WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Jeannine Marie Franz

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: 15 May 2016

[Begin Interview]

TS: Well, today is May 15, 2016. My name is Therese Strohmer. I'm at the home of Jeannine Franz in Sneads Ferry, North Carolina, on a beautiful day, to conduct an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Jeannine, how would you like your name to be on your collection?

JF: Jeannine Marie Franz.

TS: Okay. You want the Marie in there?

JF: Yes.

TS: Okay, excellent.

JF: So I have photos. Do you want to see any of that while you're talk with me or you want me to just—

TS: Actually, let me stop.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Well, Jeannine, why don't start out by telling me a little bit about when and where you were born?

JF: I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1978.

TS: Nineteen seventy-eight. Did you live in the city? Did you live in the suburbs of Baltimore? Where did you live?

JF: I lived right outside the city, next to Dundalk, so I went to Colgate Elementary School, Holabird Middle [School], and then Dundalk High School.

TS: Okay. So the whole time you were right in that same area?

JF: Yes.

TS: What did your folks do for a living while you were growing up?

JF: My mother was a stay at home mom, my dad was a bus mechanic.

TS: Did you have any siblings?

JF: I had three—well, two foster sisters and a foster brother for probably about a year or two. I was very young, like kindergarten, but otherwise, no, I'm an only child.

TS: Is that right? Okay. What was it like growing up in Baltimore as a kid? What kind of things did you do for fun?

JF: Well, I was right across the street from the mall, so me and my girlfriends, we had so much freedom, I guess, being next to the city, and at that time it was pretty safe, so it was pretty much the mall right across the street, roller-skating. I roller-skated competitively throughout elementary school.

TS: Indoor, outdoor roller-skating?

JF: Indoor, like figures, free style, and dance.

TS: Oh, okay. Are you still pretty good at that?

JF: [chuckles] I don't know. I was thinking of trying out the roller derby if I ever get my hip fixed. No, it was—I haven't roller-skated in a very, very long time, but that was—once I hit middle school that was kind of the hang out too; roller-skating. So we lived there on the weekend.

TS: Yeah. What'd you do in the winter time? Same thing, because you go indoors, right?

JF: Yes.

TS: Did you enjoy school growing up?

JF: I did, for the most part. I had good grades until some parts of high school, I guess, when I was struggling with things like math. But I did; I think I enjoyed school quite a bit. I had, like, perfect attendance. I think I was just a pretty good student.

TS: So you liked going to school?

JF: Yes.

TS: Did you have a particular subject that you really liked and really were interested in?

JF: Music.

TS: Music, that's right.

JF: Music and history. I started the flute in fifth grade, and I was self-taught quite a bit so I'd move ahead of the other students.

TS: Really? So you just kind of—

JF: I was competitive.

TS: [chuckles] Okay.

JF: So I'd just go learn myself, and I started taking private lessons, I think, around eighth grade—my band teacher recommended it—and so I carried it through high school and, of course, into the Marine Corps.

TS: What got you interested in music, and in the flute in particular, as a young girl?

JF: Exploratory music.

TS: What's that?

JF: In fifth grade, they'd have you try out different instruments.

TS: Okay.

JF: Yeah. And then you had to pick one. Or actually, I think it was fourth grade and then fifth grade you were actually in the band so you had to pick something, and I don't know if there was any reason, I just picked—

TS: Like you just randomly picked it?

JF: —I picked the flute. I thought it sounded pretty. That's all I can remember. I was like, "Oh, well, that one looks like a cool one to play."

TS: Did you enjoy practicing?

JF: Yes.

TS: Yeah?

JF: I loved it. Yeah, I just—I think when I first started it was hard because I'd sit there and my mom would be like, "Are you practicing?" You have your twenty minutes a night or something you have to do.

I'd be like, "Yeah, I'm—" I'd screw around. But the better I became, the more I enjoyed practicing and actually really started working at it.

TS: Yeah. Well, that's pretty cool. So you played through high school. Did you play competitively outside of high school?

JF: I played through high school, so I was in the marching band, and I played in the Baltimore[?] Youth Orchestra. I was in all-county and all that kind of stuff.

TS: Yeah. You were competitive for sure, then. So you're growing up and you're in Baltimore. Did you have a sense of what you wanted to do when you grew up?

JF: Music; that's all I could think of. There was a—I wanted to be a cosmetologist so I looked at the vocational school, but I couldn't be in the band if I went there. And so, it was more important to me to stay in music, so I stayed at my high school and didn't do the cosmetology thing. And I decided, "Well, I'm going to go for music."

TS: Okay. And so, how were thinking you could use that? Did you have any ideas of going to college?

JF: I wanted to go to college. I had had aspirations of going to Peabody Conservatory [The Peabody Institute of The John Hopkins University], but I didn't know how I was going to pay for it or how anybody was paying for that kind of thing. So those were my initial thoughts until one of my girlfriends told me the military had bands.

TS: Oh, okay. Just randomly? She was like, "Oh, yeah, you could—"

JF: She was looking into the military so—not necessarily the Marine Corps. She ended up joining the Marine Corps, but she was like, "Yeah, the army, they have bands and they'll pay for your school and all this stuff."

I was like, "Really?" I didn't know any—I told you my dad was a marine.

TS: Right.

JF: But I didn't know much about the Marine Corps, besides all these bumper stickers that he had and that he went to Vietnam. He never talked about it.

TS: He just didn't talk about it, right?

JF: So I was like, "Okay." So I told my parents, I said, "Maybe I won't go to Peabody and try to work and all the stuff associated with that. Maybe I can join the military and be in the band."

TS: What did they say to that?

JF: I can't remember their reaction. I mean, my mom was probably like, "Oh, no."

TS: [chuckles]

JF: And I have a feeling that—I probably didn't get too much reaction because I don't remember it, but my dad was probably like, "Oh, hell yeah." [both chuckle]

TS: Because he was a marine, right?

JF: Yeah.

TS: Alright. You told them that and, then what year was this? Your junior or senior year?

JF: It was the end of my junior year because I went in delayed entry that summer. Well, I looked at all the services and the army wanted me to play the saxophone. So I'm like, "Sax player and—"

TS: Oh, you played the saxophone too?

JF: No, but they wanted me to play the sax. They said it's closely related to flute and I should be able to figure it—I said, "No, I'm a flute player." Navy wanted me to do flute and sax, because that's what they do in the navy. They do [unclear] [school of music?]; they learn both of them. So you have one that you come in proficient at, and then you learn an additional—

TS: You pick up another?

JF: Yes.

TS: Okay.

JF: So the last stop was the Marine Corps, and of course, this guy looked the sharpest out of any of the recruiters that I saw, and just the presence and demeanor were so different. They had these dress blues [Air Force or Marine Corps dress uniform] hanging up, and he was telling me about how much harder the boot camp was, and just all the stuff that recruiters tell you once they figure out what it is that you're looking for. So I was like, "Oh." And they wanted a flute player. I said, "Well, that's great because I play the flute. I don't want to play the sax or anything else." And I said, "Yeah, I like a challenge." So he showed me some things, the Marine Corps band, and so I was like, "Okay. That's what I want to do." I'm sure that just completely made my recruiter's month; they got a female and they got a flute player.

TS: Right. It's probably not an easy spot to fill, you would think. It's pretty unique talent to do that. How far ahead did you sign up for delayed entry?

JF: The summer going into my senior year.

TS: Did you have to have your parents sign for you, then? Okay.

JF: I think they did to go into delayed entry, but when I went to boot camp I was eighteen.

TS: Okay. And so, when you did sign up, was there a reaction then?

JF: No, they were just always supportive of everything that I've wanted to try or go do. My dad did not influence my decision between the services at all. I'm sure it was probably hard for him, but he was just there. He's the one that went with me, and he just stood there and didn't say anything. [chuckles]

TS: He let you figure it out; what you wanted to do?

JF: Yeah, so they were supportive. And I ended up with—The recruiter presented the Marine Corps College Fund—I got that going into the band—so that gives me about eight hundred, twenty dollars a month if I go to school full time once I retire from the Marine Corps. I got that, so it was, like, two scholarship type things put together, and I remember my dad telling me just how proud he was seeing that recruiter up on the stage—the Marine recruiter—and getting those certificates and the Sousa Award and stuff like that.

[If a marine completes an active duty contract of at least forty-eight months, they may become eligible for the Marine Corps College Fund. In combination with the GI Bill, the MCCF provides almost all of the funding necessary for a college education]

TS: Which one is that?

JF: They pick a student. John Phillip Sousa [American conductor and composer]. They would give an award to somebody who's in the band in high school; probably their top performer or however they went about it. I got that too, so he was just really stoked.

TS: Yeah, very excited; you're looking really good. So you went all the way through your senior year knowing you were going to join the Marine Corps. Did you try to prepare for it physically or mentally or anything like that?

JF: [chuckles] Well, I ran track all through high school and I was in really good shape so I really wasn't worried about the physical part of boot camp; what the recruiters told me I would have to do to pass. But my dad told me what boot camp was like when he went to boot camp, so he showed me *Full Metal Jacket.* I never asked him. I'm wondering if he was doing it to like—if he knew boot camp had changed and that really wasn't boot camp

anymore. But he showed me this movie and he says, "This is the closest I can find to Marine Corps boot camp that's pretty accurate."

And I was like, "Oh, my. What am I getting into?"

[*Full Metal Jacket* is a 1987 British-American war film. Its storyline follows a platoon of U.S. Marines through their training, primarily focusing on two privates who struggle to get though camp under their foul-mouthed drill instructor]

TS: Right. Did you have second thoughts?

JF: No. I was just nervous. I was like, "Oh, my gosh. I'm going to get beat up." But it wasn't quite like that anymore.

TS: Right, right. And it was not the same for women as it was for men when your dad went through, right? That's interesting. So you went in in July of 1996, right?

JF: Yes.

TS: And you're going from Baltimore. Did you fly down here or take a bus? Do you remember any of that?

JF: We flew from Baltimore to somewhere in South Carolina, and then we got on a bus and put our heads down, and then we put our heads up and we're told to get off the bus. [chuckles]

TS: You were told to put your heads down on the bus? Okay.

JF: Yeah. They didn't want us sleeping, but I remember we had to ride from the airport going to [Marine Corps Recruit Depot] Parris Island [South Carolina] with our heads down; couldn't see where they were driving us. I guess so we couldn't—it was harder to sneak out if we wanted to leave. [chuckles]

TS: I guess so. Tell me about your initial indoctrination into the Marine Corps when you get off that bus.

JF: It was just a total culture shock. You get off and get on yellow footprints [painted footprints that new recruits stand on to learn how to stand at attention], and it just completely sets the tone of boot camp as soon as you get off that bus; how things are going to be for the next three months. It was just an amazing experience, I would say. It's hard to describe unless you actually go through that. I can't say I was scared, like, nervous, because everything happened so fast, so it's hard to remember a lot of it really.

TS: Yeah. Well, they don't give you a lot of time to reflect on it while you're in there, right?

JF: No. You do that, get lined up, and go and do administrative stuff; up all night getting uniforms and doing paperwork; all that kind of stuff; and you get in the receiving barracks. That's about all I remember, but it was a long night.

TS: Your barracks, was it an open bay barracks with all the women—

JF: It was an open squad bay for the whole time.

TS: Alright. I forgot to ask you when you did delayed entry: What's your expectation? What did you want out of the Marine Corps when you first signed up and did your delayed entry? What was it that you were looking for yourself?

JF: You know what? I wasn't quite sure. I knew that it was going to give me some direction in life. Once I got there I couldn't really turn back on it, so. I knew I was going to—I'd have a job. I'd be more disciplined. I think I pretty well was through high school anyway, but I just—I really wasn't sure what to expect or—to expect myself after going through it. I think it really was I knew I was going to have some kind of direction. I was going to have a job. I was going to be able to play in a band, which I wanted to do. And I'd have the opportunity either while I was in or after I got out—plan was four years and I was done—to pursue my music degree. So, other than that, I just didn't really know what to expect.

The recruiters said that, "When you go into the band, all you do is play in the band. You don't go to the range, you don't PT [physical training], you don't do anything that marines do." It didn't matter to me but that's what he said, so I thought I was going to the Marine Corps and just playing in the band and performing.

TS: Was that what happened?

JF: No. No, you go to the range, you do everything that marines do. You go to the field. And bands have—They deploy. They do everything. So, no, it was quite different than what was described. That's a problem for some that I did see, but not really for me. I really grew a love for the Marine Corps and appreciation for everything it was about, and I loved being engaged in things physically and being physically fit. I enjoyed going in the field and going to the range and that kind of stuff. It was different than anything I've ever done in my life.

TS: When you were in basic training and you have this initial culture shock and you're going through it—because you're pretty young, you're eighteen—just probably barely eighteen or half a year into it, right?—even though you're physically fit, was there anything really physically challenging for you? Or emotionally challenging?

JF: It was hard, I guess, to be away from home, just as anybody. Kind of get a little home sick, and I never wanted to communicate with my parents so much in my life. [both chuckle] I wanted to get away, and then I was writing to them every night; every time I had time, that's who I was writing to. And they kept a book actually with—They kept all my letters.

