small service too.

DL: Yeah, and when I went in on an open contract I honestly thought I was—and look at what I did. I really did end up doing a lot of office—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Yeah. In a desk job.

DL: Yeah, a desk job. But I got to wear my boots and my uniform.

TS: That's right.

DL: That's why when my kids were in school and if somebody said to them, "Your momma wore combat boots," they'd say, "She did. She was in the Marine Corps." [chuckles]

TS: There you go.

DL: It didn't bother them any.

TS: No.

DL: Yeah, but that's what I usually say to a lot of kids: "You've got to—" And then I say, "Now, can you go to college first and get a degree in something and then try and use that to go into the military, and then you could be an officer."

TS: Right.

DL: Not to deter being enlisted, because enlisted's great too; they're the backbone.

TS: Right.

DL: But just so they get their—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So they know what they—

DL: I try and tell them all the options and see what they might like.

TS: That's a great way to do it.

DL: That's what I—That's all I can say to them.

TS: How do you think your life has been different because you decided to go and join the Marine Corps?

DL: I got to go and travel—Like I said, I got to see several different places before actually settling down now. And of course, with my husband, too, we traveled and then he was on a recruiting duty and we went to Minnesota, the Midwest, and we got to go back to Okinawa, and it's great. And I met him because of the Marine Corps. And I really didn't ever want to go back home and I still don't. I just—it's—that's why I'm here. This is a good—great military town, I have a good job now in the civil service. But I think it was the best thing for me to do.

TS: Yeah.

DL: I needed to get away from home because I felt like I wasn't going anywhere and I just didn't want to be there anymore.

TS: Yeah. It sounded, too, like you needed a challenge.

DL: Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely, yeah.

TS: You haven't really said that, but just from talking to you.

DL: Yeah, now that I think of it, yes, there was a challenge; that was definitely a challenge. And when I find that little story they did up on that—

TS: Oh, yeah.

DL: It says a lot because I remembered everything. Back then it was all fresh in my mind because it does say, "Why did you join the corps? What did your friends and family think?" This, that, and the other.

TS: Oh, yeah. Well, I can't wait to get that.

DL: So it's in that little thing, that little story, so I'll have to try and dig it up and send it to you. But it was really good, and I'm very, very glad—It was tough in the beginning, of course, but it was great. And then being—staying with the military as a military wife.

TS: Right.

DL: And it was—I think it was easier on me, because I had been in the military, to deal with a lot of the stuff.

TS: You knew all the Mickey Mouse [slang for insignificant or unimportant] stuff you had to deal with.

DL: Yes, yes. Definitely. And my husband would always say that I was a very supportive, good military wife. I guess he said, "Maybe because you were a marine." I don't know. I'd like to think that even if I hadn't been in the Marine Corps I'd be a good, supportive wife anyway.

TS: That's right.

DL: I know I would. [both chuckle] Yeah.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

DL: Being proud, being—well, for here, for this country. Being proud and standing up to anybody who tries to do anything against us or hurt us. You've got—Proud is the most important thing that comes to mind when I hear patriotism.

TS: Yeah. Would you do it all again?

DL: Oh, yeah. In a heartbeat. And I'd like to stay longer if I could. If I know then what I know now, yeah, I would have liked to have finished it out.

TS: Yeah.

DL: But so many circumstances.

TS: But you can't see the future.

DL: You cannot see the future. But yes, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. Definitely.

TS: Well, good.

DL: Yeah, yeah.

TS: Well, I don't have any more formal questions. Is there anything that we haven't covered that maybe you'd like to talk about at all?

DL: Wow, I think I've talked a lot. [chuckles]

TS: Just a little bit, Dolores.

DL: Yeah, right. Just a lit—Don't get me going about the Marine Corps and I'll talk. I'm very proud of the fact that I was in the Marine Corps.

And then for the longest time I didn't do anything until I heard about the Women Marines Association, and I thought, "You know, that's something I think I'd like to try, I'd like to get interested in." Oh, from the moment I met Miss Shirley [John]—and I know you know Miss Shirley, right? Whew, I mean, that's it. I've been with them since.
[chuckles]

TS: Well, good.

DL: And she has me to go with her to a lot of functions. If I was retired I think I'd be going with her to everything.

TS: Well, I can see why because you just exude a lot of pride and everything in your service.

DL: Thank you. I do, I do. When I talk about the Marine Corps, I'm very proud. I'm very proud. And the fact my husband was in the Corps too. And I li—and I always tell my children, "You were Marine Corps brats and you're very resilient." And they're very—I mean, they're good. They were good kids. We—she said tough love—my daughter said tough love—which was true. I mean, we didn't beat them or anything.

TS: Well, you had tough love, too, from your mother.

DL: Oh, now, that she did do. [both chuckle] Yes.

TS: A little different.

DL: That's why my brother said, "It's going to be easier in boot camp, okay? They can't touch you." [both laugh]

TS: Gotcha.

DL: But no, I mean—and the kids are proud of that fact; they are. They like to tell people that their parents were in the Marine Corps. Like, my son just recently sent me a text message with an attachment of an article, and he teaches up at the private school up in Asheville, the boys' private school called Christ School, and one of his students is going to go to the [United States] Naval Academy. He got accepted to the Naval Academy.

TS: Oh, that's great.

DL: So they write an article about that, and in the article he's talking and he's saying that—but once he finishes the Naval Academy he wants to join the Marine Corps. And so, I said—I texted him back and I said, "Needless to say, I'm sure you told him your parents were in the marines.
He goes, "Yes, ma'am. That's the first thing I told him before he was even going to the Naval Academy." I don't know why—he said why he wanted to go to the Marine Corps but I couldn't remember what he said in the article.
But Nicholas[?] was really—He said, "Mom. You'd like this. You'd like this a lot."
I said, "Oh, yeah, I would." And everywhere he's been, wherever he's taught and coached and all, he comes across kids whose parents have been in the Marine Corps, he definitely tells them, "Oh, my parents were in the Marine Corps."

TS: Oh, yeah. That makes a good connection.

DL: Yeah, he does.

TS: That is good.

DL: My daughter too. She likes to talk about the travels, and especially in Japan.

TS: Yeah.

DL: She said, "Boy, that's an experience I'll never, ever forget for as long as I live."

TS: Well, good.

DL: "It was a lot of fun."

I said, "Yeah, it was. But it was time to come home because he was going to retire."

TS: Yeah.

DL: Yes.

TS: Well, thank you so much for letting me come and talk to you.

DL: It was my pleasure.

TS: It was great to meet you.

DL: Thank you for listening to me and all my babbling.

TS: Oh, that was definitely my privilege, Dolores.

[End of Interview]