WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Paula Trivette

INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer

DATE: April 10, 2011

[Begin Interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer, and today is April 10, 2011. I'm in Greensboro, North Carolina. I'm with Paula Trivette. This is an oral history interview for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Paula, how would you like your name to read on your collection?

PT: I would like it to read Lieutenant Colonel, Retired, Paula Jackan Trivette.

TS: Okay, excellent. Well, Paula, why don't we start out by having you tell me about when and where you were born?

PT: I was born in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, and that was in 1953, March 14, and I am one of seventeen living children of one set of parents, Ignatius and Mary Jane Jackan, who are both deceased now; my dad died in [October 2010—PT corrected later], my mom died two years ago [December 2010—PT clarified later].

TS: Aw. So, you have sixteen siblings?

PT: Sixteen living siblings, yes.

TS: And how does that break down for boys and girls?

PT: It breaks down nine girls and eight boys. There were three sets of twins, so she had all combinations of twins. The first two were a boy and a girl, and boy is one that had died; they were premature; twin girls just a little bit older than I am; twin boys a couple years younger. So, she had all the combinations of twins.

TS: Are you a twin?

PT: I'm not a twin, but I look like one of the twins.

TS: Do you?

PT: Yes.

TS: Oh, how about that.

PT: I look like this one, this one, and this one.

TS: Which one's you?

PT: This one. [laughs]

TS: Yeah, you do look like—yeah. Well, how great is that.

PT: And then these are the twin boys.

TS: Okay.

PT: And Rody's the one that had the twin.

TS: And you have to have matching shirts on, it looks like there.

PT: Well, this is my parents' sixtieth wedding anniversary, and if I had my druthers, we would had all the siblings wear one color—

TS: Right.

PT: —the spouses wear another color, and the grandkids a third color. But I didn't win out, so you could wear whatever color you wanted.

TS: Oh! [chuckles] That's pretty neat.

PT: Yeah.

TS: Well, that's very interesting. Tell me a little bit—now, the place in Wisconsin Rapids, was that, like, a small town?

PT: It was a town of about eighteen thousand people, I think that's—might be less; I'm sure it's less than that now. But we were born and raised Catholic, as you might surmise, raised in the Catholic school, and of course we were very poor, and Mom and Daddy didn't pay for high school, barely paid for elementary school, so we knew that they would not be paying for college. And if we wanted to go to college, it was going to be on your own dime. So I decided that, yes, I wanted to go to college. I knew I wanted to leave home, go to college, and find—find myself somewhere. [laughter] Less the children.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Well, before we get to college—

PT: Okay.

TS: Before get to college, tell me, what did your—what did your folks do, then? I'm sure your mother had to stay at home.

PT: My mother actually stayed at home; she was a stay at home mom with all of us. My dad was actually an engineer; he worked for the Right of Way Department for the state of Wisconsin. And originally, he used to buy and sell property for the state, to put in highways, and then he belonged to the Right of Way Department, where they would actually get the—the highway—permissions to put the highway through. So he had several different jobs through there, but he retired, actually, at the age of fifty-five, which is younger than I am now, still with ten children at home, which—that's a story in itself—

TS: Yeah, no kidding.

PT: —but we'll keep them positive, I won't go there. [both laugh]

TS: So your mom was probably "Oh, wait", you know?

PT: Yeah.

TS: "Go back to work!"

PT: Right, exactly.

TS: Well, where did you fall in this—

PT: I was a middle child, and I considered myself very fortunate to be in the middle, because I grew up with everybody.

TS: Yeah.

PT: I knew my—my older siblings as well as the younger siblings, whereas the oldest brother, Bob, had gone away to the seminary and my mother was still having children, so I feel that he doesn't even know the younger ones that he didn't grow up with, so.

TS: Right, because he was much older than the rest of them.

PT: Right, yes.

TS: Well, what—So, what was your household like? I mean, how did that run?

PT: Small house we lived in. We had—and this, you'll find rather interesting. Our house took on several expansions during the eighteen years that I lived there. But as you walk in the back door, there's just a small porch, which leads you into the kitchen. In the kitchen, there's a table that would seat eight. You always then would set up two card tables for dinner, and always a couple babies in high chairs. And so—oh, how did it run? My mother ran the house, my dad was gone most of the time. Mornings, we would wake up—if it was during the school year, the older kids got up earlier and you always had a hot breakfast; you had oatmeal or something of that nature. On weekends is the only time you had eggs, but you would have oatmeal or, you know, cream of wheat or something; you'd have a hot breakfast. The first shift would go off to school and then the younger kids would eat and they would go off to school. We lived within three blocks of a—of our elementary school, we went to Catholic school and Catholic high school, and the Catholic high school was about two miles away. So—

TS: Did you just walk to school?

PT: We walked to school.

TS: Both of—both places?

PT: We would—Yes, both places. We would eat our lunch at school, you got a hot meal at school, so they always had hot food there, and then after school we all had jobs, whether they were—well, let's see. We started—I started babysitting in fourth grade, so we had babysitting jobs that took us—when I was in eighth grade, I started working at a job that was passed along to all of my sisters—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: [chuckles] As you got to a certain age or something?

PT: Romanaski's Bar.

TS: Is that right? What'd you do there?

PT: Ann Romanski, she owned ten rooms that she would rent out to day workers or weekend workers, and she had some that lived there full time. So after school, you would go and you would make all the beds, clean all the rooms. On weekends, you would do laundry, ironing, scrub floors. It was the very same thing I did at home, but I was getting paid for

it, so why the heck not? [laughing] But we all loved Ann Romanski and loved going there, she just was very good to all of us, and it was money for us to pay for our tuition, our books, our uniforms—it was a Catholic high school and we wore uniforms—and books, and so that's why I say, you know, Mom and Daddy didn't pay for—for high school, so I knew—I didn't look at them for—for college money either. So we all had different jobs.

Then from Romanski's Bar, you then graduated to Judge's Laundry. Tom Judge owned a laundry in town, and I went to school with his daughter, so after high school we would go and it was a typical—He had gotten several contracts from dormitories where we would wash and mangle all the sheets and fold them; restaurants, the same things with tablecloths and napkins and things of that nature. And then a lot of people had their own family clothing, but mainly the high school kids did the mangling; these big sheets going through this big—

TS: I was going to say, what's a mangle? What's a mangle, not sure what that is?

PT: A mangle is a [set of hot rollers where you put a wet sheet through it—PT corrected later]. There's one person on one end of the mangle, the other [on the opposite end—PT clarified later] —it's a huge, like—you know, the old-fashioned washers, washing machines—

TS: Right.

PT: —had the wringer?

TS: Right.

PT: It's like a huge wringer. You put this wet sheet through the wringer, and it dries it; it steams it; it's very hot; it steams it. As it comes out, there's two other people on the opposite ends of it coming out, they grab the sheet, fold it, put it on a pile, grab the next one. So, you had—it was a whole system, four people had to—

TS: Had to work together, then.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: —operate this—the mangle. Yeah, you really did. So—But the best part was lunch, because we would go down to the Red Owl Store and buy fresh deli meat. We never had deli meat at home, so we would have ham, it was wonderful, and fresh rolls, we always had white bread in loaves. Our neighbors were bakers, and we always got leftover trays of bakery—Arnold's Bakery, but God bless them, they were always feeding us. [laughter]

TS: Isn't that terrific.

PT: It really was. So, that was—from then—from Judge's Laundry, then I graduated to our local hospital, and I worked in the dietary department there. And that was a lot of fun. We prepared trays, you know, for the patients to go up, and then basically did dishes, so.

TS: How did you get involved in that?

PT: In that? Actually, let's see. Who—

TS: This was—

PT: I had a contact.

TS: Was that a hand-me-down job, too? [chuckles]

PT: No, that was not a hand-me-down job.

TS: Okay.

PT: No, that was—and you know, I don't know how I got that job. Oh, yes I do! Another girl that worked at Judge's Laundry, she got a job there, and she was working there, and she let me onto it, so—and it beat mangling sheets in the—in the summertime; oh, that was just a nasty job.

TS: Pretty hot.

PT: Very, very hot, but you know, it was—it was money, you did what you did. And then, from there, the same girl had a family that owned a restaurant outside the outskirts of town, and I would go with her on Saturdays; just Saturday. We would go there and worked in the kitchen there, chopping vegetables or doing dishes or whatever. So you know, various different sources of income coming in.

TS: Yeah, and you worked from a very young age.

PT: Oh, yeah. Fourth grade, we started babysitting, and you had your favorite families that you liked to babysit for, and I would always tell them—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Did they ask for—Did they have certain people they called too? That happened in my family; like a family—"Oh, could I please have Paula?"

PT: Oh, absolutely, that's why I would tell, like, the Crook family—the—and I don't even—Mr. Crook—I don't think I ever knew his—his first name, but Mr. Crook worked with my dad in the same—not the same department, but in the building, so he knew we had, you know, tons of kids. And—But I became their babysitter, and I would tell him in July, "If you're planning to go out New Year's Eve, get your reservation in now," because that was a really busy time. [chuckles]

So I loved going there, they had two little girls that were just delightful. And I actually, then, ended up doing some ironing and cooking—not cooking, ironing and cleaning and stuff for her in the summertime. I would go there, ride my bike across the river, and go work for her.

TS: How nice.

PT: Yeah, we had, you know, people—we were—we were a very highly thought about family; we were all hard workers, and, you know, it was positive for us, because, you know, it was mon—good incomes for us, and for my family as well; we had good reputation and, you know—but we were good workers, so it was a win-win situation for those that hired us and those we worked for.

TS: That's right. Well, what'd you do for fun?

PT: For fun—[laughs] For fun—

TS: There had to be some of that there.

PT: There was some of that. On Sundays, after we went to church—this was one of the fun things we would do, is we would go on family hikes. And the most favorite place for us all to hike would be to our cemetery in that local town. But the problem was you had to cross a train trestle to get to the cemetery. There was not a sidewalk on this train trestle. Sundays, there weren't too many trains running, so you were pretty safe in crossing that train trestle. It was the same train trestle, during the summertime, that we would walk across to get to the community swimming pool. Otherwise, we would have to go all the way around town, this way, if we—here's our house, here's the train trestle, the pool was right there. Otherwise we did a very circuitous route.

TS: So you're basically having to walk on the tracks, across?

PT: Right. Yeah, and I would just look there, knowing I was going to fall through. I don't think—I don't know how—

TS: How high above the ground was it? Pretty high?

PT: Yeah. You know, I don't know how thin I thought I was that I could slide through one of those slats. [laughs] But it was—it was the most anxiety-producing time for me; I just

hated it. It was almost like you just froze before you'd start walking across those trains—we never had a close—close—

TS: No? You were never worried about a train coming?

PT: No—well, if there was one coming, you could jump to another—right off of the tracks there was an area you could jump to, and just hold on for dear life so you don't have to jump into the river. But it was—it was scary.

TS: Yeah? Did anybody have to do that; to jump over?

PT: No, no, we always—because you kind of knew the time the trains came, and so—matter of fact, right after lunch, we would always have to, during the summer time, get down on our knees and say the family rosary before we could go swimming. So while you're saying the rosary, you hear the train whistle going, so you know, okay, the train's gone, quick, get over the rosary and get to the pool. [both laughing] So that was one of the fun things we did. We would also, then, in the winter, a lot of skedding—sledding and skiing, water—not water, what do you call it; ice skating.

TS: Ice skating, sure.

PT: And after we all left home to go to school, my father bought a pool table which they dug out our basement and made like a recreation room, but I was already gone to college when this happened. So he put a pool table in down there, and my younger brothers became good pool sharks. And—But the girls, you know, we did a lot of just games at home; kick the can, yeah, cards, yeah.

TS: Wintertime, I know.

PT: Yeah, wintertime, cards; ice skating, though, in the winter; we did a lot of that; sledding, in the winter. That's when we would walk to—they called it Mosher's Ma. It was a—When I go back and look at it now, Mosher's Ma is just a little hill. [laughs] This is what we tobogganed down; you know, we carried our sleds there, our toboggans, and went—but we—

TS: It seemed very formidable when you were a young girl, right?

PT: Yeah! We walked everywhere we went, because we didn't have a car that could take everybody, so you're not going to just drive a few people there, you know, you're going to walk or—we had bikes, and we would take turns riding bikes in the summertime. Those that had paper routes—all my brothers had paper routes, and so they needed the bikes for their paper routes. And in the winter, we used this big sled that we had, that they put their papers in the sled—

TS: Oh, neat.

PT: —and they'd sell papers outside of church; you know, after church on Sunday. But we had paper routes, and you know, sometimes I helped them.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Very entrepreneurial.

PT: Yeah. I mean, it was whatever you could do, and my oldest brother started selling [for the] Artistic Card Company—it was all occasion cards and Christmas cards and—so every summer, people expected—if it wasn't Bob, then it was going to be somebody else. That was another pass-along job—that Artistic Cards—because you could get your—your name engraved on the cards. Of course, we never had that, we're—you know, we—that—the rich people, we knew where to go for those.

TS: Yeah, those are the houses that we're going to sell—

PT: The houses we're going to go to first.

TS: That's right.

PT: But, I mean, it was—it was a lot of fun, we did a lot of things, and of course, birthdays, you know, we never had a birthday party for ourselves, because my parents felt like you have enough people here for a party, so—but that was really the only day that I really felt special, you know, that I was—

TS: Singled out.

PT: Singled out for something, and it was your birthday. We never had wrapped presents, they were always—my mother would put a deck of cards or something into a IGA shopping bag, staple that bag shut, and that was your present. And then you open up that bag—same thing at Christmastime, nothing was wrapped, it was in the IGA shopping bags.

TS: Is that right?

PT: And you—you know, put one staple on there, don't be wasting three or four staples, you just—you know, one staple will do it. Don't look in that bag.

TS: And did she keep the bags?

PT: Oh, yes, oh yeah. We recycled—you know, you talk about being green, today? Oh, they don't know green. But we weren't as bad as our neighbor. My neighbor swore that she washed out her Kleenexes. [laughs]

TS: My mom used to keep the cereal box; the waxed paper, you know, in the cereal box?

PT: Oh, okay, yeah.

TS: In a drawer, and use that.

PT: In a drawer and use that, yup. And we—of course, we didn't make lunches for school, but you know, you were certainly—days following that, if you had those Ziploc bags, you know, the baggies, well, you better save every—wash those baggies out. I mean, I find myself still doing some of that today. Not so bad, but I think, "Man, this thing doesn't need to be thrown out. If it's not greasy or whatever, you can rinse it out, shake it out, whatever."

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That's right, that's right.

PT: You can do that, so. You know, I've got lot—you know, a lot of really good memories of growing up, and you know, all of us sisters, it was kind of the sisters against the brothers. My sisters did—

TS: Well, you had it pretty evened out.

PT: Yeah. The sisters did all the indoor work, it seemed. You know, we did all the—the laundry and the scrubbing the floors and dusting and all that. My brothers did all the yard work and then they had jobs at, you know, car—car—car shops and stuff where they worked.

TS: Did they have to do the snow shoveling?

PT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That was—everyone did that. Yeah. And we had—actually, what my father did, I don't know how long ago, I was just a kid—I know we used to have nothing but dirt out in our backyard, so he had the entire backyard paved; blacktopped. So number one, you could play on that, number two, you could park cars on that, because after a while—after a few years, there were lots of cars being parked, and they're up and down the street and around the corner.

But the interesting thing is, I grew up on [redacted] Hooker Street. And when I was in—I guess going to college, a big—Wisconsin Rapids is a big paper—paper mill city. So this [Consolidated] Papers developed a new plastics plant at the end of Hooker

Street. It was only our house that faced Hooker Street, and you had the Hooker Street address. There were other houses that faced 11th Avenue, 10th Avenue. But at the opposite end of the street, which was maybe three blocks, four blocks down, they built this big plastics plant. Dura Beauty was the name of their products. Well, they petitioned to have the name of Hooker Street changed to Dura Beauty Lane. So that is actually what—where—my brother now lives in the house we all grew up in. He lives on Dura Beauty Lane. [chuckles]

TS: They didn't want to be—have Hooker [St.] on their address.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: They didn't want to be [on] Hooker Street and, you know, nine girls grew up on that street. [both laugh]

TS: What an address, there we go.

PT: Yeah, that's pretty funny. [redacted] Hooker.

TS: Well, tell me a little bit, then, about school. Did you like school?

PT: I loved school.

TS: Did you?

PT: I loved school. And I don't know if it was just the fact that I loved learning, but, you know, being away and doing something different, and you didn't have to take care of your little brothers and sisters; you could be away. But we did not go to kindergarten. They had kindergarten, that was not mandatory, but there was no way to get to kindergarten; it was too far for you to walk by yourself.

So, three blocks down, then you went to first grade. And I had—matter of fact, my first grade teacher was not a nun, Barbara Ebson, and Barbara Ebson, bless her heart, when my father—when my mother died two years ago and my father died this October, she was at the funeral home there for both—for both of them. She still remembers our family and she just—she was near and dear to my heart, she got me on the right track. And in first grade I won the spelling contest. And the prize for the spelling contest was a little ceramic dog. I brought this dog home and to this day, I have no idea what happened to that dog. I hid it in a desk on the porch, because I knew someone else was going to want [it]—it was the cutest little ceramic dog, that they were going to want that dog. I went back to get the dog and it was gone and I've never found it since.

TS: Oh, no!

PT: And nobody's ever claimed up to taking my ceramic dog; my prize, my prize, my first prize.

TS: Oh no, so you only had it for like a few hours in your possession?

PT: That's right, my prize. But so much was that.

Let's see, in the second grade, I had a nun, and it kind of—she was kind of scary for your first—Sister Octavia. [chuckles] But in third grade, I had Sister Stella. In third grade, you make your first communion. So that was a very special time, but—but a—kind of a very hurtful time, I guess, because in third grade, when you got your—when you made your first communion—well, first of all, I had my own—my first very own dress; my first communion dress; white shoes, white tights, the whole thing.

TS: That was not a hand-me-down?

PT: That was not a hand-me-down; no, my first dress that was ever not a hand-me-down. And let me tell you in a few minutes what happened to that dress. But we were also given these little communion purses, and it had your prayer book in it and your rosary in it. And those purses, in our classroom, were lined up on the bookshelf, and once they were paid for, you could take them home. Well, guess whose purse sat there and sat there—to me, it seemed like a millennium, for ever and ever. I knew that eventually I would get it, but it just embarrassed me more than anything to see—my purse was still sitting there, all the guys' prayer books are gone, the—all the girls' purses, my purse is still there. So finally one day, I just asked Sister Stella if she would please just put it down in the desk until my parents had the money for it. And that just, you know—it embarrassed me—

TS: Right.

PT: —more than anything, and I thought, you know, people—I didn't realize we were poor, growing up, until that—that event, I knew that we were. Eventually, because all my sisters got theirs, so I knew that I would have mine eventually, but it was just seeing it there every day.

TS: Being the last one.

PT: Being the last one. But you know, like I say, I didn't realize that we were poor growing up until you look back at it today.

TS: Right.

PT: We never went without food, we always had hand-me-down clothes. So anyway my communion dress—my first non-hand-me-down dress. When we were in—and you can't see the picture from here; the little picture, right in the center of the wall.

TS: Okay.

PT: That's our first family portrait we ever had. And my mother took—now, I have one sister, Carol, who's retarded; physically and mentally retarded. Carol—my mother always told us that she was our ticket to Heaven. If we're good to Carol, and don't complain about having to take her places, put her in the wheelchair or dress her, change her diapers or feed her, whatever, that, you know, she is our ticket to Heaven, and we will, you know, be there by the grace of God through Carol.