TS: Oh, excellent. That's a great thing to have, for sure. Did you keep theirs?

JF: I did, but I don't know what happened. They got lost in a move or something, but I did have all of their letters that they sent me.

TS: Oh, that's pretty neat.

JF: Yeah.

TS: So you've got a memoir, really, of what you're telling them about your experience, right? That's pretty cool. When you went in, too, your friends, what did they think about it? You said the one friend ended up going in the Marine Corps, but what about your other group of friends?

JF: No, they were all supportive. I was dating my current boyfriend now, Jason, at the time. He was very supportive. He didn't—We kind of lost touch after I had left. But everybody thought it was pretty cool. I had a big party leaving and they thought it was really neat that I was going in the Marine Corps.

TS: Well, that's cool. So physically, it wasn't all that challenging?

JF: I don't think so. It was more mentally challenging at times. I was one that—I never really took too much personally, or tried not to, but sometimes when you're tired, all that kind of stuff, it can get to you. But I enjoyed it, for the most part. I didn't have to think about anything. I was told what I had to do and I didn't have to think about what I was wearing or doing my hair, and just go do what you're told. I mean, that's pretty easy in itself, I guess, and I actually looked forward to going to the pit because it relieved stress. It was extra exercise and—

TS: Describe the pit to people who aren't familiar with that.

JF: [chuckles] The sandpit. There was a big sandpit outside of the barracks and they were in different places throughout the Depot, and so when you screw up either as an individual or as a group—usually it was a group of people that would end up out in the sandpit—and so you'd do exercises until you pretty much couldn't do anything anymore, and that was your consequence. So you'd think again because you strive for perfection; that was the way, I guess, of making you think about things. But sometimes you get so stressed out, you look forward to getting worn out so you don't feel stressed anymore. [both chuckle] But you get the sand all over you and sand fleas and everything's all stuck and you're disgusting, and you're like that for the rest of the day.

TS: Oh, yeah, because you got to keep going, right? Now, you were saying earlier that you guys didn't go through the Crucible at that time or did you?

[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]

JF: No, that was a couple platoons behind me, so I didn't really get to experience any of it.

TS: Yeah. When you graduated, then, did your parents come to graduation?

JF: They did. They went down Parris Island while I was gone for boot camp; they went down to play golf or something, try to spy on me; they took some pictures of what they thought was me. Then they came down for my graduation.

TS: What was that day like?

JF: It was just amazing. All through boot camp they teach you what it is to be a marine and how prestigious that is, and about your history and the legacy that you're carrying on, and so it was just an amazing feeling. Not something that I thought I was going to be all my life, but in that one year of making this decision, it was a really big thing for me. It was quite an accomplishment to think you make the step of going to boot camp and going through it after I saw how many people didn't make it through boot camp, and I just really looked forward to the career I was starting. It was amazing. And I was so lucky to have parents that were supporting me through something like that.

TS: Pretty neat.

JF: Yeah.

TS: Do you remember the first time you put on the uniform?

JF: No. Like, my service uniform?

TS: Yeah.

JF: I remember getting fitted for it. I thought that was pretty cool because that meant you're getting closer to the end.

TS: To graduating through it? Yeah.

JF: So as we were getting fitted, again, for those—besides that, no, I can't really—That's another blurry part of boot camp.

TS: Sure. Did you get the coin when you graduated? Did you get a coin?

JF: I got my emblem.

TS: Your emblem, okay.

JF: I guess they're doing coins now.

TS: I'm not sure.

JF: I'm not sure but we had—That's what this is.

TS: The first picture you showed me. Yeah.

JF: So instead of the—What they're doing now is they have their ceremony after they get done with their hike from the Crucible. We would have—Ours was called the "Emblem Ceremony," and my parents went to that as well; it was the day before graduation. So that was just one step closer to being called a marine. You got your emblem and got to put your emblem on your cover. And then we had family day.

TS: Nice, nice. How long was it after you graduated from boot camp before you went to music school?

JF: I think I had ten days of leave and then I went straight there. I didn't have too much time in between.

TS: No? And remind me where that was at; where you went to music school. Oh, Virginia.

JF: Yeah. So it was the [United States] Armed Forces School of Music [now the Navy School of Music] at Little Creek Naval Amphibious Base [now Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story, Virginia].

TS: What was that like?

JF: It was hard for me. I have a hard time memorizing things, or just slow learning in general when it comes to memorization. So it was a lot to learn in six months. I forgot what the college equivalent is of that but—

TS: Condensed, I'm sure.

JF: Condensed into six months of school. It was a lot of fun. I learned a lot. It wasn't just playing. We had music theory. We had to sight sing. We had conducting and sight singing.

TS: What is that? What do you do for that?

JF: When they'd grade us we'd do it in front of the class, so we'd begin some sort of piece of music—and I'm not going to demonstrate this [chuckles], especially while being recorded.

TS: I should get you to get your flute out for sure.

JF: But you'd have to sing from the piece of music, and then you would have to conduct while you're singing, so it happened in stages. You do it in front of a class so it was quite embarrassing. I hated it because I cannot sign at all, and so that was a struggle; I had to have a lot of afterhours help with that portion of it. It was a long six months. It was a lot. But we spent the day with music and playing and practicing, practicing afterschool. I met a lot of great friends that I still talk with now. So it was pretty neat.

TS: Is there one band or are there a number of bands? Are there different ways that you can be part of the Marine Corps band? How does that work?

JF: There's eleven or twelve field bands, so once you graduate the school you get assigned to one of them, and I was lucky enough to be assigned to the Marine [Corps]Forces, Pacific Band, Hawaii in Kaneohe [Bay]. So you're just like anybody else in the Marine Corps, you're just assigned to a band based on the needs, and there's—I think I recall somebody that—they were actually that good, they went straight to the [United States Marine] Drum and Bugle Corps.

TS: That's a premier spot to go to?

JF: Yes.

TS: Okay. I guess you'd have to see where the openings are for a flutist.

JF: You could give a wish list. All of mine was East Coast because I wanted to be near my family and stuff.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Close to family.

JF: So initially I was supposed to go to [Marine Corps Base] Camp Pendleton [California], and then, last minute, the week before I was graduating, they said, "You're going to Hawaii." So yeah, it's based off the needs of your instrument, and also, probably, rank equivalent too.

TS: Oh, right. Right. That's true. You've got to fit the slot.

JF: Yeah.

TS: Well, okay, so you're going to Hawaii. Are you excited?

JF: Oh, yes. I was like, "Wow. I'm not going to Pendleton. Hawaii. That's—"

TS: Big change.

JF: Oh, yes. Three years in Hawaii. Pretty exciting. So I—That band was stationed on Kaneohe. We got to do some pretty interesting performances. Once a month we'd perform down at the Hale Koa [Hotel], down in Honolulu at the military resort. We played for the Pearl Harbor Memorial every year. Once a month we'd just play down—There's somewhere else we played down in Honolulu.

So while we're playing down in Honolulu, we'd run into a lot of veterans—a lot of World War II veterans at that time—and those who were actually there during Pearl Harbor, so they loved to come talk with us. A lot of them liked to tell their stories, their experience, so it was interesting. I love history, so just to be able to talk with these people that were there at the time was an awesome opportunity.

[The attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service against the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on the morning of 7 December 1941. The attack led to the US's entry into World War II.]

TS: That's pretty neat. So you're playing at different events. What was a typical day like when maybe you weren't playing an event? What'd you have to do?

JF: Usually physical fitness training in the morning as the unit—or the band; the whole band would go out together. Then we'd have generally concert band practice. We'd have marching band at some point. We had a jazz band, so they would practice at some point during the day, or any other some small ensembles, and you'd have your individual or just section practice together. It was playing all day.

TS: Playing all day?

JF: Yes.

TS: Did you have extra duties, Marine Corps duties, outside of the band?

JF: I was a junior marine in the band so I really didn't. I helped out in the instrument repair shop trying to learn. I thought maybe I'd try to go the [route of?] instrument repair technician at some point. So I worked in there trying to learn. But no, generally you would stand duty but we didn't have—we didn't stand duty.

TS: Wasn't really anything to stand duty for?

JF: There's barracks duty and stuff but we didn't—We stayed in somebody else's barracks because we fell under MARFORPAC [Marine Forces Pacific], which was on the other side of the island, so it was kind of a thing where it wasn't really our unit but we're using the barracks and we didn't stand duty. We were lucky.

TS: Okay. I see what you're saying.

JF: But typically, somebody in the band would stand duty and do different things that other marines do; chow [U.S. military food (e.g. breakfast, lunch, dinner)] hall duty. We had those at that time but we didn't stand those. Our schedule was so different than everybody else's because we were gone so much that it was hard to do other things.

TS: A lot of traveling around?

JF: Yes. Last minute stuff.

TS: Yeah. "Pack your bag, we're going."

JF: Sometimes, yes.

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

JF: I was at the beach almost every day, bodyboarding, hiking, snorkeling. I love the water, and it was beautiful and perfect all year, so there's all sorts of outdoor activities to do out there and it was just a blast.

TS: What was your favorite thing to do or place to go?

JF: Probably up the North Shore or Hale'iwa. I really liked that town.

TS: What'd you like about it?

JF: I liked how—I liked to go up there and watch the sunset, and it was really cool how the locals, everybody, they'd just kind of gather at the beach and sit on their tailgates, and you'd hear some Hawaiian music, and everybody was just sitting there watching the sunset, so it was neat to just hang out and kind of fit in with the culture.

TS: Pretty relaxing.

JF: It was.

TS: Low key.

JF: That's where I'd live now, if I could.

TS: Yeah. Would it be? Well, you've got a pretty sweet spot where you're at right now.

JF: Yeah.

TS: Yeah. Is there anything else about Hawaii that you wanted to mention?

JF: No. That pretty much covers it.

TS: Did you have your daughter in Hawaii?

JF: Oh, yes. I did have Ashley.

TS: I couldn't remember. Okay.

JF: So I was there about two years. I think I had her about—after I was there two years, so she left when she was one.

TS: She left?

JF: We left when she was one.

TS: Oh, okay. She left with you.

JF: I'm sorry.

TS: How was that experience, being pregnant in the Marine Corps? How did that go?

JF: Oh, boy. It was very challenging being in the band and being pregnant. We traveled a lot, so morning sickness. We'd be on a bus, throwing up out the—Now I'm being disgusting here—but throwing up out the side of the bus, because it didn't get me out of anything; I should have asked for it to be. But it was very hard to rehearse, hard to get places without doing that, and I just remember a couple of times that we'd get there and there was no time for me to clean up. I had to sit there [chuckles], get set up, and start playing.

TS: After you'd been sick and—

JF: Oh, my gosh. So it was just—It was terrible. It was great being pregnant in Hawaii because you had perfect weather and didn't have to have all—it was just—it was comfortable, but being in the band, it was definitely a challenge.

And then the marine part of it, I still had to go to the field and go to the range. I didn't make it to the field one year so that was frowned upon, because when you work with people who have never been pregnant or their wife had this perfect pregnancy or something, they don't realize that different people have different pregnancies, or after pregnancies. Things have definitely changed over time, dealing with these kind of things.

But I remember my squad leader—We would have to get inspected all the time before we did performances. We did a photo and we had inspection for the photo. I was told that I had to get my blues altered after we had this photo done. I was pregnant. They

fit very well. I didn't even look pregnant but I guess something started growing and I was like, "Well, I can't—Am I going to get it altered every week?"

TS: Right, exactly. What are you going to do?

JF: So I guess it's a challenge, kind of, dealing with men and morning sickness. I'd run out of food because I kept throwing up. "Can I go get food?"

"Yeah, go to McDonald's."

"The house is closer than McDonald's. Can I just run home and get some cereal?" They just didn't understand. And with having the power, I guess, that comes with rank, it can be miserable on a person dealing with people that just don't understand or refuse to try. Go on the range breast-feeding. Oh, my gosh. Imagine a day out at the range. So those kinds of things, you got to keep carrying on and you just have to deal with it, I guess.

TS: You think that over time, the Marine Corps got a little better at understanding the circumstances of pregnant women?

JF: I think so. I mean, that was my only pregnancy so I didn't have to experience it again, but I definitely tried to understand different situations, and I didn't really see the women that I worked with have too many problems after a time.

TS: What about for child care? How did that go for you?

JF: I was lucky; I was really lucky. In Hawaii, we had somebody's wife watch my daughter at the home. When I was in [Marine Corps Base] Quantico [Virginia], I had somebody in my neighborhood watch her at the home. We also had some family around. One of her aunts lived next to Quantico. My parents are in Baltimore. So she was little, not in school. If I need to go to—Once I became a single parent, if I had to go to a chorus I could send her up to my parents. I've been very fortunate through my whole career to have great support networks.

TS: Yeah. That's probably critical to being able to get through it, right?

JF: It is. It is. Especially when you're going to different schools and they require different hours then day care's open. So I've just had either family nearby that was very supportive, or just other people that understood; or spouses of marines so they understood.

TS: Right. Yeah. Is there anything else you want to add about Hawaii? No? Did you put in for your next assignment?

JF: Well, I was married. So I was married to my daughter's father. He got orders for recruiting. He ended up—I was going to get out, because I was like, "I don't know if I want to be dual active [both spouses in the military], and be doing special duty assignments and have a kid; be in the band traveling while he's not going to be at home a lot." So I was like, "Maybe I should get out."

I'd already started my reenlistment process but I was getting ready to cut it off, and I talked to somebody in the band in Quantico because I knew he was going to Virginia, and they said, "Yeah, it's great. Come on over. We know plenty of people here. You'd have a good support network." They said, "Don't worry about it. Reenlist." So I did. So that's how I ended up in Quantico, because I had to follow where he was going recruiting.

TS: Okay. He didn't have to follow you, but he was up for recruiting duty then?

JF: He went to recruiter's school and came back to Hawaii, and then we both moved to Quantico after I reenlisted.

TS: Okay. And so, you were in the band at Quantico?

JF: Yes.

TS: How was that experience there? Any different than Hawaii?

JF: It was a little bit different. I wasn't—I was a sergeant when I got there, so your experiences going somewhere as a sergeant—a little bit more seniority than being remembered as the boot [new marine] in your first duty station. It was different. I was there during 9/11, so that kind of turned things around there, too, with the band.

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

TS: Well, talk about that. Talk about 9/11; what that day was like for you, and then we can talk about how the consequences were afterwards.

JF: Well, I was at the Sergeants' course, and we were sitting in a class and one of the instructors came in and told us about the World Trade Center, and everybody just kind of sat there like, "What?" Just in disbelief or—really, it took some time to process, I think, for everybody in there. Then we went out and saw the TVs and saw the news, so immediately we're like, "Okay. Some people are going to be called back from the course, going back to their units," and that's what happened. So there was a lot of us that could continue; other people had to go to their units and come back at a different time because they were recalled.

TS: You were still at Quantico for the course?

JF: Yes, I was at Quantico.

TS: But you were able to continue?

JF: Yes. And I lived on base, so that helped because the base was locked down. For the band, they lived in the band hall for—I can't recall; it's been so long ago—but probably for a few days; at least until they were allowing people on and off the base.

The band, when things like that happen, they become a part of the interior guard, so they were guarding the generals' building. They had rotations. They're watching the generals' building. I remember land nav [navigation] sitting up on the hill kind of watching us as I was finishing the land nav course, and I thought that that was—For that particular MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], I thought it was a good lesson because we worked for somebody who—a band officer who constantly harped on us being musicians first and marines second. Everywhere else you learn you're a marine first and whatever the heck else you are, then that's what you are, but you're a marine primarily. And that comes before anything else, if the mission dictates. So I thought that when that happened that was a very good lesson, I think for her and for other people, because not much longer then we started deploying—division band deployed to Iraq—and having to see how serious something like this is and where their MOS is no longer relevant. Now they're standing guard and that's all they're doing.

TS: Right.

JF: So it was interesting. So obviously—And being so close to it, too, absolutely just horrible. And going up around [Washington] D.C. and seeing the Pentagon and what happened to it.

TS: When did you hear about the Pentagon, because the [unclear] World Trade Center and then the Pentagon.

JF: I can't remember.

TS: Yeah. It was just a blur.

JF: I really can't. That was the first thing we saw on the TV and—

TS: Because Quantico's not too far from there.

JF: No, no. And, I think that's when they ended up locking everything down, was when that got hit. A lot of it is quite a blur, but obviously something that none of us will ever forget. There was one of Ashley's aunts, I think she worked in the World Trade Center—

TS: Ashley's your daughter?

JF: Yeah. She worked the World Trade Center. She went there. There was another one, she worked in the Pentagon, and thankfully she came out alright. So it was a pretty scary moment, and I guess the realism of something like this happening on our soil again—something so huge and tragic—and it showed us that we can't continue to just sit here and be complacent anymore.

TS: Right. Well, you talked about how when you were in Hawaii you talked to the Pearl Harbor veterans, and that was the largest attack on our soil until 9/11. Then a few years later, you have this experience with 9/11 so close to home, really, for you, right? Did you ever make that kind of connection between what happened at Pearl Harbor and what happened?

JF: Oh, yeah. Especially, like I said, just hearing the experiences and how they felt when that happened. I would say, it's pretty much—It was unexpected for many and an eyeopener. It's amazing as you go through day-to-day life and whatever you're doing, and something so big happens and then you start wondering, "Could it have been prevented?" And all the questions that go through people's minds when those things happen. So speaking with people and just watching all the stories and documentaries and stuff on 9/11, I think there's a definite connection in experiences between the two.

TS: When we talked before we turned the tape on, you had said how you started to work a different sort of job when you were at Quantico. You want to talk about that?

JF: I did a lateral move to administration. I decided that I wanted to reenlist again. I guess I already put in, maybe about—because I did early reenlistments because I only did three year—So we're not talking about four year periods here, because I'd reenlist for three years, and a year out you can reenlist. I decided I wanted to try to stick around for twenty, if I could.

TS: Okay. Why did you come to that decision?

JF: I just couldn't see myself not being a marine. I just loved it. The music thing kind of went away and I really just had a love for the Marine Corps in general. So I decided that—With some experiences that I had in the band there with some leadership, especially the "you're the musician first" deal, it became pretty frustrating.

TS: Okay.

JF: We start clashing, me and this woman, and I said, "You know what? I need to do something else where I'm going to have good mentorship," because I really didn't. I need to do something else where I can grow because I wasn't. I was—I felt like I was just kind of in band. "Is this what I'm going to do for twenty years?" I really wanted to grow as a person and a marine, learn other skills, have other experiences, so I tried to go intel [intelligence], and they said I had too much time as a sergeant. I didn't have that much time, a couple of years, but they're fast promoting, just like the band was at the time. So I said, "Okay." And with the current situation, I was able to say, "Well, let me try admin [administration]." And they said the same thing. I said, "If you don't take me into admin, I'm not reenlisting." And they took me.

So I start OJT [on-the-job training] at Quantico, and I think I did maybe about four or five months on-the-job training there before I went out to Kansas City [Missouri]. During my on-the-job training I was able to go to the Marine Corps Martial Arts

Instructor Course, and I came out as a green belt instructor, and picked up brown belt pretty quick after that. I didn't get my black belt until Kansas City. So that was kind of the beginning of me being able to do something different; I worked in a company office; they let me go lead company PT on Fridays, put me in charge of training. So seeing that there was so much more that I could do.

TS: Are you still married?

JF: No.

TS: Okay. In Quantico that relationship ended, or soon after?

JF: Yes. We got divorced while I was at Quantico, and I got married later on again, but no, I'm not married now.

TS: Yeah. No, I know that.

JF: I've had a few names if you look at my—

TS: The reason I'm asking you that is more because—Did that have anything to do with you deciding to want to stay in and be a marine, and retire as a marine?

JF: Being divorced or being married?

TS: Yeah, yeah.

JF: No, not at all.

TS: Not really. Had more to do with your internal feelings about the Marine Corps?

JF: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. The marriage initially was, I guess, the motivation to think about getting out, because I didn't want to be a detriment to the unit or something with being married to a recruiter and trying to be in a band and having a kid. But like I said, I had a great support network, so I was able to make it work with all the traveling and that sort of stuff. I am glad that I made the decision to stay in because, obviously, what I was going to get out for didn't work out.

TS: Right, right. Exactly. Because it would have all changed anyhow, then, again, right, if you had?

JF: Yes.

TS: It's interesting how you said you wanted to have some strong guidance, mentorship. How did you recognize that was something you either needed or wanted?

JF: I wasn't learning—I'm trying to figure out how to say this. In the band, I played my flute; that's all I did. But other aspects in the Marine Corps, I wasn't really taught; I had to be self-taught. I didn't have somebody—You're supposed to be counseled every month as a junior marine. I didn't have those kind of things.

I think it was the Sergeants Course that showed me that. I saw how much I did not know as a sergeant that I should know as a sergeant, because I picked up really quick. Like I said, I didn't have somebody grooming me or—I just picked up. I honestly wasn't ready, looking back on it, after I saw, really, what would be expected as a marine sergeant, not just a flute player.

TS: Right. You wanted to be a marine first, not a musician first.

JF: Yes. I wanted to be both.

TS: Yeah. Right.

JF: Pretty cool job.

TS: Yeah. Well, one of the reason you said you picked the Marine Corps and went in initially was because you wanted this challenge. Was this something like you wanted to be challenged more?

JF: I think so. I mean, the band was challenging. It definitely was not boring. We were always pushed—always pushed to do better—and you'd have to audition, I think it was twice a year, so you'd get graded to make sure you're playing at or above the level of your pay grade.

TS: Okay. You had to play better the higher your pay grade was? Is that right?

JF: Yes.

TS: Constantly improving.

JF: So just like—It's an evaluation to make sure you're on track, just like any other job. It wasn't an easy job. It was very challenging. It was a lot of fun. We got to go to Ireland in Quantico, play for a World War II celebration, so that was a pretty awesome experience. We did Mardi Gras. We played for Basilone Day [John Basilone Memorial Parade]; I think it was [New] Jersey. It was so many huge events. So it was a lot of fun, but there was stress behind the fun as well.

[John Basilone was a U.S. Marine Corps gunnery sergeant who was killed in action during World War II. Every year, a parade is held in Raritan, New Jersey, his hometown, to honor his service]

TS: Right.

JF: But I think I went down a route—What was your original question?

TS: Well, just about being challenged, wanting to have a challenge.

JF: So it was, but I wanted something more than—at that point I guess, than just music. I wanted somebody to help me grow as a marine, as an individual. So yeah, I think it the Sergeants Course that showed me that. I saw all these things that I just needed to—I wasn't going to get it there.

TS: Okay.

JF: I was being held back by this one person in particular, so I asked for the lateral move and I think it was the best—As much as I miss music to this day, I think that that was the best decision that I made for the rest of my career.

TS: Well, it's interesting, because if you're in music in the Marine Corps, that would have to be a very, very small—I mean, the Marine Corp's small enough anyhow and I imagine that musical field within the Marine Corps is a tiny speck.

JF: It's very small. It is so small. [chuckles]

TS: But when you go into admin, that's a huge MOS, right?

JF: Yes.

TS: So your world's going to boom open for opportunities, I would think, in new ways.

JF: I think so. Just meeting—I guess getting outside of one realm and meeting other people with different experiences, because it just felt like—It was only two duty stations in the band so, of course, different places are going to be complete different experiences, I'm sure. The [Marine] Division Band, that mentality and what they do, and especially during that time, is going to be different than the Quantico [Marine Corps Band] or Hawaii Band. But you are limited to backgrounds and experiences. I think it's kind of like a bubble. You're in a band; there's like, twelve of them; everybody knows each other.

TS: You're in a bubble. Sure. Yeah. That's true. What was the ratio of men to women? Not specifically. But were there a lot of women in the band or were there still mostly men?

JF: I think there were mostly men. I can't remember how—Say there's fifty people—I'm guessing probably around fifty in the band—maybe somewhere around ten might be women.

TS: Are any of the women in leadership positions in the band?

JF: Not in Hawaii, but Quantico, we had a woman band officer. I know there's women drum majors, and as time went on, there became more.

TS: Okay. Yeah. I was kind of wondering about that.

JF: Didn't see it too much when I was in, but as time went on, yes, more of them started stepping up into those positions.

TS: Okay. So you make this lateral move, and then you end up in Kansas City. Tell me about Kansas City. You were there about a year, you said?

JF: There's not much to tell you about Kansas City. I was there for a year.

TS: No? Not much.

JF: Well, I was pretty much doing on-the-job training as an administrator at the 9th District Headquarters for the recruiting command, so it was interesting that I got to kind of see how a recruiting command works. I was married to a recruiter but I wasn't engaged in what they would do so much; I just knew he was tired and worked a lot. But to see how the actual command works and the other side of—I guess, more of the support end of the recruiters and how much dedication it takes, that job, I really grew an appreciation for the command aspect of it and seeing from the top how much—I mean, it's stressful there too. It's a job I'm glad I didn't have to do. [chuckles] I would have made it happen, if I had to. I was screened for it, at one point, but I was in the band. We were fenced off from B-Billets when I was in the band.

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

TS: Oh, okay.

JF: The band saved me from that but it was—Yeah, so I was admin, I—black belt instructor there. That's about it for Kansas City.

TS: Okay. And then you went to [Marine Corps Base] Camp Lejeune [North Carolina]?

JF: Yes.

TS: Tell me about that experience. You're in North Carolina for a while after that, right?

JF: For the rest of my career. For a long time.

TS: For the rest of your career. Different places. Okay, so let's talk about it.

JF: Well, I got married; somebody I was dating for—while I was in Kansas City, long distance relationship. We got married, I moved to Camp Lejeune, and I was with the Group Personnel Administration Center, so I was on the personnel pay side of the house for admin. I was probably there, I guess, about a year, and then I had the opportunity to go to Iraq. My unit wasn't leaving but we had to send augments [Individual Augmentee] to another unit.

[An Individual Augmentee is a U.S. military member attached to a unit (battalion or company) as a temporary duty assignment (TAD/TDY). They can be used to fill shortages or when an individual with specialized knowledge or skill sets is required]

TS: Did you volunteer?