Well, in her next breath, my mother would say to me, "But you, Paula, will ride to hell on your tongue." Now, what kind of a thing is that for a mother to say to her daughter? Obviously, I've never forgotten that thing to this day. I didn't think that I had the potty mouth of the family, because if you dare spoke any bad language, you had your mouth washed out with soap. I mean, that was just the way that it was, you didn't—you didn't sass back or you would be slapped. You know, we were very respectful of our parents. So anyway—but that's something I've never forgotten.

So, we have this family picture taken, and Carol is very tiny, my mother is going to use my communion dress for Carol. Well, that was wonderful, she's an angel, let her wear white. No, she had to dye the thing burnt orange [laughs] and you see this burnt orange dress on Carol. And whatever happened to—I didn't care what happened to it after that.

TS: After that.

PT: "You ruined my dress, whatever you want to do with it, do with it." So, my communion dress became Carol's burnt orange photo dress.

TS: And that's what it is in that photo?

PT: Yeah.

TS: Okay. [background noise] Good save.

PT: Yeah, it was.

TS: Oh, yeah, it sticks right—I can see it.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: That's Carol sitting right there; sticks right out, that burnt orange dress. White would have been just fine for her.

TS: What a beautiful picture, though.

PT: And that was our—

TS: Where are you in this picture, here?

PT: Now—Oh, you can't find me? [chuckles]

TS: Well—

PT: This is me, here, I was in—a sophomore in high school.

TS: Okay.

PT: And as you can see, Bob was the oldest, and then all of us girls, there's Rody, Marcia—where's Marcia—Rody, Marcia, Chris, and then [Marjorie] Jo and Maureen are twins, this is Maureen. Marjorie Jo, and then Paula. So all of us girls, kind of the same age grouping of girls.

TS: Oh, I see.

PT: And then it comes, Bruce—

TS: The younger boys.

PT: Yes. Bruce, and then—but Carol came in between them; there's Carol. Then David, Tim, Terry, Steve—we had another little girl thrown in there, Lois—yeah, that's Lois. Where's Amy? No, this is Lois, Amy, and Jeff.

TS: There you go.

PT: I thought—I know that we're all on there. [both chuckle]

TS: That's true. What a great photo.

PT: And they—John Keel Studio had this picture in their studio for ever and ever and ever, because—

TS: Oh, I bet they did.

PT: Now—

TS: What year was this taken, then?

PT: This was—have to look on the back.

TS: Sixty-something.

PT: I have several pictures—oh, I didn't even—well, let's see. I graduated in '71 from high school—

TS: It's like '68, '69.

PT: —so it's '68, yup. When my parents had their sixtieth wedding anniversary, this other picture was taken by John Keel, the same photography studio, however, there were too many of us to fit into the studio, so that picture was taken in our high—Assumption High School auditorium, in the gym.

TS: I see, yeah.

PT: It's a gym floor.

TS: How interesting.

PT: And we actually had—it said "Assumption" going across the floor in letters, and I had a graphic artist person remove those letters. [laughs]

TS: Now, with—with you having gone to a Catholic school—and so, when you were in—it would have been elementary school when John F. Kennedy was president and then he was assassinated.

PT: Yes, in fact, I was in sixth grade, and I remember a teacher coming in and just announced it to—you know, to the classroom. And everybody was just in tears, and cried and cried and cried, and we got the day off from school to watch the funeral on TV, and of course you prayed, you said a rosary immediately; you know, for him and for the family. Yeah, it was—that and when the Pope died, you know, those were the only two days I remember getting off for school. [laughs]

TS: Yeah.

PT: And any—any extra time, but that—I—and I felt most sorry for Caroline and John-John [John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr.], because those were the images that you see all the time. But the—the pomp and the regalia of the funeral, the solemnity and everything of it, I was very impressed by that, and the horses carriage and everything, that—the whole—the whole ambiance. I think we're drawn to tradition and I'm a traditionalist, and I like that, and I like order and that type of thing, so. But that really did not feed into—I never thought about the army or the military or anything while I was going to school.

TS: Did you have the duck and cover kind of things for the Cold War, you know, with the—like the Cuban Missile Crisis, would have been—

PT: No. No, we didn't have that.

TS: No?

PT: Not—Not that I remember. I know we had—what were they? A siren would sound, and then—actually, then we would take cover, but that was—maybe that was the Cold War. I didn't know whether—but I thought it was something else.

TS: Might have been tornado watches. [chuckles]

PT: Yeah, could have been—no, it wasn't tornado. But something—we'd have to get down under our desks—

TS: Yeah, for the—

PT: —and then when the siren went off—I thought it was just a—

TS: Some kind of drill or something?

PT: Yeah, a drill for something; who knows. You know, you just do things mindlessly; you don't ask questions. "Yes, sister. Yes, sister. No, sister."

TS: So you liked school. Did you have a favorite subject?

PT: I loved—I loved music. [laughs] You know, we had to go to—go to church—every day before class started, you went to church. And all of my sisters, we all sang in the church choir, but the music in elementary school was music on the air. At one o' clock on Wednesdays, they would tune a radio station on that had music on the air, and for half an hour you'd have a music program that you would sing along with, and that was our—our music in there. But I loved math, I liked the sciences. History, I just never could relate to, and I hate that, because I think, you know, had it made more sense to me—I just didn't—you know, I didn't think that these people—George Washington, was real. I thought it was just something like, you know, a novel, a story.

TS: Like a fictional character?

PT: A fictional character. So I never—but I hated reading. And I think—I probably—at that time, probably was dyslexic, and didn't know it. But we used to have to do these silent reading tests; you'd read a couple paragraphs and answer a series of questions. Oh, I would get so sick in there. Sometimes I would just have to leave and, you know, just, "I've got to go to the bathroom," and throw up. This is making me just ill. It made me ill. Because I knew I wasn't a good reader. Instead of working at becoming a better reader, I just tried to avoid it.

TS: Right.

PT: And you know, my mother, bless her heart, she probably didn't know who can read and who can't, here, you know? You just—you go to your sisters or brothers for what you need, and you know, they'll help you with your projects or whatever you have.

So—But Chris was the artist. I did not have artistic ability, and I have more today than what I ever had before, but in different areas. But you know, she could draw beautifully and paint and, you know, she was very creative. I do a lot of handwork now, but I still don't have the creative streak that—that she had.

TS: Well, did you have an idea as a little girl, like, what you thought you might want to be when you grew up

PT: Well, you know, it was very limited during that time. Women became teachers, was pretty much it, you know, or nurses. And I really didn't even think about nursing, because I never had any affiliation with the hospital; nursing. We never went to the doctor; you know, I was never sick. And there was a school nurse, and that—you know, was only there for shots or they would do eye tests and stuff, and I just thought, "That's no fun." I didn't think about that, so, you know, I guess I thought "Yeah, I guess I'll be a teacher." But that—really I didn't want to be a teacher, but I had to do—you know, figure out something. I knew I would marry and have children one day. I thought that that would—you know, I would be a mother, that's what people did; you went to school and you got degrees, then you got married and had children. And then you raised your children, hopefully, to have something more than you did. So.

TS: You had said earlier that you had—you'd known that you wanted to go to college.

PT: Right, I knew I wanted to go to college because I wanted to get away from home. I wasn't going to live home forever and be a slave to the house; that was—that was the ticket there, you know. And my older brothers and sisters set the stage. My older brother went to—went to college, Marcia went to college, Chris—you know, my older brothers and sisters, they went to college. And they loved it. They came home—you know, they—I think they liked the college life. Maybe not so much that.

And of course, my brother Bob, I told you, went to a Catholic seminary. But this is the ticket of this one. My father had gone to a Catholic seminary. He had a year and a half or so to go before he would have been ordained a Catholic priest, that's when he met my mother, at The Preway [Appliance—PT corrected later] shop where they build appliances, refrigerators, and stoves, and she was a secretary there. But he belonged to a bowling league—or my mother did. My mother belonged to a bowling league, and some—somebody couldn't make it, so they invited my dad to fill in. And so, that's how my mom and dad met. And so I thought, here, you know, he had gone to a Catholic seminary and then he meets my mother and then I guess he felt like he had to have his own parish.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: Oh, you talk about one of the fun things we did; we would play church! My oldest brother Bob, of course we played church, and he would be the priest, my—all of us girls would be the choir, my brothers would be the altar boys, and all the little kids would be the congregation, and we'd make hosts out of, you know, bread; you'd stamp out the bread and the grape juice for the wine. And that was always great fun; we always did that on a rainy day.

And we would play store. That was another thing we played. Empty the shelves of anything there was, and some of the things you would open—we loved malted milk powder. Oh my gosh, and you open one of those things and we'd just eat that powder until it was gone. Stick to your teeth and your mouth and everything. That was the best, that powder.

TS: So, that's what you did, a lot of—within the family, just entertaining yourself and keeping yourself—

PT: Right, yeah. And then we had friends that owned a farm, the Ruckinskis, Bertha and Don. And their farm was, what, three miles out of town. And they—Every year that I can remember, they gave my parents land to garden. So, we would go out there every summer to plant the garden, to weed the garden, to harvest the garden.

Bertha Rucinsnki—I must have been, oh, maybe third or fourth grade, and she had a stroke, and she was confined to a wheelchair. I mean, for years—I mean, she lived twenty, thirty years in the wheelchair. But I was amazed at what she could do in her wheelchair, and she canned everything and you know, she had young strapping sons, and one daughter, Marie, who, you know, worked the farm for her and her husband.

But I loved Bertha, and they had a raspberry patch, and I loved raspberries, and we would go and every time we went up to garden, we'd go steal a few raspberries, and of course she knew we were doing that and she'd—"Go ahead." And they had a swimming pit; a pit down from the farm that we'd go and swim; after we were done working, you could go and swim in this pit. That was kind of scary, because you don't know what's in the pit, but everybody else did, so you did too. And occasionally she'd let—they would—we would ride horses, [and] we'd go up in the hay mounds. So that was a lot of fun, they were very good to us.

But in gardening, we would go [every day to the farm—PT corrected later]. Well, then they would slaughter a cow in the fall, and we would get the meat from that; my parents would buy that. And in the spring, we had friends that owned property in Rudolph, home of the [Rudolph] Grotto chuckles], and there's also the cheese factory there. And we would raise, like, a hundred chickens, and then we had the biggest picnic table because my parents—my father and some friends built this outdoor picnic table for us. And so we slaughtered all the chickens there, and everybody had their job. Of course, my dad would chop off the heads, and then somebody else would—they had a de-feathering machine, and pass it on down. I got the job of de-gutting, you know, and pass it on down. So that was, you know, just an event.

The funniest thing in the summertime, that I still—we look back and laugh our heads off now, but it wasn't funny in the summer, because we had to do it, but all of the winter hats and boots and mittens, and what—everything, my mother would wash those,

and we had to hang all that winter stuff out on the clotheslines. And I'm sure people thought "What the heck is wrong with Mrs. Jackan? She's got her winter crap out on the lines." But we hung all that stuff up to wash it and dry it, get it ready for the next season. So that's what we did, and you know, we laugh at it now, thinking people must have thought we were crazy.

As well as, in the wintertime, before you could go to school, you better get all the laundry hung out, whether you hung it in the basement—it was a very small little basement; washer—you know, wringer washer machine. We had a dryer, but you didn't use that dryer, only in an emergency use that dryer, because that cost money to run that dryer. So we would hang everything out, outside, and come back from school, take it all down, and iron inside. In the summertime, you want to get your tan, we'd take the ironing boards outside and [chuckling] plug the iron into the garage—we had a chicken coop—or not a chicken coop, a rabbit hutch, attached to the garage. And we would get up on top of that rabbit hutch and do our ironing up there on the rabbit hutch, but it was hotter up there.

TS: In the sun.

PT: In the sun, so you'd get your tan. So yeah, those were fun things. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, tell me a little bit, then, about high school, and where you got to thinking about what you were going to do, you know, after high school.

PT: Okay. High school—it was Assumption High School. My—All of my older siblings except Bob, who went to the seminary right out of eighth grade, had gone to Assumption High School. So the Jackan name was a very well-known name at Assumption High School. And we wore uniforms, which I was very proud to be able to wear a uniform. We walked to school. A few exceptional days, my father would drop us off on his way to work, those of us that were going, but otherwise we walked there. And I loved high school. We had nuns and priests that ran the high school, and I had friends then, and you know, we all had jobs then. And my friends from—from our elementary school, we walked across the street—or across the bridge—the river to the rich side of town, is where the high school was. We lived on the poor side of the tracks, and the river. And so we would—but it was adjoining of our school, St. Laurence School was where I went, St. Peter and Paul was across the river with St. Vincent's; those were the wealthier parishes in our town. Then St. Mary's and St. Laurence were the ones on the other side. But I had—I had a lot of friends; at least I felt like I had, you know, friends in high school. And I even had—they surprised me with a surprise birthday party, and that was the neatest thing for me. And we had sleepovers and—

TS: Were those presents wrapped, in that?

PT: Oh, yes, those presents were wrapped!

TS: Okay, just checking.

PT: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Martha Hipskin would have my party for me. But I'm getting ready now where I'm going to have my fortieth high school reunion, so I've been getting a lot of Facebook, and you know, chatter over this fortieth reunion. I'm looking forward to going. I'm taking my husband with me, but he won't have to participate in all the things, because he did not grow up with this group of people.

TS: Right.

PT: And so he won't. But some of those same people, you know—I was never a cheerleader. PE—I went to PE; I always felt—considered myself kind of klutzy in that department. I just wasn't real athletic, because we didn't have time to participate in any sports. My one regret is I was never a Girl Scout. My mother said she'd teach us everything we need to know about Girl Scouting. Well, you know, folding diapers and washing and cleaning, there's more to Girl Scouts than that, I know there is. [both chuckle] So that was my—you know, my regret; I wished—but we had to come home after school and, you know, take care of the kids and do the house chores until we got our own jobs, and then we went to work those jobs after school. So I, you know, never really participated in a lot of athletics. A lot of music, and I received some—even awards with my music, and when I graduated, I actually received the bishop's medal for being, I guess, the most Christian-like of them or whatever. But that was a great honor; I felt, you know, very proud, and had to give a speech. That was a nerve-wracking thing, because at that point, I was not—I didn't consider myself a good public speaker, either.

TS: How many were in your high school?

PT: We—In our graduating class, we had maybe a hundred. So it's, like, three, four hundred people; four hundred. I think there's more now. Now they don't call it Assumption High School anymore, they call it—Area something.

But what I want to tell you, though—I'm going to get this out because my father, upon my mother's death—you know, we grew up in a very poor, poor family, but upon my mother's death—and it is now the WRACS, Wisconsin Rapids Area Catholic Schools, it's all combined. But my father gave this gift to our high school, and we all gasped.

TS: Oh. Why don't you read what that says so—for the tape.

PT: This says "Wisconsin Rapids Area" —this is March 28, 2009, and it says "Jackan family gives fifty thousand dollar gift." Where [a] fifty thousand dollar gift came from—you know, I guess growing up they didn't have that money, but apparently over the years, my father apparently made some good investments and—and I thought, "Whoa!" But the—

TS: So everybody in your—all your siblings were kind of surprised that he left this gift?

PT: Oh, yes. But I'll tell you another reason—here, and there's a picture of my mom and dad. "Scholarship, attribute to wife in appreciation of Assumption." And he established this as a memorial fund for my mom when she died. Well, one thing I didn't tell you, growing up when we had all these jobs, ten percent of every penny we made—of every dollar we made—ten percent of every dollar we made—went into "The Fund." None of us had any idea what "The Fund" was. It started off as what my dad said was my mother's sugar fund, when the price of sugar skyrocketed, that in order for her to buy sugar, we're going to contribute to this fund. So when you think about ten percent of Bob, Rody, Marcia, Allan, Chris, Joan, Maureen[?], Paula, probably down to Bruce and David.

TS: So ten.

PT: Ten people, working jobs, ten percent of every dollar going into that fund from the time I was babysitting in fourth grade until I went to college, that's lots of years of ten percent accumulating, so you know, somewhere along the line—but I never knew that we had a penny to spare anywhere. [chuckles] At least, growing up, we didn't. But—But that was certainly a tribute for my dad, to my mom, so.

TS: Well, terrific.

PT: So that was one thing there, too.

TS: That's really terrific.

PT: When my parents had their sixtieth wedding anniversary, we had a big anniversary party for them, with invitations and everything, so that was a neat thing.

TS: Well, tell me how—when you decided what you were going to do for college.

PT: For college. Well, I knew that, as I told you before, they—my parents didn't have money for high school, for uniforms, for books, or tuition. And so if I went to college, it was going to be on my own dime. I knew that I was smart enough to apply for financial aid, and I would get scholarships. As a matter of fact, I had a laundry list of scholarships that I did receive upon graduation, they were listed. But then, ah-hah, I came upon—there was a girl that graduated, let's see, about four years before I—five years before I did, she was in my brother Allan's class, and she was on the very same scholarship that I ended up getting. It was a four-year nursing scholarship, offered by the army, and it was called the WRAIN program; Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing Program. And—I can't think of her name offhand here right now, but she had gotten the scholarship, and I thought, "Boy, that's something to get. I wonder if that scholarship is still available?".

So I did some, you know, looking around and searching. I think I'd even called her and—to find out, you know, what was I getting into. And she said it certainly was worthwhile. So I decided to apply for that. I had no idea if I wanted to be a nurse, nor if I wanted to be in the army. This is back in the '70s, when being in the army wasn't a great thing for women, but oh, for the price of an education. And I just thought, "Hey, if I can

get this scholarship and I get a degree, if I want to change my mind and do something else later, that's great, but at least I will have a degree in something; I will have some letters behind my name."

So I applied for the scholarship, and in typical—as I look back at it now, typical military tradition, I thought months and months and months went by, and I heard nothing. Then all of a sudden, an envelope comes in the mail, and I'm told that I have been—am being offered this fully funded scholarship; "Do you want the scholarship? We need to know within five working days."

So I thought, "Well, I'm a gambling girl. I guess, okay, yeah, I'll apply for it and go for it and do it. It's, you know, someone's paying for my school." So I applied for the scholarship—or, I accepted the scholarship, and that was a turning point in my entire life. Number one, I thought, "I'm smart enough to get a four-year nursing scholarship," so you know—I never—I knew I was smart, but you know, I just thought I really have to work hard at things. And I still do, to this day, you know. I have a memory, but it's not as long as others, but I'm resourceful and know where I can go and get what I need.

TS: Was it kind of like you felt a little bit lost within the crowd of your family, as far as that goes?

PT: Well, that—I think—in time, I think I became the "rich" sister, because all of my other siblings worked their way through school, and I didn't have to work through school, I was being paid to go to school, because I actually received three hundred dollars a month, you know, for whatever. My books were paid for, so it was like spending money for me. So I had sent a portion of that money home, which—I wanted it to go to my brothers and sisters for their lunches or whatever. And so every month, I sent half my paycheck home. Well, I'm sure that none of my siblings ever knew that that money had gone home; I'm sure it went into "The Fund."

TS: Right.

PT: And—But when I married, and the first month the check didn't come, I got a phone call, "Where's the check?"

And this was right after I'd gotten married, and you know, I explained to my dad that, you know, we have financial responsibilities now, and you know, Bill is not sending money home to his family, and you know, da-da-da. So I think that caused a lot of hard feelings on his part, for a long time, you know. So then I felt like I was a dollar sign. So that—that's a period where, you know, I tend to want to—work your way through the past, and just focus on the future, and let that part go.