JF: I was looking for a deployment. I was actually trying to be a drill instructor at some point, but my husband's monitor [Marine Corps MOS who fills duty stations], as funny as it sounds, he said, "No, she needs to deploy before she does that." So I had people engaged in helping me find a deployment because I never had the opportunity to go. My unit had already gone my first year there with augments from my section. The whole section didn't go. They didn't send me because I was new and they wanted me to learn administration before they were going to—

TS: Right, the job. Send you out to do it, right?

JF: Yes. Independently. There, I had some awesome mentors. There's a couple female master sergeants and a chief warrant officer and they were just phenomenal at training me, and I was trained, actually, by my NCOs [non-commissioned officers]; I was a pick-up staff sergeant, and my junior marines were actually training me and teaching me my job.

TS: Is that right?

JF: But everybody was so great about it.

TS: Do you want to mention anybody's name?

JF: Chief Warrant Officer Cling[?]. I'm going to see if he's available to be my retiring officer because he made that much of an impact on this, I guess, second part of my—or the rest of my Marine Corps career, getting me just a great foundation to start as an administrator. Master Sergeants Mary Enpreneda[?] and—what was the other one? Oh, I'll have to give you her name later.

TS: Yeah, that's okay.

JF: I'm so bad with names. Whitehead—Martha Whitehead.

TS: What are the qualities that they imparted to you that resonated with you?

JF: They were just so professional, and great teachers, and they had a lot of patience, and they understood that I lat [lateral] moved. I got promoted to staff sergeant. When you're a staff sergeant you're expected to know your job, so they were just—the way everybody went about everything to teach me, I think I had to have the best mentors and teachers there were in the administrative field because they really—I mean, they were experts at their job; that's how I saw them. They're definitely some people to look up to and just a great example of a marine, as well. Like I said, just the professionalism that came from these people. Just a huge impact.

TS: So they helped carry you through the rest of the time that you were in.

JF: Yes. I guess it—Something that I did not receive earlier in my career, and they actually cared about seeing me excel. They took on extra [unclear] to—because, of course, I was a Staff NCOIC [non-commissioned officer in charge] of a section. If I'm not there, somebody's got to do that. They took on extra to allow me to go to two admin schools, probably the career course; different schools that I need to go to for my professional development.

TS: You had some catching up to do.

JF: I never had from them, "Oh, we can't do without her. We need her here. We can't do this because we're too busy. You can't let her—" I never had any of that from them. They just made it happen and they supported everything that I needed to do for my development.

TS: Great. That's great. Now, you said that everybody was trying to find you an augment so you could deploy to Iraq, right?

JF: Initially, it was supposed to be with the—at that time, they were putting the—It was the beginning of the transition teams. They were going out to—teams of ten, different areas, and training the Iraqis.

TS: Do you want to describe the transition teams? Who's on it? What kind of people are involved with that?

JF: They were actually primarily infantry, I think, initially, when this thing started out. So, no, I did not deploy with them, but I trained with them because they were trying to get me to deploy with them. They wanted a team of administrators to help them, because they found from lessons learned before if they didn't have administrators out there, kind of, with their—wherever their headquarters was kind of sitting, they were dealing with other services, so it was very hard for administration with not having somebody directly to go to.

TS: So they needed somebody to facilitate that aspect of the work they were doing without them just being able to do their infantry job, right? That sort of thing. Yeah.

JF: Yes.

TS: How did the women get integrated into—From your experience and what you've known, how did that happen with Team Lioness and all the ways that women started to get integrated into these deployments and into these smaller units in Iraq and Afghanistan?

[Team Lioness refers to the U.S. women soldiers who were used to respect local customs regarding the prohibition of men touching or searching local women during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan]

JF: Well, I didn't really start seeing that until—I didn't know anything about it until I actually deployed because I didn't go with these guys. They couldn't get us; not just me, but my other two administrators that I was with.

TS: Why couldn't they get you?

JF: They didn't have, like, a table of organization line number or something built in to do that.

TS: Okay.

JF: But we did three months of training with these guys and it was awesome training. It was so much fun.

TS: So did you think you were going to go with them?

JF: Yes. That's why we were training with them because we thought we were going with them.

TS: But so, whatever the bureaucracy of lining up the specific slot for you didn't fit.

JF: Yeah. [chuckles]

TS: I see.

JF: So they ended up sending us, but they got us attached to 2nd Marine Division, who was going out as [unclear forward?] So we went out there to be reach-back admin, so basically, we were the liaison. We weren't like the S-1 [staff responsible for administration] piece sitting up in the [tiny?] headquarters. We kind of had our own area, and we were reaching back pay and personnel information updates, that kind of thing, that had to be right on unit diary.

TS: And this is in 2007, 2008?

JF: Yes, for that year. So that's how they got us out there. We weren't just dealing with a command of forty-five hundred people. Well, we were told we were going to deal with the transition teams, but I got out there and found out I'm actually supporting about forty-five hundred and the transition teams. [chuckles]

TS: A lot more work than you expected, right?

JF: It was quite different. I wasn't exactly sure what I was doing besides that when I got out there, so it was—that was challenging in itself, and I learned a lot as [unclear], had great clerks with me as well that had dealt with deployed pay and all that kind of stuff, so I learned while I was there. And I think after I was there about a month, I had to—We had to send people to support Lioness who were—

TS: You want to describe what Lioness is for people that aren't familiar with it.

JF: So they would go out, I think, roughly six weeks, they'd receive some training on the camp and the [gals'?] teams on a—

TS: These are women?

JF: Hmm?

TS: Women?

JF: Yes, women. To certain locations to assist with searching at check points. So I was looked at as going but they didn't send me to that because I was the Staff NCOIC of this small shop, but I did have to send my female out there who—she did not want to go, but she went and she came back and just said, "You know what? This was such a different and great experience," and told me how much she'd learned, just about the culture, and just being a part of such a small female team, and being located primarily around infantry, and just seeing it was just a different experience.

TS: How did she say that that—Because you hear a lot about "men don't want women out there." I mean, that's some of the knock on women in a combat environment, right, is it should be all male; some people say. How did she describe, if you remember, how she worked with infantry guys? Did she describe that at all?

JF: No. Like I said, they're on a team so they're with other females and they're not—They dealt with searching, so they weren't actually out doing other missions with these guys so it was a little bit different. And I don't think they had too hard of a time, from what I recall, because there was a need for that type of thing out there because the guys, it was hard for them to search women and get those—So they saw the necessity for that.

TS: Because of the culture differences, right?

JF: Yes.

TS: Because the women in that society didn't want—Men aren't supposed to see them and search them or touch them, right? So this is what led to having some of the women be on these teams; to help facilitate it, to make it work.

JF: Yes. I don't know about too much push back for that. Others might have had different experiences. I was also the Equal Opportunity Representative for the unit, so I know there were some things with showers because they're on a camp that's men, primarily men, so, they had to work out those kind of things, but that's the biggest issue, really—

TS: That you had when you were there?

JF: Well, that I heard of from them. Now, at the same time, or shortly after this initial—they start hitting us up about Lioness, that I had no idea about before I went there. I thought I was just going to be sitting there doing admin. [chuckles] I was asked to be the Iraqi Women's Engagement Coordinator for the headquarters.

TS: What did that involve?

JF: Well, we would have—There was a certain training we had to go to. There was cultural training, a little bit of language, exactly what our mission was and what our mission was not, going out there. So basically, we would go out and talk to the women; small teams. There could have been a cooperative medical engagement or some other event going on, and they'd send a small team out and we'd get atmospherics, give the women—actually, we were the voice of their women.

TS: The Iraqi women?

JF: Yes, the Iraqi women. Because they didn't have too much of a voice, so any issues that they were dealing with, it was hard for them to really get too many results.

TS: What kind of things were they concerned about?

JF: There was a lot of infrastructure stuff, and they wanted to have—They'd ask about sewing centers so they could go somewhere and—to help them make money; things that were, I guess, acceptable within their culture for them to go to as jobs but they didn't have the places to go do those kind of things.

TS: You mean like a marketplace or—

JF: Yes. Or just like a—They would ask for sewing machines and have a sewing center, so they could all go and—So that was the biggest thing. It wasn't about gathering intel or stuff like that, and we'd be there to assist—We'd have female corpsmen doctors and they'd go help them out. So we would just sit in a room, chat with them, see what's going

on, see what they had to say; if there was anything we could pass on to the command that they could look at to better assist the women and children.

TS: When you were showing me some of the pictures, you had said when you put these teams together it's all women, right?

JF: Yes.

TS: And you said some of them are doing the medical and other administrative, and then some of them are just security, the women.

JF: Well, generally, when we would go out to do Iraqi Women's Engagement, we had a security force that—they were all male, so they would always provide the security while these things were going on.

TS: Gotcha.

JF: I would go out sometimes with them before these things would go on. We'd go talk with the sheik [a leader of an Arab family or village] and help get things step up for the next—

TS: So you can see what the situation is where you're going to send all the women into? I see.

JF: Yes. Yeah. Where we'd set up and how we'd set it up and they would have—I would go just by myself so I could explain to him exactly what our intent is and how we're going to get all step up.

TS: How did those meetings go?

JF: It was—It was so different than anything that I ever experienced because now he's got—I had a couple times that these guys couldn't get him to allow them to come to the school again. So I'd go out and talk with him and I was able to convince him to let us do something there. There are various reasons why, but anyhow. So I was able to get us in there again. I wasn't sure how that was going to go, being a woman and being more forceful in talking with this guy.

TS: Yeah. How do you think you were able to convince him when the other guys couldn't?

JF: I don't know.

TS: You don't know?

JF: I'm not sure. I think I was able to really—portrayed it from having experience speaking with the women in his area. I guess I was better able to portray to him the importance of that to them, those kind of events—

TS: That they had needs.

JF: —because I spoke with them; he knows the guys didn't speak with them.

TS: Gotcha. Okay.

JF: So he knew I had the relationship with them. I think that might have been another indicator of the necessity for these programs. You were asking about the training. So that was basically what it was, what our mission is, and it was maybe a day or two of training. It was different than what Lioness were doing. We weren't going through training for searching and those kind of things; completely different.

TS: Right.

JF: And then I'd just get notified that they wanted to do—Like I said, it's usually during cooperative medical engagements. They'd pull that and then they'd have the doc there and both these things are kind of going on at the same time while they're waiting.

TS: I see. Okay.

JF: It was like a waiting room. So talking to them in the waiting room and then they'd go and get seen by the doctor.

TS: So you'd find out what their other concerns were and stuff like that.

JF: Yes.

TS: While you're out there, you said you have a security force of guys that are helping you get to wherever you need to go, like a convoy or something. Were you all armed, or were some of you armed and some of you not armed?

JF: Oh, we were. All of us.

TS: All of you were armed. Well, did you ever have any fear in Iraq?

JF: No, not too much. We'd get indirect fires in the camp and stuff. That can be scary, especially when you first get there, but I think as time goes by there's a—I guess you become—have less of a fear or some complacency kind of sets in after you're there for a while, and so you've got to fight that, but it's like, "Oh, here's another one." [chuckles]

TS: The mortars coming in.

JF: There's another one. Whatever. That sounds bad but—

TS: Did you have to take cover or go into a bunker?

JF: We had a bunker next to the office so, yeah, we'd take cover there or wherever we could. As far as going out on the engagements, no, I didn't really have any problems.

TS: No? None of the IEDs [improvised explosive devices]?

JF: Not on that particular type of thing. I was doing something related but a little bit separate from the program. I think in Iraq some rules might have been a little bit more laxed, as far as taking people on missions and stuff. The guys that were security, one of them talked to me one day and he was like, "So what is this? What is this that you guys do? Why are you here?" They just knew they had to set up security. And he was one of the platoon commanders for the staff sergeant, so I explained to him what we were doing, and he said, "Oh, wow. That's pretty neat. We do security patrols around here all the time and I really could use that." So they would call me up and get it cleared through our operations guys and they'd take me out with them, so one part of Iraqi Women's Engagement was totally separate.

TS: Just on a separate side mission.

JF: Yeah, it was like a side thing. They'd call me and be like, "Hey, can you go out tomorrow?" or "Hey, we're going to go on a—" I showed you a picture—"deliver a wheelchair. Can you—"

Because I was able to go talk to pretty much the whole family. They'd be like, "Hey, we're going on a security patrol. Can you come with us?"

TS: Did you learn a different language or—

JF: I tried. [chuckles]

TS: Did you have a translator?

JF: Yes, I had an interpreter. I had—For the actual IWE [Iraqi Women's Engagement] missions, we had females that went out as the interpreters. Now, when I went out with those guys, no, they had their male. That was a little bit of a challenge, especially if it was—Because you're just sitting on patrol and then they'd come across—They'd want me to go speak with a family, so I'd go with a couple of guys with their interpreter, and then you'd see the women and children, [they're sitting?] in the house. I just let them know, "Hey, could I talk with the family to see what's going on and how things are going?" They'd see that I'm a woman and they'd generally pull the family out.

TS: Oh, really, okay? They felt safer maybe?

JF: Yeah, because I'd kind of have the guys—say they weren't engaging with their women, they'd stay back, but I'd have the [unclear] there because, obviously, there's the language barrier.

TS: Right.

JF: I did what I could on my own time to learn Arabic, so I knew a few words, and as I gained experience speaking with these people and the interpreters, I was able to pick up a lot of—kind of understand what they were saying and I could pick up a lot just through body language as well as I dealt with them more.

TS: How were those little side missions different, for you personally, from the other ones that you did?

JF: Well, I thought it was kind of neat because you hear the stories about men not wanting women, the infantry guys not wanting—all that kind of—but they asked for me. They wanted me there.

TS: Yeah, that's what I was getting at earlier, was it seemed, from what you were describing, that there's certain needs and there's certain roles, right? And so, women were filling certain roles that men couldn't do because of that cultural barrier, and so certainly this platoon sergeant—Was that what he was?

JF: He was platoon commander.

TS: Platoon commander—wanted to be more effective, and having you join him seemed beneficial to the patrols.

JF: Yes. I thought it was pretty cool that they wanted me to come out there with them, and then they kept inviting me. We had one where the wife was not happy with them for something. They spoke to the husband a lot and I think become like, I don't know, friends, but a pretty good relationship and rapport with this guy, and their kid ran into one of the Humvees [a type of four-wheel-drive all-terrain military vehicle] or something. He didn't get hurt, he just ran into the tire, so the wife was mad [and wanted?] the Humvees out. So then they brought me out to patch things up with the spouse.

TS: Yeah? Did it work?

JF: I think so. I went and had some tea with her and sat down and chatted. She was not a happy person. But I think it kind of helped them out a little bit. But yeah, there's random—It was a lot different than being with a female team and a planned mission, the way we had those engagements set up, and being with them, because if I went out with them, it was like, there was a plan of a security patrol and maybe engaging with certain houses, but things would change because of the nature of their job sometimes.

So that's where I would run into something like getting a tip of there's an IED. You're standing out in a [court?] around an IED for, like, eight hours just waiting for EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal], and different things like that.

TS: They would give you tips like that?

JF: Not me, but them. We'd be on the way back or something and then they'd get a call and then things change.

TS: Oh, okay. I see.

JF: Because of what their role was, it was just different being out with those guys.

TS: Right. So it was more random interaction, rather than this plan where you went and talked to somebody and said, "We're coming in here to do this;" it was a lot more random.

JF: I guess so. There's a plan but things have to adjust to what they're needed for out there. It was interesting to see how they work and I was able to go out in some different areas, like [unclear], see how these guys are living out there. So sometimes there's challenges being the only one and—which is different than being with a group of women.

So if you have to go, there's challenges. If you're staying in a big open area here, [chuckles] guys can stand there and go. Women cannot do that. So trying to—What were the flight suits? We had to wear our flight suits there [unclear] because we didn't have the fire-resistant camis [camouflage] that they're doing now, at that time.

TS: How did the flight suits help you?

JF: [chuckles] Fire-resistant. Or I guess more so than the camis. I don't know. I didn't run into that problem so I don't know how effective something like that is. Anyhow, that's what we wore if we went outside the wire. And so, if you have a flak [a sleeveless jacket made of heavy fabric reinforced with metal or Kevlar, worn as protection against bullets and shrapnel] and this thing, you got to take it all off.

["Outside the wire" is when service members in a warzone travel outside the perimeter fence of a camp, base, or forward operating base]

TS: Oh, to be able to just go to the bathroom or something. Yeah.

JF: They've got different camis and stuff now. They actually updated the flight suits but—which aren't being used for that purpose anymore. But yeah, there's those kind of challenges when you're out there all day with these guys. You don't have a woman to kind of—I don't know—you have to hide behind a Humvee door or something. You're out in the open, there's nothing—

TS: But you felt pretty safe with the guys doing those kind of things?

JF: Yeah, I didn't have any problems with them at all. But I think it would be a lot different if you were doing that as a living, not just out there once in a while. It was a great experience though. I had a lot of fun and I just learned a lot and really gained more appreciation for what I have.

TS: Was there any particularly memorable contact that you had with the Iraqis that you remember like, "Oh, yeah, this was something that I really remember today"?

JF: No, they were all pretty much the same. It was—They were very thankful for what we were doing, because we'd bring them clothes and food and all kinds of stuff. They were always very appreciative of the opportunity to be able to have somebody come and listen to them and say, "I'll do what I can. I can't make a promise but hey, I'll do what I can." So they really felt like they had some kind of avenue to get some assistance.

TS: And then you followed up and were able to help them sometimes?

JF: Sometimes. Yeah, some sewing centers were developed in different areas, and things that they were asking for, and there was one, they had a hard time [for a while?], so it was more like it gave them an avenue to—I couldn't do anything but they were able to complain. [chuckles] They were able to complain to somebody that was going to [unclear] [chuckles]

TS: They could vent about something, right?

JF: I think with the—There were occasions when I was on patrol with the guys that I would run into some women who were deathly afraid of me approaching them.

TS: The Iraqi women?

JF: Yes. Yes. So I'd kind of have to disengage from that because it's cultural stuff and they felt that it would bring bad to them if they talked to me.

TS: So you just backed away?

JF: Yes. I remember a house that I went to, this woman was really scared. I was trying to give her an invitation to something we were doing and she did not want me anywhere around that house, so it was—I just hate to see anybody so scared to have somebody that's trying to help her out in her house. So it kind of made me sad to see some of that, but it's very interesting just to see how these different cultures are and how much different it is, and I just really appreciate what I have here.

TS: Right. Right. You showed me some pictures, and I can't remember which are which because I know later you went to Afghanistan. You were saying you had a room where you're supposed to live, but you made a cot to lay down on in your office? Was that in Iraq?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JF: Yeah, there was a bed in my office that was already there. Yeah, in Iraq.

TS: Oh, okay.

JF: Yeah, when I went to Afghanistan they weren't letting people live in their offices anymore but, yeah, there was already one there and I know the crews before me were living in their offices. Pretty much everybody in that building was living in their office.

TS: Why did people do that?

JF: I don't know.

TS: No?

JF: I mean, I had more privacy. I had my own room but—

TS: Okay. Well, maybe that's a good reason.

JF: —so did my boss. He did too. Now, my clerks, they lived over in the barracks. But I worked late, so sometimes I'd close the door. I—shut down, close the door, get off my camis, and sit there and turn on some music or TV and I was still working, kind of on my off time but what else was I doing?

TS: Right.

JF: And then I'd just roll over and go to sleep, and I'd wake up and I was there.

TS: How was your food?

JF: Oh, the food was great. There was two or three chow halls there so I went to the one that was a little bit further away because—

TS: And you're at Camp Fallujah [Iraq], right?

JF: Yes. Oh, yeah, that was maybe close to a mile walk to that one. I don't know. Anyhow, it was a nice walk and it burned off my food walking back. But the food was so good. There was so many choices. It's like this big buffet of food. It was a lot different than what I expected going out there. I thought I was going to have, "Here's your chicken and here's your beans." But it was so good.

TS: Good. Did you do PT out there?

JF: Yes. We went on our own. Somebody's always in the office and we take shifts and we'd PT. We had a morale event every week. It was called the "Fallujah Hash House Harriers," so that was a pretty good workout. So if you know a hash, like you'd have a hare and they lay a trail and everybody has to catch the hare.

[The Hash House Harriers (HHH or H3) is an international group of non-competitive running social clubs]

TS: I've never heard of that.

JF: Great workout. So we'd be jumping over HESCOs [a cage-like container primarily used for flood control and military fortifications] and all over the place, obstacles. So it was a lot of fun. We did this thing, like, once a week. It was a morale event. Same group of people. Drink near beer [non-alcoholic beer]. [both chuckle] So, yeah, it was pretty fun. But yeah, that was pretty much our—We had some gyms there in a tent.

TS: So you could work out if you wanted to?

JF: Yes. We had weights and elliptical bikes.

TS: Now, you were there a whole year?

JF: Yes.

TS: Did you get any R&R [rest and recuperation (or recreation)- a scheduled vacation from duty]?

JF: I did. I came back for two weeks. That was quite different. It was about half way, so I was there about six months and—Now, when I deployed I thought I was going to be there six months. I was supposed to have a replacement but that didn't work out so—

TS: You had an unusually long time.

JF: I didn't know I was going to be there for a year until I was there for several months; it was actually about thirteen months. I came home. It was a very long trip coming home; same thing back. It's really just a pain to travel to and from those places because of the stops you have to make. Then coming home, and it's just so different. There's no desert. I came home in the summer so it was green, and go to the grocery store, there's all this bright fruit and stuff. I had a problem with the grocery store for a while because of all the bright fruit.

TS: Really? It was, like, too vivid?

JF: [chuckles] Yeah, after looking at tan for so long.

TS: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

JF: So we just had a get-together with friends and stuff, so it was kind of neat.

TS: Where was your daughter?

JF: She was staying with my ex-husband at the time, and my parents had moved down here shortly after I left to Iraq, so they were living across the street.

TS: How did you communicate with everybody while you were in Iraq? What kind of tools did you use to communicate for friends and family back home?

JF: Phone and email.

TS: Phone and email?

JF: I wrote some letters. I've always been terrible at writing letters.

TS: Well, I don't know, you got a whole booklet here.

JF: That's boot camp. That's different. [both chuckle]

TS: Different. Okay.

JF: But I had a phone in my office so I'd call them.

TS: Do any Skyping?

[Skype is a telecommunications application software product that specializes in providing video chat and voice calls between computers, tablets, mobile devices]

JF: We had a place that didn't last too long that we could, so I didn't get to do much of that at all. It was mainly the phone and email and some pictures. But I was busy there so it wasn't—

TS: Didn't have a lot of time for that kind of stuff.

JF: Not really. And I wasn't—I missed home. The hardest part was leaving my daughter, I would say.

TS: Sure.

JF: She was—I don't know what she was; like, six or seven or something. So she was little and it was so difficult to leave her and I really missed her. Me and my husband had just gone through—he deployed for a year, so he was back maybe six months when I went. So, I mean, I was used to being away from him but—

TS: But not your daughter?

JF: Yeah. Leaving my little girl there—

TS: How was she doing?

JF: She was fine but I had to miss [her birthday?] and stuff she was doing; stuff you can't ever get back. But other than that, yeah, I was busy; I was doing Iraqi Women's Engagement, I was working a lot, working late, staying engaged.

TS: How many hours a day do you think you worked and how many days a week did you work?

JF: Oh, we worked seven days a week. Sunday we got to sleep in till noon. I think we got an extra hour Saturday morning; that was about it. I think we started maybe around 7:00 [a.m.]. I think we shut the shop down maybe around 5:00 [p.m.] or 6:00 [p.m.] to customers, or whoever needs administrative stuff. And then, generally, I worked until probably about nine o'clock at night, I guess. There's a lot—

TS: Thirteen, fourteen hour days?

JF: Yes.

TS: Seven days a week?

JF: I didn't do anything else. It wasn't that big of a deal really. It made time go.

TS: Yeah. Well, it can be really draining, too, to keep going.

JF: I guess, but that extra five hours Sunday morning, that reset me and I was good for the week.

TS: [chuckles] There you go. You got a quick reset it sounds like. Oh, I know, the care packages that came. Did you want to talk about how many of those that came, and at Christmas time, things like that?

JF: Oh, yes. So I have to mention Mary Ann Merritt, and she served in the Marine Corps—can't remember which years—but I will say she was, I think, the first female—I don't know what they call them—powerline men, electrical—whatever they were called then. She's up in [Detroit] Michigan. She's tied in so many organizations, primarily Women Marines Association, and that's how I met her; going to one of these conventions that we had every other year.

Well, she got my name and my name, and my name, I guess, went to all of these organizations. So I got—around Thanksgiving and Christmas—I got them throughout the year but during that time, hundreds of boxes and—

TS: Just addressed to you?

JF: Well, for me to give out.

TS: Okay. I see.

JF: So I had some shelves where I'd put these things, and I had Women Marines Association meetings, because we had an Iraqi Lioness Chapter of the Women Marines Association aboard Camp Fallujah—somebody stood up [to formally activate and commission]—the year before I got there, so we'd use that to give out stuff, because I got a lot of women's items.

Where I worked we had a lot of the infantry guys come in who came from somewhere else outside the camp so, they'd sit there waiting to get some stuff done and I'd give them boxes and be like, "Hey, take this stuff back, give them to your guys." So I had plenty of places to hand these things out. But it was just phenomenal how much stuff we got. And I think told you about two hundred, two hundred and fifty stockings, and there was always very useful items in there.

TS: What were the most useful things do you think?

JF: A lot of stuff we would get was like—We'd get a lot of baby wipes. I'm sure to a lot of these people that was very useful to them. We would get calling cards so—we didn't have our cell phones out there so getting—we had calling centers, so the calling cards that they would send us so we didn't have to spend so much money to call home; got a lot of those. Just—Got a lot of candy. I've never seen so much candy in my life; it was like Halloween on steroids or something. Yeah, just a lot of random things that someone was like, "Oh, wow, look at this." I had a—I was sent a bunch of pillows to give out, and they had people sign these pillows and write notes to us, so I was giving out all these pillows. Blankets, posters, cards. We'd get Valentine's. We'd get cards for everything. And they'd send us, also, stationary to write on to send letters to home. So it was neat.