But anyway, so back to high school. When I got the scholarship, I was very proud of the fact that I had the scholarship. I had no idea what I was getting into, other than that I knew that after two years, I could go wherever I wanted the first two years, and so really I was just being paid to go to school and be a normal college—

TS: Go to anywhere you wanted for school?

PT: Anywhere I wanted, for college. So I went to Viterbo, it's V-I-T-E-R-B-O College, in La Crosse, Wisconsin. I had already applied for that school. They were initially a all-girl's school; it became co-ed a couple years before I went there. But it was a small college, and I thought I would do better in a smaller environment. So I went to that college, and I knew after two years, that I would then go out to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C. That was the scary part for me. Get on a plane and go, I had—the only time I had ever been on an airplane before was to fly from Wisconsin Rapids to Milwaukee for my physical for the army, and my swearing-in ceremony. Other than that, I had never been on a plane. And then, what do I do when I get there? You're all by yourself, you don't know a soul. So that was a real growth time for me. Of course, the one thing my parents always taught me, when you see someone, especially in a small hometown, you say hello; you know, "How do you do, Mrs. So-and-so?" whatever. In Washington D.C., I learned very quickly you don't do that. And then I felt—I felt very stand-offish, I guess, because you're used to being friendly to people, but you know, if you say hello to any Joe Blow on the street, they, you know, think you're looking to get picked up, [chuckles] and I said that's not quite what I'm here for, and so I just—I became—kind of withdrew a lot, and I could see myself becoming more of an introvert than an extrovert, at that time.

But once I got to Walter Reed—and you know, just the prestige of being at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, that was enough—I had—the greatest thing, I had my own private room. I shared a bathroom with a suitemate, and I'd never had a room to myself, I never had a drawer to myself. Growing up at home, we had a chest of drawers, the top drawer was bras, the second drawer was socks, the third drawer was underwear, you wore whatever was there that fit you. So some days, you go to school really endowed, other days you're like Twiggy. [both chuckle] And sometimes your shoes were big, sometimes your shoes were squeezed in, so you just, you know, did whatever. This—Now I had my own dresser, my own desk, my own bed. So that was—you know, I thought, like, "I'm in high cotton now."

But I worked very hard. Number one, I did not want to lose the scholarship, because I knew that, you know, I had too much riding on it. And so I was a very—I was always a very serious student; I took studying very seriously. And I thought, you know, "I don't know if nursing's for me—if I want to be a nurse—but I'm going to be a nurse when I finish this after four years," because I just told myself, "I will graduate, and I'll do well."

Well, the more I got into nursing, the more I thought "Hey, this is really kind of interesting," taking anatomy and physiology and all the, you know, courses that I had never taken before. I said "This is really a lot of interest," that I had in this. So I decided this nursing thing might work after all, for me. And I owed the army only three years payback from the four years of school, which is a very lucrative program. My husband and son went to West Point, they get four years funded—fully funded—but they owe five years payback. And then I came out as a first lieutenant, they graduated from West Point and were second lieutenants, so I thought, "This is—This is a good deal." [both chuckle] So—

TS: What did your family think about this decision you made?

PT: Well, I think my parents were glad, you know, I had—financially, it's a good thing. I think that they were leery for me, not knowing—because I didn't know what I was getting into. And my sisters, you know, we just really never talked about it, and you know, I don't know if they were proud of me or not, but I think there was more jealousy, maybe, or envy, because I wasn't have to—going to have to work through school. But when I look back at it now, I would have traded them[?] over and over, because, you know, it was a gut-wrenching thing for me. I really worked hard and I studied hard, but I missed a lot by being gone from home, you know, and that—I realized I missed my family, I missed my sister having their first baby, and you know, I missed all the things that I just couldn't rush home on the weekend for; I was in Washington D.C. and they're all back in Wisconsin.

TS: It's not a day trip.

PT: It was not a day trip. But then, you know, I had others—my brother Bob was in the army, and they were proud of him, and my brother commissioned me in the military. When my parents came up for the commissioning, I knew they were very proud. And they were there in the Rose Garden right across from Walter Reed, and I think it was a very, very proud time for them. Of course, then when I got my job—the job—the position at the White House, then, oh my goodness, you know. [laughs] Then I might as well be the President of the United States of America myself, you know; they were very proud.

TS: That's right.

PT: And—But to the point where, when I was promoted to lieutenant colonel, I invited my parents to come out for that, and I told them that it would be—it would not—I said, "The president will not be promoting me, he does not do that. He does not promote anyone because that's what he would spend his entire job doing," is promoting people. But I said, "I will be promoted on the grounds of the White House." It was in the Old Executive Office Building [now referred to as the Eisenhower Executive Office Building], and I said—and you know, "I'm sure that, you know, I can get you a tour." But they were only going to come if they were going to get to meet the president, and I said, "Sorry."

And then, once again, I felt like, you know, I'm a—I'm not their daughter, they weren't coming for me. They were coming because of the position that I had, or maybe they'd get to see the president. As it turned out, President [George Herbert Walker] Bush Sr. knew that my parents were there and he invited them to come to the Oval Office for a tour. And I've got lots of pictures of all that time.

TS: So, they did come?

PT: So they did come, yeah, and they were there. And I think they were very proud, so. All in all, I think they were proud of me, you know, and my accomplishments, and they could—they could talk about their family in a positive light. You know, and long story short, none of us were ever in jail, nobody's ever been strung out on drugs, we're

all—had good productive lives, we all, you know, made something of ourselves. And so, for that alone, they should be very pleased. But I think it was really out of fear that you disbehave—that you misbehaved, growing up, that you just didn't do that.

TS: Right.

PT: So you had the fear of God in you. "You better shape up or ship out," is one of my dad's favorite expressions. [chuckles] Okay.

TS: Well, did you—I was thinking about when you were saying that you pretty much had your nose to the grindstone.

PT: Right, yes, I did.

TS: But you're growing up in a time when there's, like, a lot going on, in the late '60s, early '70s—

PT: Yeah.

TS: —with the counterculture, Vietnam War—

PT: Right. Yeah.

TS: And you know, what—how—what were your thoughts at that time, you know?

PT: Okay. At that—now, I had a brother—my oldest brother Bob—he graduated, did not continue studies at the seminary. And he went to Vietnam. I was in college—my first year of college then. And that was a scary time for me; I thought, "What am I getting into? Am I going to have to go and fight a war?" Prior to that, I think growing up at home, we were so sheltered. You know, we didn't have the TV on, we didn't have the radio on, there was a newspaper, but Dad read the paper after dinner, and so it's like, you know, you weren't into reading the newspaper. So really, current events bypassed me. It's incredible, I love reading back now to see what was happening when I was growing up. I had no idea, because you didn't look further than your back yard or, you know, your own hometown; who you babysat for or whatever. There just was no discussion at the table of current events or what was going on then. So it wasn't until I went to college, and then it was a rude awakening. And I remember going on a tour of the Arlington Cemetery when President [Gerald Rudolph "Jerry", Jr.] Ford's motorcade came by. And that was the first thing that—"Oh! My gosh, I'm right here where all this is happening." And you know, being that—so close to Washington D.C. and living in that area, that's really when I became more historical. I wanted to go back and see these places and, you know, Civil War places and World War I and II and go overseas and, you know, I had much more interest in that. I realized these were real things happening in my country. [chuckles] And so—I mean, I have to claim ignorance. I mean, it's just I was a dumb kid growing up. I mean—

TS: Did you—Were—Well, but during the ‘60s—the late ‘60s when you were—you would have been in high school, I think.

PT: Right.

TS: We had—There were some, you know, the—

PT: Martin Luther King [Jr.] assassination, remembered that.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Martin Luther King, Robert F. Kennedy—

PT: Right, Kennedy and those things. And those I remember, and you know, but it wasn’t anything that said, “Oh, I want to go fight for my country,” or, you know—it was just, “How bad is that, to have—to have that happen,” or “What’s happening to our country?” It was more—you know, because I never feared for my life or my country, or you know—I felt—I always felt very safe, and all of a sudden that safety and security is blown away. And I remember, I would tell people, you know, when I had the position at the White House, if I was standing in the Rose Garden, and I just—you know, I couldn’t have been more proud to be there, until then you look up at the rooftops, and you see Secret Service agents with Uzis. And you think, “Oh my God. But if somebody can take out the president, they can take me out.” And so, then it became, you know, “What—what is this country? Why do we have to have all these extra security measures?” But I felt very vulnerable, then, at that point, as well.

TS: Did you then—and did you have anything about, like—well, I guess, like, did you have any heroes at that time, growing up?

PT: You know, I really didn’t. [chuckles] I think, you know, the Pope was your hero, the nuns were your heroes, the priests were your heroes, and you know, it was—religious icons were your heroes, and that was the culture that you grew up in. It was much more of a Catholic culture and not politicians.

TS: But did you have any—were you aware at all of the Civil Rights movement that was happening?

PT: You know, not until the assassination of Martin Luther King. And I remem—I was babysitting neighbors at the time that happened, and I just thought “Oh my gosh.” You know, it was just more fearful; I better go lock the doors, and you know, you didn’t want to go outside, and you realize, “What’s—” you know, “What is this coming to?”

But growing up in Wisconsin, not too many blacks. I mean, it was a rare time you'd ever see—Milwaukee certainly had more, but in my hometown, Wisconsin Rapids, I mean, a black person would be a sheer oddity. I mean, it was pretty much pure—pure white in growing up. And so, I never considered myself to be biased or—what's the word, prejudiced against the blacks, because I'm not, but I never grew up with them, never had to live with them, and you know, it was, you know, just—

TS: In nursing school, did you run across anybody?

PT: Yes; off the record.

TS: Okay. [chuckles]

PT: [chuckles] Off the record.

TS: Well, here, I'll turn that off for a second.

[Recording Paused]

TS: What he told me about it, so—okay. Okay, so you're in a new culture in Washington D.C.

PT: Right.

TS: And you're—you're new to the army, too. Now, did you—as a—as a—in the training program, for college, did you have to do any army things?

PT: We had to do nothing army. [both chuckle] I felt like I was just going to nursing school the first two years, in La Crosse—at Viterbo College, in La Crosse, I was just going, doing my—I was a nursing student, as far as I felt. Now, upon arrival at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, that changed everything, but not so much. We did wear uniforms to class, we lived in Delano Hall, and all of our instructors were military instructors that matriculated from the University of Maryland. So, they all wore uniforms, we wore uniforms. We would have [extraneous comment about cat redacted]—we would have instructors, we would do—have a field day where we would go to the field and fire our weapons, set up tents, and that type of thing.

TS: Oh, that's a little army.

PT: So that was a little bit army. But compared to the real army, and going, you know, to war or a simulated war, it was not so much. Medic—Nursing corps and medical corps are not your visual army people. Now, that certainly has changed today, with all of the wars, but—and certainly with Vietnam, but going through school, I never felt like I was in the

army, except when my paycheck came and I had a paycheck; "Thank you, Mr. Army." [chuckles]

TS: So did you ever have, like, a basic training?

PT: We did have basic training. Once we graduated from school, when we were commissioned first lieutenants, and we went for six weeks, I believe. I went to San Antonio, to the basic training program there, before I was stationed at Brooke Army Medical Center. And once again, though, that was more—more classes, more theory and concepts, and we did a few military things, but it's not like we went out for six weeks to the woods and played guns and that type of a thing. Matter of fact, it was very rare—you know, we would have to fire weapons, but just for training purposes, and then I never touched another one until I had to go and do it again.

TS: So was the—

PT: But we did have physical—you know, PT tests; every quarter, PT tests. And my goal was to max my PT test, and I maxed every single PT test I ever took. Now, when I was pregnant with our sons I didn't have to take the test, but I did max every one, so I told my sons, this is a standard I want you to—[laughs] to achieve.

TS: Max out.

PT: If your mother could max a PT test, you all will too. [laughing] So.

TS: Well, had your father been in the military?

PT: My father was not in the military. He would have loved to have been in the military, and that would have been a great deal for our family. We would have had a much larger quarters to live in—house to live in than what we had, you know, and I think the whole perspective of growing up would have been totally different. My father had polio as a child, and he had one leg shorter than the other leg, and so he never qualified, and he was deaf in his left ear, so he never qualified for the military. But he—he worshipped the military, and he was very proud of all of us, in our family, that served the military, and many of us did, as a means of education. Two of my brothers went to West Point, and my oldest brother, Bob, was an—I think he was on an ROTC scholarship—no, it wasn't ROTC, he was on a—some kind of officer program; scholarship program. And—but we all really made something of our lives, those of us that—military, you know, was a good match for many of us. Some stayed in not as long as others. I had—

TS: Did any of your sisters?

PT: My sister Rody was in the air force. She retired from the air force and she is down in Florida doing pretty much the same job she was doing in the military; is what she's doing now. And then, that's—I'm the only girl, other than Rody, but many of my sisters

married military. Matter of fact, if I can run down the list, Bob is retired army, Rody's retired air force, Marcia's married to retired air force, Allan spent a few years in the army, I think he served maybe three years and—no, he was air force, at MacDill Air Force Base, and then he was in Panama; my parents visited him in Panama. That's Allan, Chris, no military connection whatsoever, so she's one of the rare ones. Marjorie is married to retired military, Maureen, no military connection, so that's two no military. Then I was military, retired; Bruce, army retired; and then after that, no military. [laughter] All the younger ones didn't go. Younger ones did not go and serve. So the older generation, myself and above, went—younger brother, myself, that did.

TS: And the younger ones are mostly the boys, right?

PT: Right, yeah.

TS: Interesting.

PT: Oh, wait, Steve, sorry! My brother Steve—after David, the twins, Tim and Terry, no military, then Steve, graduated from West Point, actually. Sorry, Steve.

TS: Oh, yeah, don't want to skip him.

PT: I—I always looked up to you, I think[?] you're my older brother. [both laugh]

TS: There you go. Well, when you were in—so you're—when you're in your final years of college—

PT: Okay.

TS: —and—also, what kinds of things did you do on your off time, in that—had you been away from home before, ever?

PT: No, not—well, just the two years when I was in La Crosse, two hours away, only, but I had never been away. What I did in my off time was I traveled. We would take—you know, we had groups of friends that there was—what was it—the Citadel wasn't too far away, and several of the girls had boyfriends at the Citadel. So we would go on, you know, dates and hikes and picnics and stuff with them at the Citadel.

But on weekends, we would travel, you know, into town and go through all the museums. I mean, that was just a gold mine for me; get on a bus and go down to the Smithsonian, and the [United States] Capitol, and you know, every—just—historically, just a gold mine. And that's when I started getting more interested in history, realizing this is where all this took place and ever—this was real, and the presidents in the White House and everything.

So—Let's see, we took—oh, I remember going—we did a camping—winter camping trip out—up in the Shenandoah mountains and so—just took advantage. Didn't do any—I didn't do any foreign travel, but on spring break, several of the nurses would

go, you know, overseas on some foreign travel. I did come home so my parents could go down to Panama to visit with my brother. So I, you know, would fly home so they could have the opportunity to do that. But I didn't feel a need to have to go overseas at that time. There's so much in America that I'd never seen that I was content to—to do that.

TS: Were you homesick at all?

PT: You know, I can't say I was. I was—yeah, I missed everybody, I missed not being there for the babies and births and stuff, but you know, I thought, "I've got so much to do," and you just keep yourself busy and occupied. But I would write my parents and I would, you know, get letters from them and—or from my mom, my dad was never a writer. And my sisters were all in college, and you know, I just looked at it as—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Everyone started doing their own thing.

PT: Yeah, you're doing your own thing, and so I thought, you know, I kept plenty busy and I dated, you know, quite a bit then, and matter of fact, that got discouraging, because, you know, one time—I would go out probably with anybody on a first date. And nine out of ten times, I never wanted to date them a second time. I thought, "What is this, what are these shmucks?" [both laugh] My first date with my husband, I knew I would marry that man. I didn't know when, but I thought "This is the man I've been looking for all—through all these other toads I had to kiss to get to the one handsome prince."

TS: What was different about him?

PT: He was interested in me. He wasn't interested in getting me to bed. And nine out of ten guys, to me, that's all that they wanted, and I just wasn't into—into that at the time. But really, you could talk to Bill, and he was just so interested in you, and I thought, "Here's somebody that's not blowing their own horn," you know, and—I mean, he would rarely ever talk about himself, and just a real gentleman, and—you know, one that opens the door for you, and he still does to this day. And a matter of fact, every day I will wake up, there'll be a note on the kitchen table, because—if he's gone off to work already, he'll have left me a little love note, and I come home and there's a love note I mean, he's just the—they broke the mold after him; he's the nicest man.

TS: Aww. Well, then, did you—when did you meet him? I know you told me earlier.

PT: At my first assignment in San Antonio, Texas, in 1976.

TS: Nineteen seventy-six.

PT: So, I—I was in—'75 to '78, in San Antonio, Texas.

TS: That's right.

PT: And we had—I was in basic training down there, and all of my—you know, our whole class was in basic training, and two of my friends who were later stationed at Fort Polk, Louisiana, came up to visit me, and they said they wanted to look up this guy, Bill Trivette, that they had met at basic training. And I still can't figure out why I never met him at basic training, but I said, you know, "That's fine." At this time, I'm taking a sabbatical from men, I'd had it with the dating game, I just—you know, "Let me go do my thing here by myself; don't need this aggravation in my life."

And so they came, and we decided we'd go to church on Sunday and then out to brunch. My roommate, Julianna, pretty much monopolized the conversation while we were out at—at brunch, so I never really got to talk to him much, but I'm taking a sabbatical from men. Well, then, three days later, I get a phone call at work.

"I don't know if you remember me, but I'm Bill Trivette."

"Oh, yes, I remember you. [unclear]" —all excited, "Yeah, I remember you!"

So he invites me out for a date on April 15, which turned out to be his birthday, and I remember that's income tax day, April 15. We went to My Place restaurant. And I knew, at that table, that this was the man that I would marry; by the time the evening was over, that's the man I would marry. He asked me to marry him two [weeks —PT corrected later] later. [chuckles] We married six months after that. Had two weeks—no, it wasn't two months; two weeks later, he asked me to marry him.

TS: Two weeks after the date?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Two weeks after we first met, after our first date., in the library. We married six months later, and then you try to tell your children, "Do not do what your parents did."

TS: "Don't do what we did."

PT: Yes, exactly. But you know, I told my older son, Evan, I said "The difference between me and you is that I had dated a million men. You have not dated but a handful of girls. There's no rush." But he married the girl that he was telling me about, and they—she is perfect for him. [both chuckle] So I've been so wrong in his adult life, to his—to his benefit.

TS: Well now, tell me when you—okay, so you—you've got this scholarship for the Army Nursing Corps.

PT: Got the scholarship, yes.

TS: You knew that you had a three-year—two—a three year commitment.

PT: I owed them a three-year commitment.

TS: And so, did you think, "Okay, I'll do that, see what it's like, and then—"

PT: Yeah, you know, if it worked, then I would stay in longer. And so my first assignment was in San Antonio. Bill was in the military, he was going to law school at the time, but he had—he was on what was called excess leave program, where they gave him time to go to school, but he had to pay his own tuition. So he found a nurse to pay his tuition for him. He's still paying me back today from that. [laughter]

But—so then, you know, the deal that we struck up—once we married and we're in the military, the deal was that I would stay in the military as long as I was enjoying it, and I did; I loved it then; I thought "This is the perfect match for me." It just felt like I belonged to some—to something, somebody. And I thought "I will stay in as long as it doesn't interfere with our married life." That was not even a consideration until our children were born. And then I thought "If this is going to be something that's going to divide—I'm going to be stationed here, you're going to be stationed there—then it's time to get out. I want our family to be raised together."