TS: That's nice.

JF: Yes. This woman, I can't believe what she does—

TS: What was her name again?

JF: Mary Ann Merritt.

TS: What about, like you said, the women had specific things that they hoped—What kind of things did they want in their packages?

JF: [chuckles] I don't know. We got a lot of feminine hygiene items and lotion. We loved getting lotion because—I don't know—it'd just smell good and your hands—from all the dust your fingers would crack. Body sprays. Not that you want to go around smelling all perfumey, but it was just nice to get some kind of—something girly every once in a

while. Those were always cool to get. Slippers. They'd send us some bright colored slippers and stuff.

TS: Some fun things like that.

JF: Yeah, like fun stuff. So we would get together once in a while and have a spa night. So some of the stuff I didn't give out—I held it—and then we'd get together and do manicures and pedicures. They would send us stuff to do those things.

TS: Yeah. And you had that one picture of the salon. That was kind of neat too. So you had places to go.

JF: That got there—Yeah, that wasn't there my whole time there.

TS: A little bit later?

JF: I think that was more towards the end, so we just had to find our own ways to kind of have fun and do that stuff. Now, when we would go to the barber shop there was a guy that did my eyebrows all the time. He would string them and pluck them and stuff. Yeah, I think that place got there around month ten or something.

TS: Yeah, a lot later. Okay. So you were trying to figure out how—Just as the women getting together could, like you say, do pedicures and manicures. Did you get to paint your toes?

JF: Oh, yeah. Nobody's seeing our toes.

TS: That's right. Your fingernails you couldn't have, could you?

JF: No.

TS: But your toes you could.

JF: It was a lot of fun because there's so few of us that it's important to have that woman or female support network, I think, to talk about woman stuff that the guys don't really care about and just to kind of have that bond. We'd get together and watch movies and do different things together. And that's really what that organization was about, having that chapter of Women Marines Association out there—

TS: Right. Kind of helped coordinate all that stuff, right?

JF: Well, you'd get female mentorship. One of the women that always stood out to me was Sergeant Major Mannis[?] and she was always at the events if she could make it. So you would have—Because as a female marine you don't always run into, say, senior enlisted or officers to talk about career stuff or just things in general. It's usually a man. Not that it matters too much, but sometimes it's nice to have that woman perspective, because it's not like you're where you grew up and your mom's there. So some of them become like

mother figures in a way while she's not able to be there. And just to have that opportunity for mentorship. You would have junior marines and you would have senior marines and there's that avenue for the mentorship. I thought that that was a great opportunity that the Women Marines Association, that chapter, had brought to us there.

TS: Right. Pretty beneficial.

JF: Yeah.

TS: Was there anything else in Iraq that you wanted to mention?

JF: No, I don't think so.

TS: We covered most of that stuff there. Now, you're still with Camp Lejeune, and then after you went back to Iraq you got to do something, you said, that you're pretty proud of, right? I mean, not that you're not proud of anything; you're proud of everything you've done. But the School of Infantry?

JF: Oh, yes. I went back to my unit, and then I had the opportunity to become a combat instructor as my B-Billet. It was relatively new at that time as really being considered a B-Billet and that pushed it—kind of equated it to DI [drill instructor] or recruiting when you're being looked at on the promotion board.

So I didn't know much about it because I didn't go through MCT [Marine Combat Training]. My MCT was at boot camp with our drill instructors and all that stuff there. It was like a basic warrior training, marine combat training, like, a two week deal or something. So I was like, "What do they do there? What's the—?" Never seen it. Never been over at [Marine Corps Base] Camp Geiger [North Carolina]. So I spoke with one of the female company gunnies [informal abbreviation for gunnery sergeant] and she took me around. I was like, "Oh, this looks like an awesome job."

My ex-husband, he was stationed there over at the School of Infantry as one of the battalion sergeants—He was sergeant major of Infantry Training Battalion. I was trying to go the drill field but they wouldn't move us together, so he said, "Hey, how about look at this?"

So I was like, "Okay." So I went—I had applied for that, and I was there about three and a half years, I think. It was a really cool opportunity. I went through Marine Combat Instructors School. I think that was about eight weeks or something, and we basically go through what the students went through and we'd learn. Our knowledge obviously had to be above theirs, so we'd go through everything, learn how to instruct, and we went through Formal School's Instructor Course at the same time.

TS: Was there anything when you went through that that was particularly challenging for you to try to get through?

JF: We go back to memorization. [chuckles] So that deficiency of mine, I think, has always helped me be a better teacher because I have to find different ways for me to learn and pick up things and retain, so I had a lot of tricks that I was able to give to the students.

The other challenge—I was in really good shape going there but the 15 and 20K [kilometers] hikes got me. I ended up with a stress fracture. It wasn't that I—I didn't struggle to keep up carrying the load. It was quite a load. It had to be over a hundred pounds. I don't think it was supposed to be, but we had extra stuff because we'd carry a pack and we had weapons. So the 15K, I had issues towards the end. Took an x-ray. They were like, "It's not broken." So I go do the 20K. That's where I ended up fracturing it, so I guess I finished it off.

TS: What'd you fracture?

JF: A bone in my foot.

TS: Okay.

JF: So that still affects me now, but that was a struggle. I mean, I made it, but I went through therapy, and while I was trying to recover—kind of prepare for the 20K, it hindered my performance, because of trying to run and stuff.

TS: Yeah, with a broken foot or even a stressed foot.

JF: Yeah, starting to break, I guess. So I made it. I've always—There's that determination. I was like, "I'm not going through this course. I'm not doing this again. I'm getting through it now." And yeah, then I did it. So for my—When I was assigned to a training company, they actually talked about—It's kind of like DIs. You serve for a year in a training company and then you go—what they call—[as a?] quota, like as a platform instructor or academics or dealing with the students that are injured or getting ready to be processed out. All that kind of stuff.

TS: Right.

JF: So they were talking about doing my quota in my first year and two years on the back end. I said, "I really want to learn my job. Can you keep me in the training company? I'm going to go to therapy. I'll get on crutches during boot—I'll do whatever I'm supposed to do, but can I—things I can stand there and learn. I can watch marines assemble and disassemble weapons. I can teach them. I can do certain—I just can't do the hikes."

So they allowed me to stay and learn my job and I got past the injury. And I think it was a good example for the students, too, because they get hurt all the time, especially the females—hips and feet. So I said, "Look, I was trying to be hard. Now I broke it. You got something, take care of it before you go and do what I did. And now here I am in front of you guys, like, my first class, on crutches and a boot and stuff."

TS: Yeah. It is a good example to show.

JF: And at first, I wouldn't get on crutches. I was hobbling around, I was like, "Okay, it's not going to heal." So I said, "Alright." I started off with them without the crutches. I was like, "I'm on crutches now. I was trying to be hard and it doesn't pay off in the end."

Yeah, so I was in training company for about a year. I had kind of a different path over there. I was a squad instructor and then I was a platoon commander for a couple cycles, and I went as a gunny so I moved up faster than people usually do. Going over as a gunny, you had to be very humble because you're doing what sergeants are doing, and you're learning from them; the ones that have been there. And we had mixed MOSs, so even though we weren't infantry and battalion, we had infantry MOSs with us as instructors because we rated[?] so many of them to be over there. It was just varied MOSs, and you learn so much from different people. And one instructor I thought was phenomenal; he was a cook. He had just different ways of teaching stuff. So I was a gunny, I had a staff sergeant in charge of me, and everybody's pretty good about everything.

TS: Are you training just men?

JF: No, men and women.

TS: Men and women? Okay.

JF: Marine Combat Training Battalion. So the non-combat arms MOSs, all the support MOSs, would go through MCT; so straight from boot camp they would go over there.

TS: And then, what did the combat arms—

JF: They went to infantry [and?] battalion. They basically went through the same curriculum, except for they stay there. The first month was pretty much the same for them, but then they'd stay and branch out in their MOSs and stay in that battalion and do their MOS school there. Ours would go wherever their [unclear] school was.

TS: Did you enjoy this tour?

JF: I did. It was so different. I was like, "Maybe this was more—" It was more me at the time, because by the time I was a gunny I'd been in—[unclear] longer, I was like, "You know what?" Maybe the DI thing wasn't for me anymore. I'm no longer the sergeant running around yelling at new recruits. I was a gunny and I felt like I was more in the mentor role at that time. So I think that—

TS: Do you want me to pause it for a sec?

JF: Yes.

[Recording Paused]

TS: You ready?

JF: I am. I don't remember what I was saying. Oh, MCT. As an administrator, it's quite a different atmosphere and you learn—I was able to learn more about tactics and weapons and get to go play around with them. You learn how to teach these things, so it was—I guess you-bloom-where-you're-planted type deal, and just learning something so different than what you deal with every day. And you look at a DI too—Your uniform, everything's got to be perfect, right?

TS: Right.

JF: But as a combat instructor, you're out there in camis every day and you're dirty and you get to go play around out in the field, and Marine stuff, so it's a lot of fun. And then seeing—having that mentorship role as these marines come from boot camp, and you're transitioning them from that recruit mentality, and getting them ready to go to their MOS school and go out to their unit and become more of an independent thinker and initiative and all that kind of stuff.

TS: So you're building them up in a different kind of way.

JF: A different way than being a recruit.

TS: Yeah. Interesting.

JF: Yeah. And a different aspect of team work. So yeah, it was just an amazing experience to—I guess one of the highlights of my career to have that opportunity. After a year in the training company, I ended up being the academics chief. That was my quota but I ended up kind of getting stuck there because you have to go through schools; some kind of academic school and you get all kinds of different schoolings. I went over to the college for some courses.

TS: What did you mean by it was your "quota"?

JF: It's like your break, like, half-way through. So they have certain billets that are combat instructor billets that they fill these—like I said, academics chief, they have platform instructor. So it's combat instructors that are teaching the weapons and tactics classes, and then they do that for about a year and then they go back to the training company.

TS: Okay.

JF: I did all the curriculum stuff, and it was a notorious billet for getting stuck because of all the classes that you had to do to become that. Along with it, we had to evaluate the instructors so, I'd sit in a lot of classes and evaluate. And so, I went to mentoring and monitoring instructors' classes and stuff like that.

We also had to evaluate the 15K hikes, so I have to say that doing that—I did at least between forty and fifty 15K hikes.

TS: You went with them?

JF: Yes, because I'd have to make sure they were following the SOP [standard operating procedure] and all that kind of stuff.

TS: Is that the one that you had the picture of you on the bus after the hike or is that the original—

JF: Oh, I had the—Yeah, I had the pack on.

TS: Yeah.

JF: Yeah. It was another—I was like, "Here's another one."

TS: [chuckles] Right.

JF: I had all these glow sticks that I kept account of all the hikes that I did, because we'd have to have a certain color on there if we were academics so they'd know it's us. [both chuckle]

TS: That's interesting [unclear] glow sticks for that.

JF: It was a lot. It was a lot of hiking.

TS: That's cool. So you left there in 2012?

JF: Yes. Thirteen. Twelve, twelve. Yeah.

TS: So you went to the New River Marine Corps Air Station [North Carolina] after that. Is that right?

JF: Yes, I went to HMH 461 [Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461] which is a CH-53[E Super Stallion transport helicopters] squadron. So that was different. I had never been on the wing.

TS: Oh, right. Okay.

JF: So I thought I was going to retire from there but the monitor sent me there. I was still married. He was stationed some—He was in Afghanistan, I think. We went through four deployments or something together; long ones. Because that was another year long thing. So it was time for me to move because I've been over there more than three years. I got selected to master sergeant while I was there. So I was like, "I can't really wait for them to figure out him. I've got to go somewhere." So they kept me there while they were trying to figure out him. That's really what kept me in this area longer. I was like, "Maybe I'll just end up retiring from here.

So I got to be with a squadron; I was the squadron admin chief. I started working on—with influence from my sergeant major—started working on the—to be a part of the

air crew. [chuckles] I didn't make it. I had a hard time with the swim qual [qualification]. Because we were going to deploy and they needed gunners. He was like, "Yeah. We need people. I really want you to do this."

I said, "Okay. That sounds cool." My parents didn't like that too much. [chuckles]

TS: No?

JF: [unclear] because I had to have them watch her so I could go to the swim qualification and all this stuff. They were not happy about that at all.

TS: Why weren't they happy?

JF: Worried.

TS: Oh, that you were going to go—

JF: "Why you got to go volunteering?" [chuckles]

TS: Oh, right.

JF: That was the first time I saw them unhappy about something I was doing extra[?]. But I had exercise induced asthma, and they put me through the asthma test and all that stuff again and they said, "Nope."

And that was right before I was getting ready to go back to try the swim qual again. I made it through a good part of it and I didn't complete the part right before the dunk tank. You ever seen those?

TS: No, I haven't.

JF: It's like a simulated helicopter thing, and they lower it in the water and they rotate it.

TS: Oh, okay.

JF: Watch a video of that. They all have to go through that for the pilots and the aircrew. They lower it down and they rotate it, and you're strapped in and you got to find your way out. But you do the crawl-walk-run thing, so at the last piece you're—when you start off you have oxygen, but anyhow, you get to where—like the fourth stage, you don't have oxygen and you have blackout goggles. So you go down, you get disoriented underwater, and then you got to find windows to push out and get back.

TS: Wow.

JF: Yeah. I wasn't too upset that I didn't make it to that. [both chuckle]

TS: I wouldn't have been upset about not making that part.

JF: I've never not made something that I was trying to do, so I think if I went through it again I would've made it, but yeah, I was like, "Well, darn asthma." [chuckles]

TS: Yeah. But you did find a way to get to Afghanistan, right?

JF: Well, they had to take me as their admin chief.

TS: Okay. So you went but you went at a different capacity than you wanted to.

JF: They wanted me to do both of them.

TS: Oh, I see. Okay.

JF: That's what they would have people do, both. There were marines that they were crew chiefs, that's their MOS, and they had other marines that were doubled. So I just did admin the whole six months.

TS: How was this tour and deployment different from the one in Iraq?

JF: That six months seemed longer than a year.

TS: Really?

JF: It was different because it was this twelve-on, twelve-off shift. Yeah, I worked a lot of—probably more—I think I worked more hours in Iraq, but it didn't seem like as many because it was like this requirement; like, you had to have people there at a certain time, and then get twelve hours off. I worked the midnight shift a lot. It was boring. It was really boring.

TS: It was boring? You didn't do the same sort of work that you did in Iraq?

JF: No, I was just doing admin and that was it.

TS: Where were you at?

JF: Camp Bastion [Afghanistan; now known as Camp Shorabak].

TS: Was the terrain different?

JF: Everything. If you look out from the hanger, it's just desert, and it was—I don't know—maybe a couple of mile of road to get to Camp Leatherneck, where they had more of the morale stuff over there and shops or whatever.

TS: Did you go over there very much?

JF: No, I think every once in a while. Sometimes I'd go over—I had my bike sent out, and so I'd go ride over there, and it wasn't anything too exciting, I guess. The British, they had some restaurants; like, an actual restaurant where you could get steak and ice cream and stuff. You could actually sit in, not like the trailers. The British had some interesting stuff. But no, I didn't go over too much. You work twelve hours and then—I don't know—go exercise and—I had my own room. I was a master sergeant. Sergeant major made sure his master sergeants had their own room. Now, I was able to Skype there so that was different. I was able to Skype with my parents, my daughter, from my room.

TS: She starting to be almost a teenage now, right?

JF: Yes. Yeah, that was three years ago, so she was.

TS: Thirteen, fourteen.

JF: Yeah. And we had wi-fi [wireless local area networking]. It didn't work too well but I was able to get on—

TS: Every once in a while.

JF: Yeah. And I had a—one of those phones, the magicJack [a device that allows the user to use the Internet to make phone calls], so I'd call them through there.

TS: Right. Yeah, the magicJack.

JF: So yeah, it was just boring.

TS: So you didn't do the type of work that you did in Iraq where you went out to meet with the women or anything like that?

JF: No, I didn't do anything, at all. There's not much to tell you about Afghanistan.

TS: I guess most of these pictures that you showed me are of Iraq, right?

JF: Oh, all of that's Iraq, except for there was a picture of me on the helicopter and—

TS: Oh, yeah. Why don't you talk about that? You reenlisted on the helicopter.

JF: So that was a—I got to fly over Afghanistan and reenlist on the helicopter on the twenty-third of July, which was my last reenlistment and that's the day that I went to boot camp. So special.

TS: Right, right. Special.

JF: And I took some flags up with me, flew some flags up there, and that was—yeah, that one. [referencing a photograph] That one was up there with me when I reenlisted, so I

thought that was pretty cool. And they let me go test fire. [chuckles] So I got to go fire a machine gun at nothing in the desert but—

TS: Over top of the terrain, right?

JF: Yeah. Sitting there in a desk all that time—I was at the end of my tour. That was pretty exciting. I think anything could be at that point.

TS: You had a six month deployment that seemed like two years, and then your year deployment in Iraq flew by, you think, pretty quickly?

JF: I think so. Yes.

TS: When you look back at those experiences and being deployed, are there any lessons that you learned for yourself, as a marine or as a woman or just as Jeannine?

JF: Lessons from deployment. I can say from being married while I was deployed, our first—me and my ex-husband—our first deployment was his deployment and that was a year in Iraq. So I was worried all the time, always waiting for the phone call, and I'm taking care of the house, the kid, the dogs; all the stuff that you do back at home.

When I deployed, I saw that having—seeing it and being there and doing it yourself is a lot different. You kind of have a visual of what the other person was going through, somewhat. He was on transition teams so he had quite different experiences, but you see it; you see the area; you learn about the culture; you see what a deployment's like; and it's a lot different being the one gone than the one back.

So hanging out with some of the wives there—back—I was able to tell them what it's like. "Hey, don't worry so much, and these are things that happen." Because you—I don't know—drop your laundry off, got to go to the grocery store, you don't got to—You worry about yourself and your marines. And that's it. You know that you're okay. If you can't call home because communications get shut down, you know you're okay. So you're not worried.

TS: Right.

JF: It's just a different perspective on that end. And so, it was interesting experiencing both ends of it; the wife at home and the marine deployed.

TS: The anxiety's on the home front, not so much in the deployment.

JF: Yeah, I think so. Yeah. You have—I mean, I wasn't infantry, so they have different experiences as well and come back with a lot different experiences. But speaking with other people, and my ex-husband who was an infantry guy, he kind of—it was the same thing. He was in a lot more dangerous situations, facing stuff every day and losing people, and he worked with the Iraqis a lot. But in general, it was the same perspective: You are worrying about you and your marines.

TS: You're in that bubble.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

JF: For him, worrying about staying alive.

TS: Yeah.

JF: And whatever you do. Home, you don't know what's going on. So yeah, it's so much different on each end. I think that's the biggest thing I learned about the most, like I said, in Iraq; just experiencing such a different culture and actually kind of being out in it and talking with the people.

TS: Right, right.

JF: Yeah, but other than that, that was pretty much it.

TS: Your last assignment, where'd you go? MARSOC [U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command]?

JF: I'm with MARSOC now.

TS: MARSOC, okay. Yeah. So that's where you're at now, and this is where you're going to be retiring from in July. So two months.

JF: Two more months, yes.

TS: What kind of role do you have here? Is it admin?

JF: I'm the adjutant chief for MARSOC, so I work under the general; not directly; I never see him. [chuckles] But basically one of his staff.

TS: Right. You're under that chain.

JF: Yeah, like another office down the hall, but. I approve awards that he's approved but on his—I endorse them on his behalf, or approve them, so they go through the system to Headquarters Marine Corps; basically, like a trusted assistant. We manage correspondence that goes up there to the general. So we have all of his correspondence [unclear] basically. And directives; I manage about two-hundred directives. So that's been—Coming from a squadron and you have ten, maybe, squadron orders or something, maybe not even that. And then it's like, two-hundred, so it's a lot to manage.

TS: It's a lot more balls in the air.

JF: There is a lot of civilians, so it's quite a different environment than I've been used to. So I got to see—I got over the wing and got to see how they operate and grew so much appreciation for the wing, because everybody makes fun of them. [chuckles]

TS: Because they're not infantry?

JF: Yeah, because they're not infantry, and the mentality of what people perceive them is more laid-back, and they don't go to the field, that kind of stuff. But they do in a way; in their aircraft they do their training. But I got to see from them what it takes to—I guess that goes back to something I learned being deployed that I wasn't thinking of then—what it takes to keep that aircraft going in that kind of environment that people don't see if they're not a—see what they do every day. 24/7, they're going. There's no shutting down something. These guys, they didn't have a lot of time to do anything. You need a ride somewhere, you go down there and wait and hop on a helicopter and you go somewhere.

But my gosh, I mean, if one was broke down, to send it out to get it cleaned up and go, everybody had to pitch in, even administrators. Everybody was there pitching in to help them out. So seeing them in a combat environment, and how much they have to do to keep those things going and to keep missions going and [unclear] supporting, it was a lot. I just—I was impressed. So I got to see that side, and then I got to finish my time somewhere else I didn't think I was going end up, was MARSOC.

TS: Right.

JF: And although I'm not down there at the operators and sitting down at the school and really seeing everything they do, it's interesting to just see how the command works.

TS: Right. Yeah, it's a different lens that you're seeing.

JF: It's a different level for me as an administrator, and I kind of wish I had some more time to take this experience somewhere else; all that I've learned. But yeah, it's a different type of command, so just completely different experience than everything else that I've dealt with. It's nice to be able to finish out with learning something different.

TS: Yeah. Can I ask you some general questions about your time? You said you were putting the stamp on some awards. Is there any particular award that you received that you are especially proud of?

JF: Well, there's—like military award or—doesn't matter?

TS: Doesn't matter to me.

JF: See, I never got a—I have a navy achievement, and I think I have three Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and I'm proud of all of them because they're—a lot of people say this, but it's not really all what I did. I'm proud of the marines—the awesome marines that I had working with me that—their work, along with me—I've always had

really good teams—so their work along with me got me those awards, or us. I'm proud to wear them for them.

There was one, something I got this last year. Oh, it's from Jacksonville. So the Women Marine Association put me in for this "Outstanding Veteran Award" at the chapter that I work with, and it was because of all of these—the past six years, like I said, we've been doing these ceremonies, putting up Linda's—Linda Lacy's historic display, and doing cake cuttings, and so they nominated me for this for working with them. And they're just such an amazing group of women. And so, this is one that I'm proud of.

TS: What's it called?

JF: It's the—

TS: Certificate of Recognition for—

JF: —2015 Outstanding Veteran from the—Oh, the mayor signed off on it from Jacksonville. So it was neat.

TS: It is neat. It's interesting, because when I've asked that question before, a lot of times the most significant thing is something like this; not necessarily a medal you got, but a recognition for something that you're especially proud of having been a part of, or something like that, and it kind of rings true for what you're saying.

JF: Well, it's such a tremendous organization and I love what they do. All the women I run into, I just love them all. So something like that I think is really—That's really special to me that they put me in for that. That plaque they gave me that's—

TS: Yeah. It's a beautiful room here. I wish I had a video of it.

JF: You could take a picture. It's my extra, extra-large shadow box.

TS: It's some cool stuff. Do you feel like you were treated fairly during your time in the Marine Corps, with your superiors?

JF: Yeah. I think just like everybody I ran into those that you don't quite get along with. I think that it's—just some personalities clash, or you don't agree with somebody's idea about treating people or how to do things, I guess. For the most part, yeah. I've had a great experience. I don't believe that I've had any kind of discrimination as a woman, even working around primarily infantry guys over at MCT.

TS: No?

JF: No. I got—My evaluations I thought were fair; actually better than I was expecting because of what I'm being compared against from their experience. A couple of them. So yeah, I really can't think of anything too negative, except for a few individuals I could probably point out.

TS: Right. Sure. But there's always those, right?

JF: Yeah, I mean, it's not that many people that I can't remember them all. [chuckles]

TS: Even though you didn't experience any, maybe, sexual harassment, were you aware of anything happening to any other women, especially as you went up in rank and maybe—

JF: I didn't, even as the Equal Opportunity Representative; I did that for a few years. I personally did not see a lot of gender discrimination on women. I didn't really handle too much of that. I know it happens. I know it happens a lot. I've heard a lot of stories. But me, personally, I've had a lot of guys work with me and I never really had any problems. Sexual assault, yes. But as far as sexual harassment type stuff—Yeah, that stuff happens, but I'm kind of a person that blows a lot of that stuff off, like, "Whatever."

TS: But sexual assault, you say that's something that is an issue sometimes?

JF: It happens. I've experienced it so—But yes, I've heard a lot of cases of that kind of stuff, so it's pretty prevalent unfortunately. But I can say that—Since what I experienced was fifteen years ago—so I'll say in the past fifteen years the military has done a lot to move in a positive direction of avenues to have a resolution and confidentiality, so you have the option to—you just want to get help and go talk to somebody, you're not pressured to go on the stand and relive experiences if you don't want to. There's a lot more options and the education's there all of the time, every year—sometimes you get twice a year—so you know what your options are. I think it's amazing.

TS: When you said you had the experience, did you not have those options at that time?

JF: I wouldn't really—Well, I was read my rights. [chuckles] Yeah, so I had went to—I asked to go talk to a counselor. I didn't say anything to the command. I said, "I need to talk to a counselor." And so, I thought—I don't even know where I was but I was like, "Hey, this happened to me and I just need to talk to somebody." Didn't know anything about a Uniform Victim Advocate; maybe we had them. I had no idea. So then they have my—a representative from my unit come over and that's when I was read my rights and I was like, "What?"

TS: Why did they read you your rights?

JF: I guess in case any—I don't know. I don't understand why that happened, because I was like, "I'm the victim here—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's kind of intimidating, isn't it?

JF: I just wanted to talk to a counselor. I didn't want them telling somebody else about—

TS: In your unit. You thought it would be confidential?