And so, pretty much—you know, we had a good combination; he was army JAG [Judge Advocate General's Corps] and I was a nurse, so every post, while you're young, needs a lawyer and a nurse, so we could—we requested assignments that we knew would be feasible for us, and something for Bill to progress in. And me too, but pretty much in—in the nurse corps, you can do it wherever you are. There's certain courses that you need to attend, and I did one by correspondence; the advanced course I did by correspondence. And then, you know, as you go further up, then it's, you know, shorter courses, and you couldn't[?] get away with that. But, you know, if he's being stationed in Germany and I'm going to be in the States, well, that just isn't going to work. And so, the deal[?] [unclear] then I would get out. Twenty-three years, it worked.

TS: Yeah, it worked. So, you got married at your first duty station?

PT: San Antonio.

TS: Tell me how you ended up at that duty station. Did you apply for it?

PT: Yes.

TS: Okay.

PT: When we're in school, you can—you fill out what's called a dream sheet, and you list three places that you would—no, five places you can list, and they tell you the top three are what they'll look at. But they tell you, the place you really want to go, to make as your third choice. [laughs] But you know, at this point, I hadn't met Bill. I didn't—you

know, I didn't know—I wanted to go any—you know, where I wanted to go, so I just thought, "Oh, let me try a major medical center." I like the warmth, I like San Antonio, that just sounded good to me; San Antonio, Texas, I requested. I did some place in each of the coasts, I did one place Midwest, and it really did not matter to me where my first assignment was. You knew when talking to people, "Oh, yeah, this is a good place to go, that's not a—you don't want to go to Fort Polk, Louisiana," you know. But that's actually a nice place, if you're a real family person, outdoorsy; people loved it there. And I never was stationed there, but the—that's the rumor mill, was that that's not a bad place to be.

So it really didn't matter to me, you know, where I went, so I—on my dream sheet, I think—I don't know what order I had it, but San Antonio, Texas, was one of my choices, and I received one of my choices, so I was very excited. My friend Margaret Proventure, at that time—or Margaret Dapra, was there at the time, and she was going with me, and Patty Dollar—Patty Dover was her maiden name through school, she was going there. She had gotten married right after college, so she was Patty Dollar. So the three of us were there; "This'll be a lot of fun." And the three of us all lived in the same apartment complex, and Patty was married.

TS: You didn't have to—you didn't live on base at all?

PT: No. They really didn't have base housing for—well, they had some officer—visiting officer quarters, but not—so, I had an apartment, and you received BOQ, it's base officer quarters—monetary allowance, since you couldn't live on post, so that you could pay for your apartment off post. And so, that was fine by me. But my husband was actually—he was living in a dorm on post, because he was—why was he? Because he was in school, I guess the deal was. But he chose to do that, and I thought—Julianna, who was one of my classmates from nursing school, had asked me to room with her, so we shared an apartment then. And Werner was her last—Werner, W-E-R-N-E-R, was her maiden name.

TS: So you never had to live in any kind of barracks?

PT: You know, I never did.

TS: Or even dorms, then, really.

PT: No.

TS: Because you said you had your own room.

PT: I had my own—well, the nursing quarters at Walter Reed, that was considered dorm living; Delano Hall was a nursing dorm for the nurses.

TS: But you had, like, a suite, right?

PT: Right, had a suite, so—I mean, I never—yeah, I never had the barracks thing where you have one bathroom that you share with—you know, like at Romansky's Bar; ten rooms, one bathroom.

TS: Now, what about the food? Did you have—did you eat on the base or—

PT: We ate in the hospital. We ate hospital food, so we would go from our dormitory, just walk up the street to the hospital, which was just a little—a beautiful jaunt in the—in the spring, with everything in bloom. That's the most glorious place to be in the springtime, Washington D.C.; all the azaleas and everything in bloom; just beautiful. So it was a—just a nice pleasant five-minute walk up to the hospital, you ate in the hospital mess.

And that was when—I actually became anorexic in college, before I got to Walter Reed, it was. But I went—when all my sisters went to school, they all gained weight. I thought, "I don't need to gain weight when I go to school," so I just thought, "Okay, I'm just going to cut out junk food." So I quit eating junk food and then, before you know it, you're just losing weight and losing weight. I weighed ninety-five pounds at the end of my second year of college, and—but so when I went to Walter Reed, you know, they thought I was anorexic, and I had—I was actually wearing a brace when I got there. Actually, Patty tells me that she thought that I had leukemia, and I had some bone cancer or something, because I had this brace on. Working out at the garden, my parents had gone on this trip to Panama.

TS: Right.

PT: And I told them I'd take care of the garden while they were gone. The week went by and they were getting ready to come home, and I hadn't been out to the garden, so.

TS: Oh, no.

PT: I ride my bike out there, and I'm just on my knees the whole time, kind of squatted down, and it wasn't until five o' clock in the evening, I get up to ride my bike home, that I'm realizing I keep picking up this leg, and this leg just was like it had fallen asleep, and I thought, "Oh, come on." And that leg just wouldn't get any better, and it kept falling asleep. I had to keep picking up my leg. I went out to Walter Reed—I had gone to the doctor's at home, and they said, you know, "I think you've compressed a peroneal nerve in—" in my leg, so I'm wearing this special orthopedic shoe and—and brace, you know, and they said hopefully, you know, it would regenerate itself, because it wasn't complete—it would have been a matter of time. Had I worked an extra hour, I'd probably be limping to this day.

TS: Oh, is that right?

PT: Yeah. So when I got out there, you know, she saw this skinny little rail[?] person wearing a brace and it's funny how you come across to people. And we were like night and day apart from each other. It truly was a case of opposites attract, because Patty was very laid

back, very Southern, she had Dr. Pepper for breakfast, she was a junk food junkie. Here, I'm as type A as they come; I'm up and moving and on the ball; I wouldn't think of having a soda, and don't eat candy bars; not with—for meals, anyway. And she loves soap operas; I never waste my time on soap operas. And we're still great friends to this day.

TS: Oh, that's terrific.

PT: Yeah.

TS: Well, what kind of nursing did you do when you got to your first assignment?

PT: Okay. I tell people that when I arrived in San Antonio, Texas, I was assigned to the surgical intensive care unit; right off the bat; I'd never even worked as a basic nurse. So, I'm in surgical ICU and I fell in love with intensive care nursing, and at the same time, I intensely fell in love with a guy by the name of Bill Trivette. [laughs] So—But surgical ICU, I just loved it; I thought "Oh, this is wonderful." Now, I never realized—I mean, it was such a totally different world for me, and I think I'm kind of slow in putting the pieces of the puzzle together and figuring out how all this works and who the players are and whatnot, so I think it took me longer. My first efficiency report, I should have taken more personally, but it was not a good one, and I just thought, "Oh, I guess I need to do better, and what do I need to do better at?"

Well, when it came time to get promoted, you look back, and they said, "This can be a disqualifying thing for your promotion, because you didn't do so hot."

I said, "That's my very first officer—my very first OER [officer evaluation report]." And I didn't take it—I mean, I took it to heart, but I wasn't offended by it or anything. Obviously, I need to, you know—

TS: Where was that one at?

PT: In San Antonio. At Brooke Army Medical Center, the surgical intensive care unit.

TS: So, it wasn't a stellar one, necessarily?

PT: Oh, not at all.

TS: Oh.

PT: If anything—I had gotten one like that further down the line, I'd probably be, you know, out of the army. But—Maybe not. But my head nurse at the time was Glenda Warnock and she was not a person that you could approach. She was a very unapproachable person. And—but all the other nurses—I loved the nurses I worked with, and so, I guess that I must have said something about this OER, and—"I'm not sure what I'm not doing right, but somebody help me figure out what I need to be doing better." And so—A matter of fact, I feared her, you know, when I first went to work for her, and fortunately I

was put on evenings and nights, so I didn't have to do a lot with her. But then she became a supervisor, and it turns out she lived right up the street from my husband and I, when we got married, and tragically, she was killed in a car accident right in her neighborhood. So—but that was after supervisor, and I thought, you know, she was just starting to kind of come around to people. And it was just tragic that she had died.

But my efficiency reports after that were just walk on water. I had very good [OERs]—So, I guess I learned, you know, what you've got to do to punch your ticket to—to go the distance for what you did. But—But they were all surgical intensive care patients, open heart patients—

TS: I was going to ask what kind of surgery you saw.

PT: Open heart surgery, brain surgery. The first person that ever died was a twelve year old girl, and she had fallen backwards off the slide in—where did they have the killings, in Texas?

TS: Waco?

PT: Not Waco. [coughs] Just recently—not recently, a few years back. The—Fort Hood; Fort Hood killings. [The Fort Hood shooting was a mass murder and terrorist attack by Nidal Malik Hasan, a 39-year-old U.S. Army major serving as a psychiatrist]

TS: Oh, on the—right, okay.

PT: Yeah. She was from Fort Hood, fallen off the slide, and they airvaced her to Brooke Army Medical Center, but she had a tremendous brain injury and she ended up dying. That was my first death. That affected me more than anything. I thought, at twelve years old, I mean, my heart just bled for her. And I just remember in nursing school, you know, you could deal with older people dying, but when it's young like that—that was a hard thing to go by.

But doing resuscitations on patients, all that stuff just—it really—just emotionally, just took—[it] seemed to take so much out of me. And they tell you in nursing, you know, don't get too close to your patients, don't—you can't help but get close to your patients. I mean, you are their everything; you know, they're the ones clinging to you, and then you don't save them, you feel like a real shmuck. But you know, over time you realize—you know, when I was just new to nursing, everything was just so godly, and the doctors were gods and everybody was—was a god.

But I just—death was a hard thing to come by, originally. And it still is, you know? I—Matter of fact, most recently in my job now, you know, there's a lady who was dying, she was a no-code patient [meaning an order not to resuscitate], but she was going to die. And there was no one there in the room, none of her family had come, and so I just went in that room and I held her hand and just talked to her, and I thought "You're not dying by yourself." I said "You know, you've had a wonderful life and family," and you know, I just talked to her like I would want somebody to be with me and tell me I made a hill of beans difference to someone in this world.

So, it's—you know, I feel in many respects, I was so new to nursing—and I mean I would cry at the drop of a hat if a doctor would say something to me; "Why isn't this done or that done?"; I'd start crying. [chuckles] I need to toughen up my skin. But over time—Now, I've been—I was an army nurse for twenty three years, and I've been a nurse now in town for eighteen years, and many times I think, you know, "Am I getting too calloused in this now? It just doesn't—it affects me, but not the way that it did, you know, early on." And I always—I threaten to retire from this job whenever I get really irritated with things, so that's just—"I don't need this aggravation anymore!" But.

TS: Well, I imagine that nursing itself has changed since you, you know, were—started in the '70s.

PT: Right.

TS: How do you think it's changed? Even if you want to talk specifically about the military and then going to your civilian—

PT: Okay. Well, of course, military nurse, you know, you mentorsee many more wars and people are going into combat much more than—I mean, I never saw combat as a nurse in the twenty three years that I was in—in the military. Which is a blessing and not a blessing, you know? I feel like I should have served sometimes. You almost feel guilty that you didn't and others did. But—

TS: But at Walter Reed, were you caring for people who had?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: But at Walter Reed, well, that's where you're caring for people who had. And that was—you know, I would hear the stories of Vietnam; you know, in bringing back all the amputees and, you know, working in the intensive care unit, what have you; the people who are so tragically maimed and, you know, head injuries and whatnot. You know, so much—in Vietnam, you know, not as many lived as what they do now. And I think I'm glad that I'm not there right now, but I understand that, you know, just the prosthetics are such a blessing today that, you know, they didn't have before.

Now, I actually dated a fellow, while I was in nursing school, who was an amputee from the Vietnam War. And he would just unstrap his leg and, you know, go and—that was—I never knew that he was an amputee until very later into our relationship.

TS: Because he had pants on, and—

PT: Yeah. Always wore pants, and he never even walked with a limp or anything, so you could imagine the rude awakening.

TS: Yeah, that would be surprising!

PT: What a surprise!

TS: Well, what did you like—what did you like best about your time in—in San Antonio?

PT: Of course meeting my husband.

TS: Well, yes.

PT: Getting married in San Antonio, in the military. I think the fact that, you know, everything was brand new—and you're talking military; my military assignment? That the army forces you to be all you can be. Right now, in civilian life, I feel like a nurse is a nurse is a nurse. I don't get paid a penny more to do one type of nursing over another type of nursing, to be an administrator over a bedside care provider, whatever. In the army, you are forced to advance, you know. You might be a bedside nurse for a while, but then ultimately, if you want to stay in the military, you will become a charge nurse, you will become a head nurse, you will become an area administrator, you—you know, you just—you branch out, and you're pretty much forced to be all you can be. You know, I think I would have been perfectly content to just take care of patients at the bedside, and I never would have stretched myself out. So I love the military for that; to making me see that I'm—to give me a better self-image, I think, than what I had.

TS: Did you have any mentors?

PT: Initially, yes. You're given—well, Diane Williams was my mentor at Brooke. She was a really—neuro nursing was her bag. And I just wanted to be like her. She was a civilian, but she, to me, had it all together. That she had the personality for the job, she was smart, she was savvy, she cared for people, she was advancing, she—I believe she got her doctorate, she was published, she did a lot of things. Mentor as far as being assigned—I had someone—a nurse—resource nurse, and I guess that would be considered a mentor, to help me learn the ropes at each station where I was.

TS: But even informally. I mean, not maybe somebody that was assigned to you, but somebody that, like, you looked up to, and you—

PT: Oh, yeah. Oh, and Diane was certainly that person, then I had other military people. You know, I had—some of the administrators were wonderful, and you know, helped me figure this out, or even the head nurses, when I was in the head nurse position. Then as a head nurses you were a great group of people. And you cussed and discussed off of each other, you have head nurse meetings, and you get together and, you know, come up with whatever plan you needed for whatever was going on.

Matter of fact, when I was at—in Colorado Springs, we were building a new hospital, so they had all the head nurses getting together to help devise the plans for the

intensive care units for the new hospital, and you know, what you wanted to see and have done and different—I was the—I was the SOAP nurse; [chuckles] the subjective, objective, and assessment planning. So I was a SOAP nurse, and then you had all these, you know, plans, and I was a go-to girl for that. So I would—I remember going to El Paso, Texas, as the expert on the—the SOAP nursing and care plans and that types of things. So you did have people that—but actually, one person in particular that, you know, said, "I'm your mentor," nobody really was assigned at that time. Now, that's different today. I think they actually are assigned a mentor.

But there's always somebody—when I got, you know, advanced, I would always find a new nurse and tuck her under my wing, and say, "I'll help you, because I know what you're going through." And that's something that—

TS: So you did that throughout your career?

PT: I did that throughout my career. And I still do that now, outside of my career, at—because I think that so many times, you know, new nurses, what—you're put on night shift. And who do you learn off of night shift? There's nobody with experience on night shift, so.

TS: There isn't?

PT: Not as a rule, so—well, more so now, but I still work nights. I work 7p[m] to 7a[m] for that reason; that there's someone that, you know—that is experienced on those shifts and that can help those that are new and coming on, and—

TS: Do you think that—in some ways, that the military—I've heard this, I guess, put a couple different ways, but you're never given a job or a task or something that, whoever is asking you to do that, doesn't think you can do. Like you say, pushing you to your limit in some ways. Maybe giving you more responsibility than you think you can do—

PT: Yeah.

TS: —but the person, you know, that's behind you kind of thinks, you know, you can do it.

PT: Yeah, and I think that—yeah, I think that's very true, that—I think they did it to me because I think they felt like I had the intelligence, that I could do this, that I'm—I'm a cut—a cut above, so to speak, and that I could do it. But I didn't look at it that way when they were doing that, you know. I thought, "Well, this is what I've got to do next, so this is what I'm going to do, and if I want to stay in the army—" which I did, you know, I've decided this is a good—it's a good life for me, it's a good match for me, and so I'm, you know, punching my ticket along the way. And—

TS: I hear that expression a lot, punching my ticket.

PT: Yeah.

TS: Can you explain what that means?

PT: Sure. Let's see. Put easily, when—everyone gets a report card in the army; it's called Officer Efficiency Report. In order to attend certain courses, like the—well, the advanced course would be a ticket you have to punch. If you are aspiring to be Chief of the [Army] Nurse Corps, if you're aspiring to be in any position, administratively, or something above, you know, basic nursing, certain things you have to do, and to get—to continue getting good report cards for the army, you have to attend the advanced course, you have to attend this course, you have to have walk on water efficiency reports, you have to remain within the army's height and weight restrictions, health fitness advocate, all these little things. So it's like you're just, you know—punch your ticket, I did this course, I got my ticket punched, so I can continue on. It's not an actual punching of a ticket, it's more just a—a figure of speech.

TS: Right. But it's also—so it's not just what you do in your job, it's the education.

PT: No, the education. Exactly. And that's one thing; the military is all about education. I mean, you know, now to try to go to an education class, you know, you have to pay for your own, if you can get the time off to go, and it's just—

TS: Now as—you mean, in the civilian world?

PT: Now, in the civilian world—whereas in the military world, they're all for education; "Go to this course, go to that course," you know, "We're going to send you to this, we're going to send you there, you need to, you know—"

TS: Do you think there's any misconception about that from, like, people who are in the civilian world, about the kind of training, I guess, to some extent, that people in the military receive on these kinds of—

PT: Well, I think many civilians have no clue what military life is like, and it depends upon their frame of reference; who have they met that's military? And if you've met somebody that's a real slacker—because wherever you go in life, you've got the good, the bad, the ugly. If you have met a slacker, or someone that is rotund, a smoker, whatever, you know, your—your preconceived idea is going to be formed because of that person. Whereas you meet someone who's hard-charging, who is a go-getter, you know, who has shown—you know, that they—they're going to work for a living—and I would never, ever ask any of my nurses to do something that I, in turn, wouldn't do. If we're going to clean—if we're going to clean the unit today, I'm going to be right there cleaning the unit with them, from whatever. And I think, you know, you're in it—it's much more family-conscious in the military, than what the civilian world is. And I really miss that.

TS: Yeah. I have a friend who just retired and he said—just, actually, yesterday, and he said, "I'm worried about when I go to a job and it's a nine to five job, and I see it's, you know,

four minutes till five, and maybe another half hour we'll get through this job and get it done. And in the military, there's no question you would stay and do it."

PT: Yeah, yeah.

TS: "But," he says, "I worry that they're going to check out at five o' clock, and—"

PT: Yeah, and they will! I mean, you know—right now, I mean, if you dare work any overtime, you better tell them why in the world you had to stay to work, you know, past your shift. Because there's always going to be work, there's always going to be people. [unclear]

TS: How much overtime do you get paid in the military?

PT: In—none. [laughs] What do you mean? No such a critter, you know? So it's—you know, you just—you do it. But I think there's much more sense of commitment and duty to your military, you know, job.

TS: The mission that you're trying to get done.

PT: And your mission, yeah.

TS: Yeah. It's just an interesting concept that, you know, I think it's hard to articulate and get across.

PT: Yeah. Well, you know, when it was made known that I was coming to my current assignment at Moses Cone Hospital, they knew it was an army nurse coming, and my friends will tell me to this day, the preconceived notion they had in their head about this big battleax coming in, that's going to change everything, and it's going to be—just destroy the whole unit, and then they see me coming in and I'm friendly and I'm outgoing and I'm—you know, I'm going to stand back and see, "What have I gotten into here?". It was the hardest transition I've ever made in my lifetime, going to civilian nursing. [chuckling]

TS: Yeah? That's a fact.

PT: So, you know, I think it depends upon who you know in the military and what that experience has been, and you know, positively—you look on it a bit more positive.

TS: Well, did you—at what—okay, at what point—I know you said when you got married, you and your husband talked about how you were going to stay in.

PT: Right, yes.

TS: So at what point did you think, you know, "I kind of like this military, and I think I want to stay"?

PT: Right. That was actually—all along, I felt like I wanted to stay. Once I was on my first assignment I kind of figured out, you know, the military and kind of figured out my role and kind of where I was headed. I really saw myself one day as being chief of a hospital, probably smaller hospital or something. But you know, that didn't happen, but you know, that was what I was driving for, but my concern was, do I have what it takes to be one of those? Because those that I had envisioned, or those that I had seen, that were my mentors, they were wonderful in what they did. And Jeri Graham, I got to put her name in there—Jeri Graham, God bless her heart, [colonel-—PT corrected later], retired. She was a nurse midwife in the army, [chuckles] she delivered our second son at [The 97th General Hospital in Frankfurt, Germany—PT added later]. We have been friends ever since, and she is just—she is the go-getter, and I always told her she was going to be Chief of the [Army Nurses] Corps one day. Well, she retired sooner than that, but she was chief of the retired Army Nurse Corps, and she is still just a go-getter to this day. And Jeri—if there was a mentor, Jeri would be my mentor, and Mary Jo Romano. They're two of my—Mary Jo was—she was actually a supervisor for me when we were in Germany, and I think overseas, you tend to really bind with friends, because you are away from family much more so, and you know, you really become great friends with the friends that you meet there.

TS: Well, now, that was your next assignment, right, Germany? After—after—

PT: No, Fort Car—after Fort Carson.

TS: Oh, it was Fort Carson—

PT: I was in San Antonio, and then Fort Carson.

TS: Oh yeah, well let's get to Fort Carson, then.

PT: Fort Carson, Colorado, I am head nurse—

TS: And did you apply for this and—

PT: See, that's the thing, you don't apply, no.

TS: Okay. I don't mean for head nurse, I mean for Fort Carson.

PT: Oh, for Fort Carson. When it gets, I guess, two years that you've been at [your current assignment, fill out your dream sheet for your upcoming assignment—PT corrected later]. So that's when my husband and I worked cahoots together so that, you know, we would—we put the same places down, and—and he would tell his corps he's married to so-and-so, and these are the places that we would like to go.

TS: Did they have, like, the joint assignment at that time?

PT: You know, they didn't at that time.

TS: Okay.

PT: So—I always felt that the JAG Corps was very much in tune to helping us stay together. The Army Nurse Corps, on the other hand, didn't issue you a spouse. They're not responsible for your spouse, nor for your family, nor for whatever. So I just thought, if I get stationed somewhere, it's going to be Bill's branch—and this actually happened to us; it's going to be his branch that is going to have to go to bat to have things changed.

TS: Trying to get him to catch up to wherever you were assigned.

PT: Wherever I was. For example, we were coming back from Germany, I'm to be stationed at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, he is being stationed in Washington State. Well, there's only a country apart, we have a newborn baby, and a four year old; you know, this is not going to work. The Nurse Corps—Army Nurse Corps, no. The JAG Corps gets him reassigned to the Pentagon, and then he had several different jobs throughout that area during my stay at Walter Reed and then at—subsequently, at the White House, because they were so thrilled that I was there, they were going to do whatever they could in their power to keep him in the area as long as—as I was there.

TS: Well, that's terrific.

PT: And then retirement followed, so. [chuckles]

TS: There you go.

PT: Yeah. So you know, it worked out for us, but I think—I think the army got smart in realizing that's how they're losing good people, by not putting them together. And they're much, much more family-oriented now than they ever were in the years that we served.

TS: The army?

PT: The army is, yeah, definitely.

TS: It's interesting that you say that the Army Nurses Corps wasn't willing to really be as flexible as the JAG was.

PT: Right, as the JAG Corps.

TS: Because you would think, for gender, you know, that woman follows the man.

PT: Yes.

TS: But that's not the case.

PT: Nope, not the case.

TS: Why do you think that was?

PT: You know, I really don't know. That's just something that, you know, the Nurse Corps, their philosophy was pretty much, we didn't issue you a spouse, and so we're not responsible for him, but you know, if you want to keep a good nurse in, you know, help me, help me here. So—

TS: Interesting.

PT: Yeah.

TS: So you're in Colorado.

PT: In Colorado.

TS: Were you still in the surgical unit?

PT: I then became the head of the surgical unit, at Colorado—in Colorado Springs. I was initially, for about six months, the assistant head nurse, and then I became the head nurse. And in Colorado, it was a small—much smaller place, as a community hospital, as opposed to the one at Brooke Army Medical Center. So that was actually a nice place to begin my head nurse position.

TS: And you had started to say—I interrupted you earlier when you said you don't—it's not a position that you apply for; for head nurse.

PT: Right, you do not apply for it. Yeah. You're just told "You will be," [chuckles]—"You're going—"

TS: You're assigned it.

PT: "You are being assigned as the head nurse of the surgical intensive care unit and so that's what you do. There's no ifs, ands, or buts to say, "No, no, I don't want to do that."

"You will be that, and unless you prove that you cannot be that," and that's not a good thing either, so—

TS: That's right.

PT: But actually, that was a—really a wonderful job for me, because it was small enough where I could, kind of, learn the job and I had great staff there. And we would fly out anything that was beyond the capability of our smaller medical—of our community hospital, to Brooke Army Medical Center—actually, Fitzsimmons in Denver is where we would fly [more critical patients—PT corrected later] out. And we would also get patients—PT corrected later] in from [the larger medical centers—PT corrected later], you know, incoming—"Incoming!" Actually, in Germany is where I really learned a lot about the air command and how that all works and transporting patients abroad. So for a long time, I thought "Oh, I'd like to be a flight nurse." But then I had children and that just wasn't going to work into the picture, but I thought that would be a cool thing to do. And I still do. I think that to do that would be fun.

TS: Well now, as you're—as a head nurse, you're doing a little bit more of the managing—well, maybe not a little, maybe a lot more on the managing side—

PT: Right.

TS: —with, I guess, people and personalities?

PT: People; people and personalities.

TS: How was that?

PT: Civilian and military.

TS: Okay.

PT: Yes. And you have your—your chief warrant officer that worked—not warrant officer, chief enlisted person—your chief tech that is kind of your right hand man. And he handles the enlisted side of the house, pretty much, but when it comes to writing reports, you know, you're the one that it falls down upon. I think that—I think I was a very good head nurse. I cared for my people and they knew that I cared for them. As my husband always taught me, he says, "A good scout leader eats last." [chuckles] You take care of your troops, you take care of your people, and the last—you're the last person to be concerned over.

And you would hold monthly staff meetings, and you make it so that it's convenient for the staff; civilians and military. And of course baking goods for them was always a good thing, too, until they think you're a walking delicatessen, you should always be bringing things in [to eat]! So, the best way to their hearts is through their stomach. You learn that early on. But it was a—it was a transition year, you know, certainly for me, but one that—that I felt like I really enjoyed, and the smaller places are much more family oriented, and because we were a surgical unit, we dealt with a lot of different [departments—PT corrected later]. We dealt with the anesthesia people, you dealt with pediatrics, [and general surgery—PT corrected later]. Nurses and doctors and everybody would come through to see their patients, and then you'd transport—once

you'd cured them, you send them over to theirs. But I—I loved my assignment in Colorado Springs, I thought it was great.

TS: Do you have any kind of memorable story from there that you'd like to share?

PT: Yeah, I can tell you [laughing]—when—when I was running a race, I was the token female—now, this isn't work related, it is somewhat work related—the token female on the Fort Carson's running team, we were doing a ten mile run through Garden of the Gods. I had trained with a physical therapist; I knew I could run this race no problem. We had trained about three weeks before the race, because I wasn't going to humiliate myself and not be able to end this race. The night before the race, our neighbor had my husband, my trainer—who was Lou Martino, who was head of the physical therapy department at Fort Carson; the three of us are on the team. Our neighbor has us over for dinner, the carbohydrate loading meal the night before, and I usually don't eat a lot before I run. In the morning, wake up and go—I'm a nervous type person, so I'm so nervous.

They had twenty port-a-toilets in a row. I'm going in one, out, in, out, in, out, thinking, "Oh my god, how am I going to run this race?" you know. I wasn't thinking about getting dehydrated. But at the seven-mile mark, I knew something was wrong, because one of the anesthesiologists passed me, and I knew I ran faster than he did. I had trained—I had run some with him, so I knew I ran faster than him. That's all I remember till I woke up in a big MASH tent. And my husband's standing over me, and I said to him, "Your eyes look like caves." I had passed out on this race; my fear—my biggest fear. And apparently I had a respiratory arrest, so they had torn off this T-shirt I had and ended up—of course, I ended up going to the hospital, to my own unit, to the surgical ICU. So I became a patient in my unit.

And I said, "Now, you all take good care of me!"

They said, "We'll do as you taught us, ma'am!" So that was it and I ended up in the hospital for three days.

TS: So what had happened?

PT: I think I had gotten dehydrated, just from all the diarrhea that I had before—you know, just being nervous before the race, and I just passed out at the mile mark—because I remember passing that seven-mile mark—having him pass me at the seven-mile mark, and then I don't remember anything.

TS: And then that was it. How about that.

PT: So, that—I taught my staff well, they helped me through. [laughing]

TS: Yeah, "Here's a test for you, take care of me!"

PT: Yes, yes, and they did—they did well.

TS: Well, was there anything in particularly difficult about being a head nurse?

PT: Personalities of people. And that was—once again, you have to be very, very careful, especially when you're dealing with some of the more seasoned nurses or nurse techs that are there. I had one nurse tech in particular who was a minority, and so you have to make sure that you're not calling the race card. So, I learned early on to document—to document, document, document—so that you have factual things, and not just to say, "Well, you know, she's—she's not doing a very good job."

TS: Right.

PT: And so, that was—but it's like a cold day in hell, I should say, to try to get rid of someone who's not functioning up to par, unless you have—

TS: The documentation.

PT: —the documentation. Yeah, it just doesn't happen, so—and that made it ugly. I mean, I—you know, I don't like to see people lose jobs, I don't like to be the bad guy that's, you know, got the ball rolling to have them lose their job, but on the other hand, if they're being paid and are not doing the service that they need to be doing—

TS: Was that civilian and—

PT: That was—It was civilian and military.

TS: Military.

PT: Yeah. This particular one was a civilian nurse.

TS: Was that harder—I have heard that sometimes that was harder to—not deal with, but that was more problematic, because there's no chain of command.

PT: Right. Because you are their—I mean, you're their boss.

TS: So, you're the supervisor, but there's not that military—

PT: Right, exactly; right, exactly; no military chain of command. Exactly. And so, that was harder, but a lot of the nurses I had there had been there, you know, forever, and that's—this is the way we've always done it, you know, and not real change agents, and that makes it difficult, too.

TS: You're looking at a period—so we're in the late '70s, early '80s, when you're there—

PT: Yes.

TS: —and what—and in the Army Nurses Corps, women had been in the Army Nurses Corps, you know, World War II and on—

PT: Yes.

TS: And even before. But were you getting different—were you a seeing different—not—I'm not quite sure of the right word to use, but—we're getting to the end of the all-volunteer—or, getting to the beginning of the all-volunteer forces, you know, when you first came in.

PT: Yes.

TS: And so you're seeing different types—more—you know, more variety of women and men that are coming into the career of the army that you're having to deal with, that you hadn't maybe had to deal with before?

PT: You know, I never—never looked at it that way, but I always looked at it—well, not always, but I think many people started coming in—I think the common notation was, if you can't get a job on the outside, you join the military. Well, that's not true in the medical field, because you won't last in the medical field if you can't cut the mustard. Whereas, you know, that may be true in enlisted out in the field; if you don't have a job, you can't get a job, join the army and you'll have one. So from that standpoint, I think that certainly—I think nurses coming into the army were those that were very proud of the fact that they were able to advance more than what they ever would in the civilian role. I don't know if people considered it a challenge coming into the military—if they're looking for a challenge—but many—many came in as a means of travel opportunities, retirement benefits, and that type of thing. But as far as, you know—I think nursing is very different from other aspects of the military, because you almost feel like you're not in the military, you know? [chuckles] Other than, yes, you do have someone to answer to, and you know, rungs up the ladder, but I didn't—I never considered my time in the military as—as my husband would, or some—someone in the field, as a field—as a field officer. You know, I considered myself more of a nurse than I did an officer, if that makes any sense.

TS: Yes. Nurse came first, not the soldier.

PT: Nurse came first, right, yes. And that—And that's, I guess, the mindset that I had about all my other nurses.

TS: Well, I guess, actually, one of the changes that you hear about in the '70s is that you had—there was a lot of drug issues going on, as patients and maybe coworkers, necessarily, and that that was a culture that was changing too.

PT: Well, it had to change, because in the military you have to take drug tests—you do drug testing—and it can be a very random thing or a scheduled thing. And you know, three strikes you're out; one strike, you're out.

TS: Right.

PT: And so, I didn't have that much trouble. Now, I did have several that had HIV/AIDS [Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome], and you could just—you could see them dying in front of you pretty much, and that was a disheartening thing.

TS: Was it soldiers?

PT: Soldiers, yeah. One of my corpsmen was one that, you know—he—he was a very big burly fellow, and very good and very resourceful, and had a lot of energy, and just over the two years, you know, he becomes a stick figure, he's just not cutting the mustard, he develops this pneumonia, he's out of work a lot, he's gone more than he's there, then he's put on, you know, medical leave, and before you know it, he's dead. And, you know—so that was—but do you want that type of a person in your medical environment? You know, should I have known beforehand? Because no one, until he died, actually told me he had HIV/AIDS. I think that—

TS: This in the early '80s, late '70s, when it was first—

PT: Yeah, early '80s; early '80s.

TS: So that's when, really, it was first coming to the surface too.

PT: Yes. And I guess it's patient confidentiality is, you know, what they said, but—

TS: So, dealing with the blood issues and—

PT: Yeah, and all that. Oh, and that was one thing that—you know, you didn't wear gloves all the time when I first came into nursing, and now, I mean, I won't walk into a patient room without washing my hands and gloving. You know, you just don't—so I think it's a societal thing, too. But I think a lot of it, also, is overboard on some of the isolation issues that—you know, that they have, but the infection control people at Moses Cone would be the first ones to disagree with me, so. [laughs]

TS: Okay. Well now, how—then how did you—so you—after you were the head nurse, then you—then you went to Germany.

PT: Then we went to Germany.

TS: And so, how—how did you—that—

PT: That transition?

TS: Yeah.

PT: Into the overseas tour, or whatever?

TS: However you want to tell me.

PT: Okay. Now, I had one son and pregnant—

TS: Oh, okay.

PT: Now we're throwing a child into the mix. [laughs]

TS: So you had a son at—when you were in Fort Carson?

PT: At Fort Carson; Evan was born at Fort Carson. So, we—and I had—one of—actually, one of my retired LPNs [licensed practical nurse] is the person who took care of him for me so I could continue nursing. Then we go to Germany. Childcare is my number-one main issue, and ultimately, we solved that problem in having a nanny from Sweden come, and she's still is in communications with us to this very day, and she's just a dear. But she used to hand-knit sweaters for the boys, you know, when they were little. Every year for Christmas she'd have a hand-knit sweater for them. They don't appreciate those like I do; [chuckles] "Do it for me!"

TS: Well, how did you—that come about?

PT: Well, how it came about is, we were stationed at Frankfurt Army Medical Center, which is a big medical center, and you are given a point of contact, a—what did they call it—a host family. So we actually had two host families; my husband had a host family with the JAG Corps and we had a host family with the Nurse Corps. And so they will—you know, they'll know if you have children, because you'll write them in advance, "What are your concerns, I want to know."

And I said "Child—Childcare is my main concern."

When you first get there, there is daycare available, and so that's where we did put Evan; he was just an infant then, he was ten months old. So we put him into daycare there until we got more established, because we weren't sure where we were going to be living at the time, housing—you know, we waited in maid's quarters—we lived in maid's quarters for probably close to a year. And actually, what that—what the maid's quarters are, is when—these were—in Frankfurt—of course this is all, you know, World War II airy buildings, and they had these humongous—they're like apartments, but on the third story of the apartment—first—no, first, second, and third floors were housing apartments where you could be given your apartment to stay. The fourth floor above that is where the maids worked during the war who maintained these apartments, so they had all these

little—little rooms, and one common sitting room, and a common kitchen. Well, so temporarily, that's your living quarters until you are given an apartment. Well, we had like ten rooms in this thing, you know, upstairs, my husband and I and the baby. So when we got a nanny, you know, of course she had plenty—plenty of room to go to too. But it turns out that—we loved that, because you had space. Depending upon which housing area you live in, you may be living in a shoebox, you may be living in sprawling suburbia. So to get on a housing list to get some decent housing could take a long time. And our housing was okay— [extraneous comments redacted]

[Recording Paused]

PT: Sorry about that interruption, I meant to tell you that.

TS: Oh, that's okay, we just had a little—

PT: Yeah, needed a break.

TS: We're back on now, so we had a little break, and we—we were in Germany, and you were telling me a little bit about that. Now, how was—was it—did you have any kind of cultural shock, I guess, to go from the United States to Germany?

PT: Very much cultural shock.

TS: Okay.

PT: Everything closes on Wednesday afternoon. It's like they take a siesta; you can't do anything on a Wednesday afternoon. The language barrier—of course, on—on the military post there's no language barrier; we're doing, you know, English-speaking jobs. But to go out shopping or whatever is German, and we did learn a fair amount of German. Our son, we had in a German preschool and, you know, that worked out okay for him during that time. Driving, kilometers instead of miles, and doing all the conversions and everything, grams to kilograms, that's, you know, just a cultural shock in that regard. But the love of the Germans for the great outdoors, and how they can turn a little plot of land into just a beautiful array of vegetables or flowers or whatnot, they have a real love for that. And of course, the beer and the wine, can't beat that either. We took advantage as much as we could of Germany and the—attending parades and parties, and traveling and doing as much as what we could. And I had a great job in Germany that allowed me to have, like, seven days off in a row, and so we would travel—take advantage of the foreign travel then. I think my husband, more than anyone, really loved to travel, and so I would be the one to plan all the trips and schedule them because he had a much more demanding job in Germany; ruthless boss he had at the time, who we loved dearly, but it was just—it about killed my husband; his job over there at the time.

TS: Was he at Frankfurt also?

PT: He was at—Well, he was initially at Frankfurt, at Drake Kaserne, and then he went out to Hanau, and that was about a forty-five mile drive. And Hanau was actually better for him, but Drake Kaserne could have killed him. And we were—he was just walking distance—walk across the street from our apartment, and he's right there. So it was very convenient for him in that regard, but you know, we always wanted to live closer to where I work so that I didn't have as much of the commute as he did, and of course then when he was in Hanau, he had a, probably, forty-five minutes to an hour commute or whatever. But he's always been a workaholic, so he would go in early and stay late or whatever. But—

TS: Now, what was—what were your ranks at this time?