JF: That's what I thought and it wasn't. Maybe I guess I told the wrong person. Maybe it wasn't one of those—somebody that's held to confidentiality. So that was really strange. And I got a lot of pressure to press charges, and I was sent over to NCIS [Naval Criminal Investigative Service] and they had me writing everything down. I was like, "I don't really want to do this." And they couldn't understand why I didn't want to press charges. So it's a really hard thing to explain to somebody that hasn't been through that, but I said, "I don't want to keep having to talk about this. I just want to go talk to somebody in private. That's all."

TS: Was it almost like because you weren't willing to press charges, they didn't really believe—

JF: Yeah, I felt like that.

TS: Thinking that because you wanted help for yourself and you wanted to deal with it in your own way, they didn't understand that.

JF: Yeah, they could not understand that. But the education that's there for leaders now to help understand those things and not pressure somebody, and also for potential victims, understanding who you can keep this confidential with and who you cannot. So you know what your options are if that happens, or who, at least, you need to see to tell you what your options are. It's all over the place now. They've really come a long way.

There was something else with that too, is there was a questionnaire. They wanted me to be a part of the jury for a court martial, so they had this court martial questionnaire asking about, "Have you ever been a victim of sexual assault?" or something. I'm like, "This is not everybody's business." I made some phone calls, and I knew somebody else that made some phone calls, got to the right person, and they ended up taking me off of that and I didn't have to explain it to anybody; the commander or anything. I think it was actually a trial for that—

TS: Right. Well, I guess, in the civilian world they ask the same sort of questions of you, like, "Have you been the victim of a crime. Have you been—" Related to whatever kind of your trial you're going to be on. But I can see why that would be very—Then, it's a record and—right?

JF: My commander might have seen the questionnaire, my sergeant, whoever. That's not—I felt that that was something personal to me.

TS: Right. I understand.

JF: With that though, I don't know if some changes have been made but I know that it was being looked, at as far as dealing with that kind of situation and asking people these things and the confidentiality of it. So I think, yeah, we've come a long way with those kind of things—and with pregnancy and, I guess, things women experience—the longer we've really been a permanent part of this.

TS: Right. The more volume of women that have experiences that they have to actually recognize that these are issues that women deal with, and you have to deal with them now.

Couple other questions about—which one? Oh, the idea of homosexuality in the military. So you went in in '96, so they had just put "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in. and then they repealed it, actually, while you were still in. What do you think about that whole idea of can or cannot; should homosexuals be in the Marine Corps or the military?

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

JF: I don't care. Since they've done it, I haven't heard of any problems. Now, I did wonder, on the infantry side, could that create some problems, or barracks, so I don't know on that end if the issues that they anticipated, if they're actually really facing them or if they are an issue. But I haven't seen any problems at all, if that's what you're asking. As long as it doesn't disrupt anything, I don't see where the problem is. Everybody should have the opportunity to serve their country.

TS: How about the issue of, are there any jobs in the military that women should not be allowed to try or to do? Is there anything that should be off limits?

JF: I will say that I am strongly opposed to infantry.

TS: Personally, or for all women?

JF: Oh, for all women. I don't think they should serve in the infantry. Now, could that be a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" deal where you're anticipating all these problems that aren't going to occur? But I think this is much bigger than that, and based off my own personal experience—Okay, so I'm doing this for a day, here and there, go out, being the only one out of the guys for a day. There's complications.

TS: You're talking about when you were in Iraq?

JF: Yes. Not that they treated me bad or anything, just things women do. I had to pull a female off of a mission where we had the females do our [unclear] security where they

were kind of playing with having that kind of thing going on. She had bad menstrual cramps. She would get them that severe to where—there was no way because it would be distracting and I need her for security. So I took her off. [unclear] like, "Why are you doing that?"

I said, "Well, I need somebody focused out there." But I didn't have a replacement for her, and it was just a part of nature. I don't think it's discrimination or anything.

Injuries. So the stress fracture I have. I told you all the hikes that I've been on, and not everybody does all these over there. It's just academics. I'd rather go hike than watch students take tests, so I had the deal with my guys, I said, "You watch the tests, I'll do the hikes."

TS: So it's something you wanted.

JF: It was kind of self-induced but—I ended up with heel spurs so—I started developing heel spurs around probably six years ago or something, at least. It's been a long time. I've had chronic pain for a long time, and as time—they've grown; plantar fasciitis. Running, walking, things that I love doing are—it's hard to enjoy them because I'm in pain doing them.

Just had a hip surgery. I had a torn labrum that I dealt with at least two and a half years. I developed pretty significant pain. It probably started before then but I think a lot of it's the result of wear and tear, maybe the hiking. I don't know if the hiking—I'm sure it added to it but it didn't start right then. But yeah, very typical in women and, seen[?] as a combat instructor, it was rare for me to drop a male from the course for hip fracture; some kind of injury in hip or feet. Very frequent in females.

So I'm curious, and if you read some of the articles and thoughts—people that are—women are against it, I think they say pretty much the same things. Why knowing this, are you going to put women who are not necessarily—not that we can't do—can't carry the load or can't do as many pull-ups or can't carry a man out from whatever. I can carry men, not all of them, but—Women do have—There are a lot of women that do have the strength to do anything or better than a man, but you've got to look at the bigger picture of this, and you're looking at how infantry units operate, the cohesion they have, and what they do as men together, through all this time, do we need to make those adjustments and have the concerns about—that you shouldn't have—but we wouldn't be dealing with sexual harassment and all those things. Now, it's extra stuff they need to worry about on top of this very serious mission that they have.

Hopefully, we don't have to worry about those things, but if you look at injuries—put that stuff aside—look at injuries that are very typical of women, and what they're going to be doing is starting a career, or maybe trying to have a whole twenty-year career in the military, how long is the typical woman going to be able to withstand that? Are we going to make it four years and they're going to be discharged medically? Are they going to make it ten? I don't know. It's like science—medical science.

TS: Right.

JF: I'm just looking at mine and what I've seen.

TS: Sure. No, it's all good questions.

JF: Yeah. Yeah. I guess we'll see in the next five to ten years, once we got more in there.

TS: We probably will.

JF: Like I said, I don't think it's discrimination, I just think it's differences in our bodies really.

TS: Yeah. Maybe. Like you say, we're probably going to find out. Now, you're going to be getting out in a couple of months. You're going back to school? Is that what you're doing?

JF: I'll start my bachelor's degree. I think I'm going to do management. Something in the realm of human resources. Eventually, I want to have a career in some kind of way of assisting veterans—

TS: Oh, nice. Okay.

JF: I don't have a particular job that I'm looking for.

TS: Well, you have time to figure it out. You've got time.

JF: Yeah. I want to help veterans in some way, so I'm going to focus somehow around human resources.

TS: Would you recommend the service to other young men and women?

JF: Yeah, definitely.

TS: Yeah?

JF: Yeah. I think you have to have the right, maybe, personality for it. If I look at my daughter, I don't see military. Not because she's my daughter. I mean, if that's what she wanted to do, then I'd be all for it. Yeah, I'd be very supportive of her. She wants to be a cosmetologist, so that's her personality. If that's something—

TS: Isn't that something that you were interested in a long time ago?

JF: Yes. Yes. But I also had, like, a—Me and her are quite different. [chuckles] I think that—You know yourself [referring to Therese], it's a different lifestyle being in the military, so for you to make a career of that, for you to be completely miserable for your first four, I think you've got to be mentally tough and not—Yeah, because you get a lot of criticism. A lot of it.

TS: Right. Yeah, right. Do you think you'll ever get back into music?

JF: I think I'll join the community band, maybe when I have some time. They got one in Jacksonville.

TS: Nice.

JF: My boyfriend plays—he brings the clarinet and he comes out and plays with me.

TS: Oh, did he play in the band with you in high school?

JF: Yes.

TS: It's coming full circle, then, huh?

JF: Oh, yeah. We were in the community orchestra, and all those things, together.

TS: Do you think there's anything that a civilian person may not understand or might misinterpret about either the Marine Corps or people who are in the military or along those lines?

JF: I'm trying to think back to talking to my friend's—some of their mothers back at home while I've been gone. I think the whole—Sometimes they picture it like—I know a few of them pictured me in the infantry. They didn't understand band or admin or something other than what they see, marines or any military service, like what you see on TV of them doing. That's what they would have in their mind. They knew that I was playing my flute but they had what they see on TV in their mind. You see all the war movies and that stuff. [chuckles] You don't usually see somebody sitting there doing admin.

TS: Right. You don't see advertisements of marines behind a desk, even.

JF: No, you don't see them behind a desk or playing an instrument, unless you see drum and bugle corps stuff. And the way of life, I think, just really hard to understand unless you're engaged. I can sit here and tell my boyfriend all the time about how it is or the stress. I think that you can't—It's hard to understand the stress of being an administrator. It's not the paperwork that's stressful all the time. You have the added babysitting sometimes, unfortunately. You get the phone calls at night like, "So-and-so is—They're in jail." Or "They screwed up somewhere. Come get them."

TS: It's not the job, it's the personnel and having to manage that.

JF: You have all that extra things. So now, if you have something that's very time consuming—I recently had this. I feel like I lost months of work. You've got to do what you're expected, keep up on your job and everything while you're dealing with personnel issues at the same time. It's a challenge. And then, so, you've got to—especially, I guess, as a senior Staff NCO, you're pulled all over the place, different duties. I'm not just sitting here doing my paperwork, I'm also, at some point, the Equal Opportunity Representative. In Iraq, I'm doing Iraqi Women's Engagement *and* everything that's expected of me aside

from that. What else? You go out and teach martial arts. You have—I mean, there's so many things that's thrown at you in the military, because there's no—yeah, you get a billet description but—

TS: That's only part of what you're doing.

JF: But you're doing everything else that you're told. It's challenging to manage all those things.

TS: It's interesting, as you're talking about managing people, you manage people in the civilian world but you generally don't have to worry about them outside of work. Like you say, it's like in the military, you're embracing the whole person, their whole life, right? So if they go down and they get drunk and they get arrested, you have to deal with that. If you're a boss of somebody, you don't have to—I mean, they might call you but it's not likely, right?

JF: Right. And you don't have to give up dates to ten different people that are worried about this one person, and there's—I enjoy the people aspect of it when you see the—when you mentor them, you see their development, especially junior marines; you can mold them. But then, yes, there's the [unclear]. I can't imagine [unclear] get a job, I bet it's just going to be—all of this has made me—I don't know—made me stronger or able to deal with so many things at one time that I'm hoping when I go get a job, I'll be like, "Oh, this is so easy because I don't have all this other stuff."

TS: I don't know. You might want to be more challenged. That could happen too. How do you think your life has been different because you went in and signed up for the Marine Corps band?

JF: I see so many of my friends back home, they haven't been anywhere and they haven't really left Baltimore.

TS: They haven't left Baltimore?

JF: No. Not really on vacation or just any—

TS: So they're in a bubble.

JF: Or not Baltimore, but Maryland; I guess I should say the Maryland, D.C. area.

TS: Yes.

JF: My experiences are just so much different. I just get out and kind of have a job and [there?] with my family. I've had to deal with being away from family quite a bit and missing things, and so many leadership experiences of dealing with so many different people and how you rotate so much and in different environments.

I think, especially through twenty years of just working so many different places, it has definitely developed confidence, and I know that I couldn't, but I feel that I could go into any job and have an interview, like, "Yeah, I don't have any experience in this but I'm going to learn it. I can manage your people. I can multitask." I feel like I could do anything, but obviously I couldn't just go out there and learn how to work powerlines, but I'd be like, "Yeah, I could do that." It's like I have this overconfidence of what I'm capable of doing because of being put in so many different places without instructions. [chuckles]

TS: That's a great explanation. I really like it. That's a great explanation.

JF: A lot of self-learning.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

JF: Patriotism. I would say having pride in my country, and supporting and defending our constitution and our freedom, and pride in our people and what our country stands for, and sometimes putting that before yourself. I think that being in the military does build a lot of that as well.

TS: Would you do it all again?

JF: Oh, yes. Definitely. No question about it, I definitely would. It's been just not an opportunity that everybody gets. You're that small percentage of America that gets to say that you serve in our United States military, and then also as a marine.

TS: Right. Even smaller.

JF: And I get to retire as a master sergeant, which I wasn't saying that I never thought that I couldn't do it, but you don't know until it happens, really.

TS: Right.

JF: I just think that's awesome and I'm proud of that. It's an honor. It really is an honor to have the opportunity to serve this long. Not everybody makes it or can. And yeah, to retire as a marine master sergeant is just—it's such an honor. I get to have my ceremony, and not everybody leaves a job like that.

TS: No, that's true. That's very true.

JF: I have people coming down. My boyfriend, his parents, and some other friends, they're all coming down for my ceremony.

TS: That's great.

JF: And the guys at the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and the Women's Marine Association.

TS: Yeah, you're going to have a party.

JF: You meet so many different people.

TS: Yeah, you have touched a lot of different areas. Well, I don't have any more formal questions. Is there anything you want to add that we haven't talked about?

JF: No. We talked about a lot of things. [chuckles] You're more than welcome to look at that if you want, or if you end up with any other questions that come up, but no, I think that pretty much sums it up.

TS: You have any last words?

JF: No.

TS: No? Okay. I'll go ahead and shut it off. Thank you, Jeannine, so much.

[End of Interview]