PT: I was promoted—let's see, I was a captain when we went over, and I became a major in there. So coming in Germany, I was a major. And I was originally head nurse of a—now, this is Frankfurt Army 97th General Hospital, big—big medical center. And I was head nurse of the medical ICU at the time, and then I became evening/night supervisor. And that was the job that I really loved because I got to go everywhere within the bowels of that hospital and meet a huge variety of people. And a lot was all—the medevac flights that would come in from overseas, we were a central locator for the medevacs. Our hospital would bring those in and then of course we'd medevac back to the States. So we would get patients from all over the world coming into Frankfurt 97th.

TS: So you would—you would have been there for the Beirut bombing, then, wouldn't you have; '80—well, not '80— [Refers to the October 23, 1983 truck bombing of barracks in Beirut, Lebanon housing United States and French military personnel.]

PT: Eighty-one to '84.

TS: Eighty-three, then, I think that—'82 or '83, I think that happened, with the Marine barracks.

PT: Yeah, I know what—

TS: Did they come into Frankfurt?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Actually, you know, I think—

TS: Maybe they went to a different—

PT: They would have come to Frankfurt, either to the Landstuhl, you know, or to the air force hospital there, because I don't recall having a lot from that particular incident coming in to us.

TS: Yes. Do you remember when that happened?

PT: You know, I remember reading—but I'm trying to think that we were back in the States when that happened.

TS: Oh, maybe you were, like, on leave or something?

PT: Yeah, something, because I—

TS: Because it would—it would have fit in your timeframe—

PT: Yeah, it would fit right in there.

TS: Well, that's interesting. But, so you had other, like, people who were really sick and had to come from Italy or—

PT: Yeah, family members, you know, dependents—from wherever, yeah. I had a great patient contact from Rota, Spain, where they make the Lladrós, and he would bring back Lladrós for all of us at a price far far less than what we could ever buy them anywhere else.

TS: What is that?

PT: They're—They're—They're a statue; I have several of them in the living room; I'll show you later when we get up.

TS: Oh, okay.

PT: It's a ceramic statue, but they're Lladrós and they're very intricate-made, and they can cost hundreds and hundreds of dollars.

[extraneous comments redacted]

PT: I'm sorry, where were we now?

TS: That's okay. You were doing some traveling. You said you liked to—

PT: Doing some traveling.

TS: Did you do any of the volksmarches or anything? [Volksmarching is a non-competitive walking sport popular in Europe.]

PT: Oh, yes, as a matter of fact, when Evan, our son, was, like, a little over a year, my husband's mother and father came up and they joined us on a volksmarch. We had a backpack for Evan, so we could march around, but they thought that was the greatest thing. And we really enjoyed it too. Didn't do as much of it as I would like, and I would love to have something like that, you know, in the States here, and I think, up north, they do have something.

TS: Yeah? Have some kind of volks—

PT: Yeah, don't know if they call it volksmarching.

TS: Yeah, I always thought that was kind of fun, too. So did you have—

PT: But they are some good stocky people; good health; healthy people.

TS: So you got to travel a lot, then?

PT: A lot then, we did, because as supervisor, I would, like—I'd work seven days, have six off, then work six, have seven off, and so that was a great schedule. And it was a very—what do you call it—reliable schedule. I knew that I could plan out my schedule for several months at a time, so if there was a trip coming up, someplace we wanted to go, you know, Bill could take a couple days of leave and I'd do all the planning for the trip, and we had a nanny that lived with us, and so she took care of the children.

TS: Oh, she lived with you? Oh, yeah, we didn't—now, how was it that you said you came to get the nanny?

PT: So, we came to get the nanny—we got Bettan. She was from Sweden, and she stayed with us for two years, I think. And then—And we got her through another couple who was rotating back to the States; they had her, and she didn't want to go back to Sweden, so I said, "Hey, we need someone if you—if she's reliable and you like her, you know, we'll try her out." And she was wonderful, she worked out perfectly well. But then she went back to Sweden, and we still had two years to go, I think, because then we got a nanny from England. And they have a whole nanny connection; in all of the buildings, people will list, you know, their nanny—they're leaving, their nanny is up for grabs, or the nannies will have a friend who wants to come, and so it's a whole nanny network.

TS: Little network, okay.

PT: —networking going on. And this gal was from England, and she was—she was different, but she was good, and she took good care of the children, and we had just had our second son, and so he was born right at Christmas time. So I was on maternity leave, she went

back to England. Twice, she called to see how things were going with the baby, and blah, blah, blah, it was fine. Two days before we were due—I'm due to go back to work, her father calls and says, "She's not coming back. Send her clothing." And no excuse, no rhyme, no reason; I could not imagine what in the world had gone wrong.

So now we're in a real bind, I've got to go back to work and we don't have a soul to take care of these two children now; a newborn and a three year old. So, Bill's mother [comes] to the rescue. She flew out on a dime and she stayed from February through May, and then we rotated back to the States after that. So that was a blessing that she came, and I tried to—I tell my son and daughter in law, now, with their two children, that I had a great teacher, so I'm here for you. And really, I do a lot with their children. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, that's terrific.

PT: So, I had a great teacher. So that's why I'm getting them Thursday through the following Monday, so it's a good thing we're doing this now. [chuckles]

TS: Yeah, that's right. Well, how was it, as a—okay, so—also to be a nurse, officer, and you're a mother, and a wife too. Now, how did you juggle all this?

PT: It was a juggling act, it truly was, and you kind of look at priorities, and unfortunately, the husband part was the lowest part—lowest priority at the time, you know, poor Bill, but he had a relentless schedule and he really worked a lot. Fortunately, we did have a nanny, and so that really helped with the childcare issues. And I worked—I was evening/night supervisor, so I was really home in the daytime, you know, with them, and then my husband would be home in the evening, so between, you know, the nanny and all—and she would clean and do that type of thing, so we had more time, you know, with the—with the children. But just the demands of the job in Germany, just seemed, you know, far—far greater than what I had anticipated, and for my husband as well.

TS: In what way?

PT: Just more demanding. The hours seemed to be longer, the training—because you did do more training there, and there were—we had BDU days where, I think, once a week we had to wear our military—you know, our battle dress uniform; the fatigues are what we wore.

TS: Right.

PT: And never did we have to do that in the States. I mean, it was just a rare—rare time we'd do that. We trained with weapons more, you went on more field exercises and things of that nature.

TS: Well, it's the Cold War, right, so it's still the East and West—

PT: Right, right.

TS: —Germany, and—

PT: Matter of fact, a couple of the troops that we took as we went into—you know, we're in West Germany, and you could—you could schedule a trip into East Germany, and we did that, but you'd never do it more than once, because it's just so nerve-wracking. And you have to—you walk across a bridge and you just feel like it's the bridge from nowhere, and will you be coming back? But shopping, that's what attracted everybody there, that's what you got there. You know, shopping was just a dream.

TS: What could you get?

PT: Rugs, mink coats, furniture, clothing, you know, German art—artifacts and dishes.

TS: In East Germany?

PT: In East Germany, yeah, for just a song. Crystal, china—I mean, I have a lot of stuff in these cabinets.

TS: Oh.

PT: Yeah. And you think, "Boy, was that worth it." [laughs] So, I'll have to show you some of the German dishes I got there.

TS: Yes!

PT: They're pretty interesting; quite lovely.

TS: That would be interesting. Well, in general, how were your relationships, say, with your superiors?

PT: I had a wonderful relationship with my superiors in Germany, because Mary Jo turned out to be one of my best friends when I was the head nurse. Now, as the supervisor, I had great support there as well. I mean, it just seemed—you know, the family has enlarged, the family's on a huge overseas voyage, and whatever they can do to make your life better. And they would have more social events for—you know, like Christmas parties for the kids, and realize that it's family, and at Thanksgiving time they would host a dinner in the mess hall for families, and you know, that was always very nice.

TS: Did you see that as your time—well, of course, you—

PT: And I did have a sister who was over there, my sister Jo; Marjorie Jo, one of the twins.

TS: Oh.

PT: Her husband was military, and they were stationed about thirty minutes from where we were, and then my oldest brother Bob, when he was in the army he was stationed in Aschaffenburg, which wasn't far either; thirty minutes; a half an hour.

TS: At the same time you were there?

PT: At the same time. So, Tracy and Casey, my sister's two kids, were two that our son just—our older son just worshipped and wanted to be with them all the time. And then, Bob and Terry ended up having a son the same—just about the same time that I had Eric there, little Markie was being born, so.

TS: So you had your family over there too.

PT: Right. We had our family over there, and Danny, their older son, is stationed out at Fort Bragg, so he's with my son at Fort Bragg there now.

TS: Oh, now.

PT: Right now.

TS: You guys keep it all in the family.

PT: Keeping it going, yeah.

TS: Now, at—were you doing any—we talked earlier about some—you know, getting special training or education.

PT: Yes, right.

TS: Were you taking any of that at this time in Germany?

PT: It was a little harder there. I never flew back to the States to take a course, but they still had, you know, offerings there, but it wasn't on the scale that—that you have in the States.

TS: In the States?

PT: The expectation is you will—you will learn. [chuckles]

TS: Well, and then how were your relations with your subordinates?

PT: My subordinates? Most of the civilian nurses and corps people that you had over there had been there for a long time. They were federal service employees, government service employees, GS, whatever, and they're there with their spouses or their families, so pretty

much they're there forever, so they're the—they're the brains of the system, so to speak, and then us military people come in and mess things up for them.

But you know, military nurses, I really didn't see a big change in that, you know. Everybody has kind of the same goals in mind, you're kind of in the same plate[?], you're away from family and friends, and you know, we didn't have—the biggest thing you had was VCRs [Video Cassette Recorders]; that you would pirate the VCRs just so you could have that, you know, in the States, but you didn't have Facebook and email and all that. That was just coming of age then, and my husband was far more ahead of me in that regard than—than what I was with the computer. It just seemed like between the children, the house, and my job, and you know, writing efficiency reports, because every time somebody leaves—and so I spent so much time, you know, just writing reports, more than anything, that—you know, you just don't have a lot of extra time.

TS: When you say that about the VCR—because with the television, it's German television.

PT: It's German television, right, so that's the only thing—you could get a TV with a VCR, you know, record—player on it, and then you could, you know, play the videos. And that was a way of—you know, we would tape things within our apartment; we have several of them upstairs from Germany. We would have Evan singing, and you know—because then you could ship them back home and they could see your child, your grandchild, and they wouldn't have to be without and they could kind of see what you're living in, and if you wanted to take it on, you know, volksmarches for the area, whatever; take it—but we had one of these humongous cameras, you know—

TS: Right, they were pretty big.

PT: And that big—yeah, they were huge then, and it was just very unwieldy. By the time you pack a couple of babies and all their gear and camera and—

TS: [chuckles] How do you hold the camera? Yeah.

PT: Just nuts.

TS: Well, now you're—you're living off of the base, or are you on the base?

PT: Actually, we're on military housing; we're living in military housing.

TS: Okay.

PT: There were some people that did live in civilian housing on post but—I mean, off base, but it was just much more—we really couldn't find a place that we wanted, and not knowing how long you're really going to be there, and going and—you know, all the rules of living, it was just easier for us to take the military housing. Although, we were forfeiting two military—what do you call—BOQs [base officer's quarters] to live in one

little apartment. [chuckles] So, it didn't quite match up. Whereas some people lived in this humongous castle of quarters.

TS: Because they had BOQs from—

PT: Right. Well, it really is kind of luck of the draw, when you come—when it comes available. If someone that's living in one of these big castles moves out, if you're on the waiting list, yeah, you can move in. If you're down on the waiting list, you got to wait till your turn comes up. Your turn comes up and you have a little—much small apartment—

TS: This is on the base housing you're talking about?

PT: The base housing, yeah.

TS: And you did say you were on that list for a little while, waiting.

PT: Right, yes, we were on that list almost, like, a year, I think; close to a year, and then we did get housing. It was adequate, but small. I mean, you know, German—everything in Germany, though, is small in comparison. Their ice cubes are this big, [chuckles] if they use ice at all; most times they don't use ice. But ice cubes are little, plots of land are little, everything is little. And us Americans need so much space; look at my space, you see?

TS: [chuckles] Well, did you have—having been in the United States and living off base.

PT: Living off base, yes.

TS: And so—But now you're in a foreign country, in Germany—

PT: Right.

TS: —and you're living on base. Did you find that you're tied to the base closer, or did you still, like, go on the economy a lot, or did you shop at the PX and the—things like that?

PT: Well, we shopped at the commissary, because that definitely was much cheaper to buy your food on the economy. But you have to go to the markets, the German markets, for their fresh asparagus and the flowers and just the whole ambiance of that. To get fresh vegetables and things, that's fine. To buy your meats and milk and staples, you go to the commissary. But, just, oh, that's one thing that I missed, was the markets; the outdoor markets with—you know, just bring home a big bouquet of flowers, and you know, dress up the house, and you know, fresh fruits and vegetables.

TS: Bread?

PT: And just—and bread, oh yeah, bread. But you know, their sweets, like cakes and cookies, they're not sweet, they just—they're not like American sweet. The breads, yeah, definitely.

TS: Brochen [German hard rolls], and—

PT: Yeah, those, yeah—just give me beer and cheese and wine and you got it; [laughs] what more is there?

TS: Well, was there—besides the job and the hours were a little bit longer and you're at night most of the time too. Was there anything that was really emotionally difficult or physically difficult?

PT: Physically difficult, if you lived on the third floor in your housing apartment and you've got to haul up all your groceries and your children and your everything, yes, that is, and that's where we lived; the third floor. It was a way up and a way down, and—carting the kids. And just, you know, when you want to leave your kids' toys outside, let them—you know, put your bike—you don't have a garage, you don't have any place to keep things, you know, so you don't have so many things; you put them on your stairwell. Instead of having beautiful flowers, you've got all your trappings there.

TS: It's a little tight.

PT: I'm sure the Germans looked at us like, "Oh, you crazy Americans," but—

TS: Well, did you—

PT: I think it was—the hardest thing for me was knowing that my husband was having just a miserable, miserable time. And he worked some incredible hours and just had one of these bosses that there was just no pleasing, you know, any which way you looked at it. But he just—I mean, I felt for my husband more than anything. He was just—I could see it in his eyes every day he came home from work. And I thought, you know, "If our marriage makes it through this, we'll get through anything; it's clear sailing down the hill after that." So—But the trips that we went on, you know, I was grateful for my husband just to—but you know, the job never left him; he always had packed a suitcase of work that he's taking with him.

TS: Did he?

PT: But he'd get to see things and, you know, do things, but he's always been a workaholic, but that was the worst that it ever had been.

TS: At that point. Was—did you have a thought of staying in Germany or staying overseas at all, to extend your tour?

PT: To extend our tour, no. We couldn't wait to get back to the States, mainly because we had our children, and we wanted them—you know, wanted the grandparents and family to have that—to have the kids know who their grandparents were. Bill's mother had come over and my parents had come over, but we really wanted to be back in the States so we could be closer—closer to family. But I think, you know, if it were just Bill and I, we probably would have stayed there forever and traveled and toured around and it would have been fine. But—

TS: But for your children.

PT: For your children's sake, yeah.

TS: And then you got—then you—after this, you went back—is there anything more that you wanted to add about your time in Germany?

PT: No, other than—you know, it's sweet memories and some bittersweet memories. [chuckles]

TS: Right, right. Well, with—So—

PT: It was hard living. Day to day living was hard.

TS: Because—just because he was working such long hours?

PT: Because he was working, and—

TS: You didn't really see each other very much.

PT: Yeah, we didn't see each other very much, and I was working in the nighttime and you know, just—fortunately, our child care was okay once we had the nanny, but in between, once you've lost it and you're waiting for it—for another one incoming, and it just seemed like, you know—daily existence was rough, but—you know, that kind of got smoothed out over time, and then it was okay.

TS: And then, I think you had said that when you went back, you were going to Walter Reed?

PT: Right.

TS: And your husband got an assignment to Washington state.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Washington state, right.

TS: The wrong Washington.

PT: Exactly, you know. Do you not know there's a Washington D.C. and a Washington state, you people? [chuckles]

TS: So they got that—the JAG worked that out.

PT: The JAG worked that out, and Bill was stationed at the Pentagon, and I was assigned to Walter Reed. And I was the head nurse of the surgical intensive care unit, which is the largest intensive care unit in the army. I had—what was her first name?—Elaine Mayo was my head nurse at that time.

TS: And so, that's quite a responsibility, I would think.

PT: Oh yes. And Elaine was a real go-getter, like someone else that—that I knew in the same—but I learned a lot from her, you know. I learned the ropes of the job, and I knew that she was leaving the area, and I didn't know that I was going to be taking over, however, and then I was told that, yes, it would be my unit and—and that was when I said, "I've got to fly with this," and I just thought, you know, "My blood, sweat, and tears are going into this job." And it really—it was a very, very demanding job, because—just the sheer volume of people now that I'm working—that are working for me or that are under my care.

TS: How many did you have?

PT: You know, hold that a second.

TS: Yeah, you bet.

PT: Because I have—I think I have a—

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, can I start it again?

PT: Sure.

TS: Okay. Paula just handed me a nice little—

PT: Kind of mini-bio.

TS: Mini-bio, that's very good. And so, you were quite busy. You supervised thirty-two RNs and thirty paraprofessionals. What's a paraprofessional?

PT: Those are the technicians; the techs; the NCOs [Non-commissioned Officers].

TS: Okay. And these are critically ped—adult and pediatric critically ill patients.

PT: Yes.

TS: Now, how was that? I mean, that's got to be really tough, for the type of patients you're getting.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: It was very tough, and I was still—even though, now, when I was, I think, assistant there—because I remember at one point in time, it was not when I was head nurse but when I was taking care of a patient, a doctor came in, just reamed me out for something. And I just should have stood my guns, but—now I've reduced myself to tears, because I felt so bad that, you know, here—I know what I'm doing, I was a seasoned nurse, you know, kind of by this point, and—I don't remember even what the incident was, I tend to forget those things, but I remember that I cried. And it was—it's a rough environment, because people are critically ill, and you need to be on top of things. And I think eventually, I came to accept it as just crazy is normal. And you know, people coming in—it's a surgical unit, so you've got people coming in and out, going to surgery—going back to surgery, coming here and there. And of course, it's the—the mecca of military medicine, so—and it was not a brand new hospital—certainly not a new hospital. It was being built when I was in nursing school, back in '70—when did I graduate—'75.

TS: Right.

PT: So it was kind of a hole in the ground and came up in the '80s and now they're closing it down completely, so it's kind of gone—gone full circle with me. But I think it—I had—I had my own little office, which I really never had before—office of my own—and sometimes I would just go in there and just try to just get it all together. And I did have good support from the administration, you know, that—and they would come around frequently and see what the needs were. We never would borrow Peter to pay Paul nurses like they do where I currently work, from other areas, so you have your staff and you can call your staff in or you can, you know, get more—get more staff if you need it for whatever the occasion may be.

But I just—I just remember it as relent—working relentlessly. I would start the day off with first having to run PT. So there were a core group of us that would meet, five o' clock in the morning, and you get your PT in, because you had to pass your PT test and get all the physical fitness, you know, training and stuff in first. And then a quick

shower and get to work, and then the day would go on, and you know, sometimes you're not home until, you know, five or six o' clock, or sometimes beyond that. And that was just draining, physically, with the types of patients that we had, and the—the—well, it didn't seem like—you never had enough staff, at the time.

TS: Right. It was like—because Walter Reed, this is where, like congressmen go to, right?

PT: Right, yes.

TS: Did you have—did you ever have that kind of treatment?

PT: Yes, I had—I think he was a senator at the time—Joe Biden, who's now Vice President of the United States of America, when he had his brain surgery, he was one of my patients at Walter Reed.

TS: Oh, I'd forgotten that he had that.

PT: Yeah, he was there, so—that was a lifetime ago for him, too, I'm sure. But you did have—so you had a lot of VIPs, you know. I had a lot of people coming through that—you know, but I was always very proud to take them on a tour of the unit and show them, you know, what we're all about and what we're doing and so forth. And—

TS: So that's kind of like a political atmosphere, a little bit. I mean, just in how you had—like you say, VIP treatment.

PT: Right, VIP treatment, and there was a VIP suite, of course, at Walter Reed, too, so—

TS: Oh, there was?

PT: Yes, yes. I didn't work that unit, but that was a separate unit. I did survey that unit when I was at the White House, then, you know, for future use for our presidents. But it was not an area that I worked in; I worked the critical care area. But when people—they would want to see, you know, the—the area.

TS: But I mean, what—so I guess what I'm getting at here is, like, when you're thinking about, "Okay, I got—I'm very busy, I have all these—" you know, "There's all these patients, all these people I have to take care of," and then you have these VIPs coming through. That would seem like an—I don't know.

PT: An added headache.

TS: Well, yes. [both laugh] You know?

PT: But you know, generally as the head nurse, you weren't—I tried to keep myself out of staffing if I could. So if we had enough staff to allow me to be out of staffing, I would. So

I didn't get myself tied up with, you know, two, three, or four patients, or one or whatever.

TS: So you were able—free to do these kind of things.

PT: So I was able to do that, but not all of the time. Sometimes if you just didn't have the staff, then you're doing that, as well as then doing your other job when you get done with that, and making assignments, and you know, just getting ready for the next shift to come in, and people—you know, civilians calling in sick or, you know—it's just always—it was, you know, just, kind of, one thing after another. And you know, it's nice now to get a phone call from my hospital to say, "Hey, we're short today, can you help us out?" and say "Gee, sorry, I can't." In the military, it wasn't a "Gee, sorry," you can't.

TS: Come on in.

PT: You just come on in. So you just didn't answer your telephone, and you didn't—you didn't have caller ID to know who's—who's calling—

TS: Did you have those, like—

PT: —so you answer it, you know you're going in. [chuckles]

TS: I was thinking about, you know, the snow call list. Did you—

PT: Oh, yeah!

TS: Did you have—But how—how did you deal with that, like, because, I mean, you have pretty heavy storms sometimes in this area?

PT: Yeah, yeah. You just stayed. The person who worked the night before couldn't be released until they had someone to take their place or it's called abandonment. [chuckles]

TS: So you just stayed—

PT: You just stayed.

TS: —and worked late.

PT: Yeah, and a lot of times, I mean, even in the civilian world, you know, you may end up spending the night at the hospital, or spending the day as the case may be, if you can't—if you can't get home or the staff doesn't come in and you work over extra, and you're too tired to drive home or to get home. So, yeah.

TS: So that's your responsibility as a nurse.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Patients have to be taken care of—as a nurse, yeah.

TS: I see.

PT: And it's not so much—it's not a military thing, it's, you know, same thing in the civilian world. I can't leave my patients until I've got someone to take care of them, and yeah, you work with a skeleton crew and they might not get fluffed and stuffed as much as you would want them to, but they're not going to die on your time, either. You make sure you have a good monitor tech [chuckles] watching those monitors.

TS: What did you like best about this position?

PT: I think the fact that I had some experience behind me—I had years behind me—and I felt Walter Reed, first of all, was just—to me, a sacred place. And the chief of the hospital at the time, Jim Rumbaugh—actually, he was chief when I was there, he ended up being [killed]—dying in a parachute accident in Honduras, and that was a tragic thing for the army when that happened to him. And that was in '88, he's been dead several years now, but he was chief of Walter Reed. And we—we had known each other when I was a nursing student; he was working in the emergency department. But he was a psychiatrist by trade, and as a commanding general of Walter Reed, he had no desk in his office. He had a couch. He was a psychiatrist. And he would get out and make rounds, visiting people, and just the most wonderful person, who—you knew that he cared about his soldiers, he cared about his nurses, he cared about everybody. And when I told them, "I'm the new head nurse on this unit here, and it's going to kill me," [laughing], you know, he was supportive.

He said, "Let's talk about it."

TS: You got to sit on the couch.

PT: Yeah, got to sit on the couch. But I think it was a much—I was very proud, and you know, when you're proud of something, it shows, and you take care of it, and you know, your heart is where your treasure lies, and—and my heart certainly was in it; that's why I say I gave my blood, sweat, and tears. I would do anything for that place, because I loved where I was, I loved what Walter Reed stood for, I loved the people who were there, and I had experience behind me. I had to—I had to perform, you know, and if I wanted to aim further out the horizon, I had to make this a good assignment.

Well, and it must have been good enough for somebody to observe, because Dr. Hutton, John Hutton, who turned out to be a White House doctor to President [Ronald Wilson] Reagan, his personal physician, was a general surgeon at Walter Reed at the time that I was there in the [surgical intensive care—PT clarified later] unit. So you know, he would bring patients in and out, and he'd always stop and talked to me, and he told me at

one time that, you know, one of their nurses was leaving, and "I'd like to see you in there."

"Well, fine, but I don't think I have a say in the matter." [chuckles]

And—but it was actually true that one of the nurses was leaving, and that the chief nurse has to let it be known that the position's available, and then the—the chief of every hospital sends forth the candidates to the White House, but we'll get into that later. Still back at Walter Reed, but it was through John Hutton, I think that—

TS: Well, we can get into it, that's okay.

PT: Okay. Well, that's probably a good transition area, because here now I had been at Walter Reed, I was the assistant head nurse of that—of the surgical ICU for a year, and then I was closing in on my second year as the head nurse, and so I knew that I would ultimately be leaving Walter Reed. And so, when he told me that—Diane Capps was the name of the nurse who preceded me, army nurse—that she was going to be leaving, he said that, you know, he would like to see me there, that I operate a good ship—pretty good ship. So, okay, but this is the army, it's a tank, and we run it like a tank, or bulldozer.

The way the selection criteria is for a nurse to the White House is that the [army] chief nurse of every hospital through the United States and overseas—the chief nurse lets it be known that the position for White House nurse is available. Now, I had never known this beforehand until it came time for this one. And so, then they ask the chief nurse to send forth the candidates that they think would be good for that position. There are certain criteria to meet. Number one, you have to be in the military. [chuckles]

TS: Right.

PT: I'm only going to speak army, but navy and air force, it's the same process. So the army—you have to be in the army for at least eight years. You have to be a critical care nurse or emergency room nurse for—for obvious reasons.

TS: Right, right.

PT: You have to have your—when you're talking about your fitness reports, your officer efficiency reports, your OERs, walk-on-water efficiency reports. Within the army's height and weight restrictions, health fitness advocate, non-smoker, da-da-da-da-da. So you have—you've punched your ticket, you've attended the advanced course, the career course, the—you know, whatever course along the way; you've done all of that. So, on paper, everybody's equal. It's a matter, then, of the chief nurse selecting who she wants to go to the White House for the interview. So, when I told my boss—this was before I knew that this position was available, I was closing in on the year and a half, and I just told my boss, "I need a new job." [chuckling] I said, "I need a new life. I can't do this much longer."

And a couple weeks later she comes up to me, and she says, "How would you like a job at the White House?"

And I said—I thought she was talking about this restaurant up the street called the White House; be a cook, a baker, candlestick maker, get out of nursing.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: And she goes, "No, no, no, *the* White House."

And I says, "What do you do as a nurse at the White House?"

"I don't know," she says, "Nothing's really written down about the job, but you'll travel."

"Well, nice pat on the back, but got two little kids, and if I'm going to be gone more than I'm going to be home, thanks, but no thanks."

She says, "Well, why don't you go home and talk to your husband about it."

So of course, I go home, I tell my husband, "I think I'm being considered for a job as a White House nurse, but I don't know anything about it."

And of course, he's ecstatic for me, and he says, "Yeah, tell them—go for the interview."

And I said "Well, you're missing the big picture. You want to lose your wife and you want to lose the mother of your children?" [chuckles] And I always say, you know, every now and then, men have a bit of common sense for us women, and sure enough, you know, I thought "Well, that makes sense, I'll tell her I'm interested. I don't need to commit to anything until I see if I actually go for the interview."

But he says "Throw your name in the hat."

So I go to work the next day and said, "I'll throw my name in the hat."

So, she tells me that, "Yes, you're going to go for an interview." And it was March 15, and that was the day of my interview. Put on my little green army uniform, jump on the Metro. Of course, you don't want to be late for this interview, so I'm sure I'm there an hour beforehand, and I'm making laps around the—have you been to D.C.? The wrought-iron gate that surrounds the White House and the Old Executive Office Building; I'm making laps around that, kind of peering in the wind—in the gate, wondering if this'll be my place of employment; what day and what time can I get in there. Well, finally, I'm on Pennsylvania Avenue, and I'm at the main gate there. And I give them my information, tell them that I'm here for an appointment with the medical unit.

And I had one of these out of body experiences, where this gate finally opens so I can get through; that's the pearly gates of heaven, the white mansion's in the distance, there's somebody far off there, and they're waving; that's got to be Saint Peter. So I'm walking up the golden—the golden gate.

TS: [chuckling]

PT: And it turns out the person waving in the distance was the girl that I ultimately replaced, Diane Capps. So Diane takes me upstairs to the medical unit. This was now in the—actually, in the Old Executive Office Building, because there's a White House, you know, proper; the office in the White House itself for the president, vice president, and

VIPs, and all the tourists, and then we have our office in the Old Executive Office Building.

So she takes me there, introduces me to people, and this is kind of a lot of fun. So then they sat down and they just, you know, wanted to know about me, what my background was, and showed me around the place, told me what I actually would be doing, and I found out the most important thing is that there were four nurses—there were two army nurses, one navy nurse, one air force nurse—and that we would rotate the travel that the president did. We would go in advance of him to set up a medical plan, and someone would be flying with him, or whenever he leaves the compound of the White House there is a nurse and a doctor that accompany him. So the four of us, we could rotate it. Hey, that's doable. Be nice to get away for a little bit. No problem.

TS: So it's not every time, but rotating basis.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: It's not every time, but we would rotate—on a rotating basis.

TS: Interesting.

PT: Yeah, so I thought, "Well, that's good."

So, by the time I finished this interview, I wanted this job. I really wanted this job. I thought, "This is a job I could do. I think this would be just a wonderful window in history to have."

So, it seemed like a millennium from March until I, you know, finally found out that I had gotten the job. Well, listen to this. My husband and I, with our children, are in—are up at West Point, New York. My brother was stationed there, so we had gone up for the weekend to visit him. We have a Spanish-speaking nanny, Rosie, who is just a gem. Rosie meets us in the garage as we pull in. she's holding a vase with three white roses.

She says to me, when we got out of the car, "Congratulations, you gotta[sic] the job!"

TS: You got to the job?

PT: I gotta; I gotta the job. You know, she's Spanish—she's Hispanic, so I got the job; "You gotta the job."

TS: I see.

PT: And I just stared at her and I thought, "I can't believe someone would call and leave a message with a Spanish-speaking nanny that I got a job as important as the White House nurse job; they would leave a message!" [both laugh] Oh, no. I had to wait till Monday to

call and find out if I "gotta" the job or if she misunderstood and I no "gotta" the job. So—but I "gotta" the job.

TS: Well, did—had she got the roses for you?

PT: Yeah, Rosie got the roses for me.

TS: Oh, that was sweet.

PT: Oh, she is. I mean, we were so blessed in having [Rose—PT clarified later]—I could not have done the White House job without Rosie. I mean, she had more patience for my sons than I did.

TS: And how old were your sons then?

PT: They were—Then, Evan was in first grade, and Eric was—six—seven and four, six and three; something like that. And so, of course—but Evan—yeah, Evan is in—he's in first grade, because he's waiting for the bus line. He—And he's kind of way above his—his mentality is way above, pretty much, the other kids in the neighborhood. And he is telling the kids that—he had just a huge imagination—telling the kids that, "My mother is going to be the nurse for the President of the United States of America."

And of course they look at him like, "Yeah, you're crazy, you're blowing smoke again." You know, they're thinking, "That guy is crazy." And it wasn't until they actually found out that was real, I had that whole bus line at my door wanting my autograph.

TS: [laughs]

PT: He became king of the classroom because I took his whole class on a tour of the White House once I was there, and that was—you know, that was everything to them. And this was during the Reagan administration, and at the end of the tour—I took a hundred first graders [on a tour of the White House]. At the end of the tour, I got back—or it was a week or so later, I got back one hundred thank you cards from each of these kids. But at the end of the tour, I gave every one a little bag of jelly beans; Ronald Reagan jelly beans. So everybody thanks me for the jelly beans, a couple thank me for the tour. But the jelly beans, that was [a hit for them—PT clarified later].

TS: [laughs] Yeah.

PT: [coughs] So.

TS: So tell me—tell me—so, what was it like—actually, if you could remember your first day on the job at the White House.

PT: I can remember my first day on the job. I should bring in that album that shows you the picture of my first day on the job; me meeting Ronald Reagan. Dr. John Hutton was the

physician to President Reagan at the time, and I had gone to work in the medical unit. Now, I need to tell you what—because it was kind of a multifaceted job. Our main reason for being White House nurse is to support the president and vice president—mainly the president, but can be worked up for the vice president—whenever they leave the compound of the White House. So that means, if he's anywhere in the Washington D.C. area, there is a nurse and a doctor that are with him, in separate cars of the motorcade, because if you don't want to blow us away both at the same time, and there is a medical plan in place—put in place by a nurse that has done the planning for this trip. So if there is a medical emergency, you know exactly where—which hospital you utilize, kind of who's going to be taking care of him, where he'll be, da-da-da-da-da. You've talked to the hospital, they're aware of it, they're ready to receive if need be. If he's coming here to Greensboro, the trips are assigned. "Paula, you're going to Greensboro, North Carolina."

My first [question] is, "Where's Greensboro, North Carolina?"

So I get out the map, and we had—each of us had a different colored pushpin, and whenever we went to a city, we'd stick a pin in the map of the United States, and then we had a world map, and we'd do the same thing for the countries that we'd go to. So, it was because of the assassination attempt on President Reagan that the medical unit came to do what it does in supporting the president in a medical emergency mode.

TS: Yeah, I was going to ask, now, had it been—had it been different prior to that?

PT: Yes. Prior to the assassination attempt, there was not a doctor in the car—in the motorcade, nor a nurse in the motorcade. There was a medical unit, but we didn't—that wasn't our reason for being. That was to take care of, you know, the whole entourage, the staff, and everybody there; give allergy shots and immunizations, whatnot. But after the assassination attempt, it was really a great call made by a Secret Service agent who realized the president was coughing up blood as they headed to the White House, who did the turnaround to George Washington University Hospital that saved the president's life.

So at that time, the capitol plan came to be. And what the capitol plan is—there's American College of Surgeons association, within the United States. They said, "We were lucky our president wasn't killed. We need to have a plan in place so that we know, whenever the president comes to whatever city, where he can go to get level—number one—level one trauma [care—PT clarified later]. If you don't have a level one trauma or a level two trauma or where we can go—the closest, most appropriate facility." So they established this book—[coughs] Excuse me.

TS: Do you want to stop for a second, refill your glass?

[Recording Paused]

PT: Alright, the plan.

TS: The plan. Okay, so let me turn it back on. Okay, we had a nice little break here, so—you're telling me that after the assassination attempt, there was a plan made.

PT: Right. The American College of Trauma Surgeons got together, and they said, "We need to have a plan so that regardless of where the president goes, we'll have a plan in place to receive him."

So they developed what is called—it's a book called *The Capitol Plan*. It is a state-by-state listing where the medical unit at the White House can go in Greensboro—go to North Carolina, there will be a point of contact in there that we can call to say, "Tell me about the medical resources in Greensboro." And he will tell you what's available in Greensboro; level one trauma center would be in Winston-Salem. Depending where the president is going, you'd want to use that one or Moses [H.] Cone [Memorial] Hospital, which is a level two trauma center; where I work.

So, I would then pick up the *American Guide to Hospitals*, find out who the administrator is in the hospital, once we kind of decide on the hospital we need to go to. Make a phone call to him, let him know that, "The president is coming to Greensboro, North Carolina, during these days, during this time, and in the event of an emergency, we would like to utilize your facility." I would ask for the administrator to give me a trauma surgeon that I can contact, come in advance and sit down and talk to him, and we would set up a plan. There would be communications people, Secret Service agents, involved in this planning. There will be, during the time that the president is in town, a Secret Service agent posted in the emergency room of the hospital.

TS: The whole time?

PT: The whole time, yes; the entire time. Regardless of where he is, that agent will be in—so that if the president should need to come, he will be the first one to be notified and they get into action.

TS: I see.

PT: We tell the hospital, "Do not close down operations, do not close down your operating room, but keep in mind that we are in town during this time frame. If there's an emergency, we're coming, we're not waiting." [chuckles]

TS: Right.

PT: "Be ready for us."

Now, if—and we would then decide in which intensive care unit we would put the—the president. Now, every hospital, you know, that has a VIP suite wants you to have their VIP suite for the president. Well, I tell them, "That's very kind of you, and the traveling entourage would love to utilize that space, but if the president comes, it's going to be nasty, it'll require intensive care. Otherwise, you know, we can handle [it]—" we carry medical bags about the size of your suitcase there, that [are] full of medicines,

intubation equipment, IVs, things that we could utilize to stabilize him, and—and the traveling party as well if they needed something.

TS: So you can take care of so much, but if it gets to a certain level of care, then—

PT: Right, yeah. If he's shot, then obviously we're going. If he has a heart attack, we're coming in, you know. So if it requires more than just, you know, what we can handle out of our bags, then we're coming in.

TS: Now, did you know this before you went to the job?

PT: I did not know—no. I didn't know what I would be doing, and that was why, you know, going for that interview was so important for me, to realize that—but after the interview, I knew this was what I would be doing. And that was scary in itself, because in that bag is the president's life. There is intubation, which is giving him an airway, so if he loses airway, I'm going to be the one to have to put the airway in. So they would have us go to our service hospitals, I would go back to Walter Reed, and practice intubating patients, so that I would know how to do that. That's not something a nurse normally does. Now, if you're lucky to have a physician with you, he certainly could do that. Except that Dr. Burton Lee, who preceded Dr. Hutton [and became the White House physician to President H.W. Bush—PT corrected later—Dr. [Burton] Lee was a cancer doctor to the Bush family. He took care of their daughter, Robin, who died of leukemia when she was four years old. He is not a hands-on type of doctor.

[extraneous comments about food redacted]

TS: Well, I have to say, now, since you're talking on tape here, that you have to—should introduce yourself to the transcriber.

Bill Trivette: Oh!

TS: Introduce yourself.

BT: Oh, I'm Bill Trivette.

TS: There we go.

PT: The maid here. [chuckling]

TS: That's right.

[Extraneous Comments Redacted, Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, so go ahead.

PT: Okay, so where were we?

TS: You were explaining how the—that you had the little bag, and you would only go—

PT: Intubation, right, so.

TS: Oh, right, you're getting training.

PT: Right. So we would go for training.

TS: Oh, but you were also talking about Dr. Burton Lee.

PT: Dr. Burton Lee was the physician who followed Dr. Hutton at the White House for President Bush. He had a military physician [Doctor John Hutton—PT clarified later] during the first part of his term, and then Dr. Lee during the other part. And Dr. Lee was a cancer doctor who gave up his cancer practice at [Memorial] Sloan-Kettering [Cancer Center], New York to come to be the White House physician. He saw his role as much more of an administrative role than hands-on role. So if the president required intubation, ta-da, it would be me. If the president would require hospitalization in a civilian hospital, I would—well, let's say military hospital, first of all. If he were in a military hospital, the protocols, the equipment, everything is pretty much the same, you know everything, so I would just work—I would be his nurse in a military hospital, he would be my patient for the day, for however long. If it's a civilian hospital, I would work in tandem with the civilian nurse that's assigned to him, for several reasons. Number one, familiarization; he knows me, he would feel much more comfortable having someone take care of him that he knows. Number two is more of a security measure. If he required morphine, I may go to another unit and check out morphine from that unit to come and give to him. You don't know if Republicans or Democrats are taking care of him. [chuckles] It's just a security measure that we would use for him. So, that's the only distinction there. Overseas, we would go in advance and really, depending upon where he's going overseas, you may need to fly in a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] hospital for him. There is capability on Air Force One; there is a medical unit there. It's not an operating room theatre, so if he needed that, we may need to bring in a little operating room theatre. But whatever we would need, maybe have a ship in a harbor if he's going to be out to sea somewhere.

TS: What about with the other nurses that—so there's two army, one navy, and one air force.

PT: Right.

TS: And so, how did you guys coordinate the schedule?

PT: Well, pretty much, it was a rotational thing. And we had a—administrative people that really worked the schedule for us, and they would just say, "You're up for this trip, [coughs] it's your turn to—you get the next trip, and that's going to Chicago;" whatever.

TS: So just rotated that?

PT: Yeah, right, just rotated. However, if he were going to your hometown or your home state, you could say, "Hey, that's my home state, you know, give me that trip." And you know, so you can kind of hicker and dicker amongst yourselves and amongst, you know, people.

For instance, when President Bush went to Japan. I was the first married nurse with children at the White House [comments about food redacted], and Art Wallace was the first Japanese—well, he was the first male nurse, and he was of Japanese descent. So when the president went to Japan, it only made sense for Art to go there. So Art went in advance and did all the planning for this trip. I fly in on Air Force One with the president to Akasaka. As soon as the president [lands], he's invited to a tennis match with the prime minister, Kiichi Miyazawa.

I told Art, at the tennis match, that, "Since your family is here," I said, "I'm happy to work both the day and the night events." Normally we would split; I would do daytime and Art would do the evening events or vice versa. But I said, "You want to be with your family, take advantage of it, because I have nowhere else to go. I can't go anywhere else while he's in town, anyway, so I'd just as soon be here." So of course, Art thought that was a great idea. So I'm at the tennis match with him, and this is when—normally, whenever the president eats anything or drinks anything, the preparation of it is observed by a navy steward, or it's prepared by a navy steward. We did not have a navy steward at the tennis court, and I'm not insinuating that he was given bad food or bad drink. But the president, after he loses the tennis match to the prime minister—and the Bushes are great tennis players. They're not great at losing tennis.

TS: And they're very competitive, too, aren't they?

PT: Yes, very, very competitive, yes. So—but he loses to the prime minister. Of course, he had just flown how many thousands of miles and so, whatever. Well, then he is offered sushi by the prime minister. President Bush loves sushi as much as he loves broccoli.

TS: Which means not at all, then.

PT: That means not at all. But of course, he's going to eat the sushi, because he's a very [accommodating—PT corrected later] guest, and he does not want to, you know—what do you call it?

TS: Offend.

PT: Offend, yes; offend the prime minister. We go back to the Akasaka Palace, which is the most gorgeous palace in all of the world. And a couple hours later, I get a phone call. "Paulita—" which was President Bush's term of endearment for me, because they had a nanny whose name was Paula, and he never wanted confusion, so I was Paulita. "Paulita, I need something for my diarrhea."

And I said, "Mr. President, better out than in."

He says, "Oh, no, no, I have this meeting to go to tonight;" this—and it was a big dinner, big—great big event with the ambassador.

And I said, "Let me talk to the doctor, I'll get back to you." Of course, what are you going to do?

So, I knew that we could not talk him out of not going to the event, so he said, "Just give me something to bind me up." [both laugh]

So, I—we—we leave for the dinner, we go to the dinner.

TS: Right.

PT: Prior to the dinner, there is a receiving line, and the president shakes a few hands, "Excuse me", he goes behind a curtain, there's a bathroom. He gets sick in the bathroom, throws up, gets vomit on his tie, [takes] off the tie, Secret Service agent gives him a new tie, he goes back out, shakes a few more hands, "Excuse me" da-da-da-da-da, back he goes. So this is going on.

TS: So he gets sick.

PT: I tell people—he was sick. I tell people, you can know the number of times he got sick by the number of Secret Service agents in this room—

TS: Without ties?

PT: Without ties. [laughter] So. The doctor and I were discussing the fact that—now, this is Dr. Allan Roberts, he was a cardiologist, navy doctor, who was with us on this trip. So we're making plans that we probably need to move toward the head of the table, because we just had a feeling he's getting dehydrated, and when the president stands up to toast, he's going to do one of these vasovagal numbers and kind of go down and out on us. Well, we don't have time to get to the head of the table when all of a sudden, you see him—and I don't know if you recall the footage.

TS: I remember, I remember.

PT: Okay. He vomits into the prime minister's lap. You probably recall the Secret Service agent that jumps over the table to get to the president. You probably do not recall the nurse in the little red dress who scurries around the table, who is there, would be moi [me]. I looked down—by this time, they have him on the floor. He looks grey, he looks dead. My heart just leaped out of me, I reach for a pulse on the president, it was very rapid and thready. I wasn't sure if it was his pulse or mine.

TS: Oh! What does thready mean?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: It was one of those things—It means, you know, just very week; very fast and just kind of [makes humming noise]; it's not a good strong, slow, pulsating thing. In other words, you know, he was, I'm sure, dehydrated, and to accommodate for that the heart's going to beat faster. So, you know, this isn't good, when it's rapid and fast and weak pulse. You don't want a fast, weak pulse, you want a nice slow, strong, steady pulse. So I thought, "This is not good."

Well, all of a sudden he kind of wakes up underneath the table, and then it kind of gets to be a comedy under the table, and you know, he's got vomit all over him. Well, I know him enough to know he's going to stand up in this crowd of people; he's not going to go out in a wheelchair or on a stretcher, he's going to walk through this crowd of people. Got to get the vomit off. I don't think about a napkin, a tablecloth, anything, I just take my bare hand, and, you know—other duties as assigned, in the military, and just get that vomit off of his hair for him. Well, then later—there was a camera during this entire time, which never should have been. They should have just cut the camera, but it was going, and Secret Service later—at a later date, they're playing this camera over, kind of looking at the events, how things went. And they say, "And there's Paula, just patting his head, saying, 'It's okay, Mr. President—'" I'm there scraping off the vomit. But, so, of course he did stand up, we got escorted out. I was given orders by the doctor to stay with the president. [Mrs. Bush stayed to deliver the speech—PT corrected later]

[Extraneous Comments Redacted]

PT: I would stay with the president in his room until Mrs. Bush returned from giving the rest of his speech. Well, you can imagine how tall the president was, one inch—one inch high, and all he wanted to do was to crawl into a hole and disappear, quickly. But President Bush never wants to inconvenience a soul. I mean, he is just such a gentleman.

And he kept telling me, "Paula, just go back to your room, I don't need you," you know, "I'm fine now," blah blah blah. How do you argue with your commander in chief? That's just a rough thing to do, in my mind. But I knew that if I could find something positive in it for me, that he would buy into it.

So, I—we got—we're back at his—at the palace room, and I said "Mr. President, I have a room next to the greatest leader of the free world. I have a TV, a VCR, a refrigerator fully stocked, I have a hallway full of Secret Service agents. Don't blow it for me, don't make me go!"

So, "Okay, you can stay."

TS: That was very nice.

PT: So then—yeah, it's very nice. When Mrs. Bush returns from the speech I tell her, "I'm here for the duration, I'm right next door, I will be checking on him through the nighttime. If you need anything in between, you know, knock three times on the ceiling or whatever, and I would come in." Of course, he did fine through the nighttime. The next day, we cut back on his schedule, and the following day we leave and we go home, we're heading back toward Andrews Air Force Base, and here, the other doctor—well, there were two doctors; Dr. Lee was with us, and Dr. Roberts. Dr. Roberts tells us that he, the doctor, had been having chest pains through this entire flight—through the entire tour.

TS: Who had been having chest pains?

PT: Dr. Roberts, the physician.

TS: Oh, my! Okay.

PT: [chuckles] [coughs] So, we end up at Andrews Air Force Base, and the president is whisked away on Air Force One is any fixed-wing aircraft that the president is on, Marine One if it's a rotary, a helicopter. So President and Mrs. Bush are whisked away to the White House. The ambulance is there to take Dr. Roberts to the hospital, and I lived to tell the whole story. And so, it was a—it was a very—what do you call it—challenging trip, one that you did not expect. But the president did fine and he knows I tell the story, and he says "You've got to get a different story."

TS: [laughs] "Make me look a little better."

PT: Yeah, right. But I always tell people the only presidential thing I ever got on my little red dress was presidential vomit. And you've got the joke. Most people do.

TS: [chuckles] And he likes that part of the story, I'm sure.

PT: Yeah, right.

TS: Well, when you—you started talking about working at the White House.

PT: Yes. A reason for being?

TS: Well, I'm interested in that first meeting that—like, your first, like—this was—this is a wonderful story, but what was your—

PT: Okay.

TS: Like, you know, you had to have had—I mean, I'm not going to tell you how you felt, but I can only imagine how you must have felt.

PT: Okay, no, I will tell you. First of all, in order to get into the White House, you need to have a badge that you wear around—a little colored badge on a lanyard, and you just flash this badge and you go through. Of course, I didn't have that badge. I was still waiting for my security clearance [to be approved. The Secret Service performed a security check on my entire family which was not much larger than most families.—PT clarified later]

TS: That's true.

PT: Took a long time, like almost a year. So every day I came to work, I had to go through the magnetometers, go through everything, until I finally got my badge, where I could just whisk myself right through. So.

TS: And yet, you can be right next to the president. [chuckles]

PT: Right.

TS: That's interesting.

PT: And you wore little badges on your lapel which would indicate the proximity that you could be to the president. Now, Secret Service had a Secret Service badge, and every day they changed color of their badges, so if one of their [badges—PT corrected later] would get stolen or end up missing, who—you know, they changed the color, and whoever didn't have that color on, you know, be wary, they might not be who they think they are. And we had—our little pins gave us proximity to the president as close as what you would need. You know, I could do CPR on him, so I could be right on him, was my proximity to the president.

So my first morning at work, of course I'm there early, I'm not coming late, and I get there before even the clinic closes, and I report to the clinic in the Old Executive Office Building, on the first floor. Now, in that clinic, we also served the two thousand people that work on the compound. Which is what we do when we're not traveling, we're not planning a trip for the president, that's where we are, that's our base, where they're writing up your report, you're planning your next report, you're taking care of patients, which are the staff that work on the compound of the White House; civilians, military. We're limited in scope to what we can do for them, but I mean, anybody can come in; they've got a headache, they want their blood pressure checked, they need allergy shots, whatever, they come in. The only place where civilians come in, don't have to pay a penny for their medicines, for their—for anything, and there's no waiting, essentially. You might have to sit down a few minutes, but you know, it was a great bonus for the civilians who worked at the White House; military, you know. But we did not do lab, x-rays, that sort of thing, but then you would tell them, "You need to go get an x-ray of your chest," or whatever.

TS: Just like a clinic—like a regular clinic, but—

PT: Like a clinic, yeah, right. But we didn't have x-ray capability at all. But that was a very different type of nursing than what I had ever done before; I did critical care; "What do you mean you've got an earache," you know? "Get over it!"

TS: [laughs] "You need an aspirin?"

PT: So I had to learn—yeah. I had a whole new mindset of things I had to learn.

TS: I see.

PT: And that was a little bit different, too, and you learn the terminology to use too. [chuckles] And also, that was kind of funny.

But Dr. Hutton was on that day, and around noontime he said, you know, "Paula, come on, we're going to go meet the president."

And of course, I was just—I was nervous as—

TS: Did you expect that you were going to meet him the first day?

PT: No, I did not, no, no. Because many people hadn't even met him until they—they had traveled with him. And so, I did not [expect to meet him—PT clarified later]—but, turns out that I had an Uncle Ray, Ray Jackan, who worked [for him] when Reagan was governor of California. He had a ranch in California and my uncle was the foreman of his ranch in California. Small world, isn't it?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Small world, absolutely.

PT: And—which I'm sure had nothing to do with me getting this job, but I had told Dr. Hutton that my uncle had worked for him, and he said "You need to come over and meet the president."

So he takes me over to meet the president, and you know, I was trying to think, "What do I say, what do I do?" And—knowing full well that I'm just going to lose it all, and I'll just be speechless when I get there; I'll just be in awe. Because President Reagan truly was one of these awe-inspiring people. Because you look up to him; he was tall, very presidential-looking; the nicest man. Dr. Hutton introduces me. So we're going over—I had not been in the Oval Office yet, at this point I'd only been in the Old Executive Office Building. And I was just amazed with how—just with my little pin on—I mean, with my pin and then my badge, I could just walk through. Nobody stopped you, Secret Service didn't stop you, you just walked right through, they say hey to the doctor and away you go. And we went right into, you know, the—well, at the Oval Office

we stopped to the secretary, because he had someone else with him, and then went in to meet him.

TS: So you met him in the Oval Office?

PT: I met him in the Oval Office. Let me get my book of pictures.

TS: Okay, all right, I'll pause again.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, what day was this again?

PT: My first day, at the Oval Office, meeting my commander in chief as a White House nurse was June 17, 1987.

TS: And we're looking at a picture—

PT: We're looking at a picture of—we're in the Oval Office, President Reagan is in this wonderfully tan, beautiful suit, looking very presidential, as he is, and I am in my 1980s version of Paula Trivette.

TS: It's a beautiful—beautiful picture.

PT: Yeah, that was—that was one thing that, being a White House nurse, you had to have a wardrobe.

TS: Oh, yeah.

PT: Because I was an army nurse, and I had a white nursing uniform, I had my battle dress uniform, my fatigues, and that was all. I had a couple pair of jeans in the closet, a church dress or two in the closet. I did not have a wardrobe for the job. You dressed according to wherever you were going. If it was a black tie event, you wore black tie clothes; white tie, white tie clothes; business suits; dresses. Then you needed camp—camp clothes—you know, Camp David clothes, which are jeans and t-shirts and water gear for, you know, wherever you were. So, my wardrobe had to fully expand.

TS: Did you ever wear your uniform?

PT: Military uniform? One day a month we wore military uniforms. Yeah.

TS: That was just in the White House.

PT: In the White House, yeah.

TS: I see.

PT: But otherwise, not on the job, because you wanted to blend in with the crowd. You—I did not wear a white nurse uniform, ever, because if you were Joe Q on the outside looking in, you see a nurse in a white uniform with a medical bag scurrying around, oh, immediately, "The president must have had a heart attack, something bad has happened, there's a nurse there, something's going on," You know. So it's a public perception—

TS: I see, very good.

PT: —that you just blend in with the public. You carried a suitcase and not a medical bag, so that, you know—or like a briefcase, like everybody else did—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: So it looked normal.

PT: —but the briefcase was full of medical supplies. So that was my first day, and I've got tons of photos here that we can look at later.

TS: Oh, yeah.

TS: So there's meeting—this is when Mrs. Reagan had her mastectomy. That's a wonderful story, which I want to tell.

TS: Well, go ahead and tell it now.

PT: Okay.

TS: It's fine.

PT: Okay. So, I came to the White House in June 17, 1987, this was the first day in the Oval Office. But I have to tell you, when I met the president, of course I knew I would forget what to say [chuckles] and don't even know what my little spiel was, but I said to him, "I believe we know someone in common." And I mentioned the name Ray Jackan. And he just went on and on about what a wonderful person Ray Jackan was, the best foreman he's ever had, and just on and on.

TS: So he knew who Ray Jackan was?

PT: Oh, immediately, he knew who that was, and I told him that that was my uncle, my father—my dad's brother. And so, I think that cemented our relationship. Whenever he saw me he thought of Uncle Ray, and he would—many times, would ask me, you know, about Ray. Now, of course, my Uncle Ray had died by this time, but—but he never forgot him.

So, this is then my very first assignment. Now, when—when you're appointed to the White House, you travel, so I had gone traveling with my—my preceptor, so to speak, at the White House. I would go on trips so I would learn how do you do a presidential trip. And the main thing we do, and we go in advance of the president, is to set up a medical plan. We ask for a trauma surgeon and we sit down with them and talk about, you know, the type of blood we need to have on hold for the president at the hours he's going to be there, who's going to be taking care of him, how it will work, where he will be, they give me a tour of the hospital and we can decide the exact location where he will be. If he needs lab work, the lab's going to come to him. If he needs x-ray, for the most part we hope x-ray can come to him. If it's MRI [Magnetic Resonance Imaging] they'll take me, show me where the scanners are; CAT [Computed Tomography] scan; that type of thing. But for the most part, we don't want him to move any more than what he needs to for security reasons and safety reasons, more than anything. So, we—just lost my train of thought, here.

TS: You were on your first visit—

PT: Yeah, so I'm on my first visit and I'm—we're going up to California; it was actually a Mrs. Reagan trip. And the Pope just happened to be in California at the time, in LA; that was when he had first went to LA—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Which Pope is this?

PT: —September 16, 1987—Pope John Paul [II]. And this lady, actually here I'm pointing to, was Mrs. Reagan's chief executive. Her name is Jane Erkenbeck, and she lives here in Greensboro.

TS: Is that right?

PT: Yes. And she is just a dear. Just one of the classiest ladies you will ever meet. We try to get together for lunch at least once a year, [chuckles] as she has a busy schedule, and so do I. So this was September 16, now—

TS: So you're shaking hands with the Pope.

PT: We're shaking hands with the Pope. That was an awesome experience. I had a whole bag of rosaries—

TS: I bet you did, to bless.

PT: —to give to my family, and all [sorts of—PT clarified later] things to bless, for the Pope, and I hold up my bag, and he blesses all your—all your rosaries and books and whatnot, but everybody had everything—and as you can see, my eyes are closed in adoration of the Pope. [laughs]

Well then, flash back another month ahead, it is October, 1987—and let me see the date on this. Mrs. Reagan was told—this is October 18, a month and two days to the date, Mrs. Reagan finds out that she has a lump on her breast and she is going to be having a mastectomy if it turns out to be a positive for cancer. Well, on Friday, I am told that I will be her nurse at the White House—or, at the hospital, but they told me, "Come Monday morning, you need to go and draw her preoperative bloodwork—"

TS: Okay.

PT: —"while she is in their quarters upstairs." Now—

TS: And this is—we don't know what—what the results are yet of her—

PT: We don't know that. We know that she has a lump on her breast, is all that we know, and so they're going to take her to surgery. And so—But she knows she's going in for this operation, perhaps. So, the worst weekend of my life was from Friday until Monday, because I'm an ICU nurse, I can get blood out of a turnip. The problem was, it was Mrs. Reagan, and I had only known of her reputation as the hatchet lady. I'm barely into the job; I came in June, this is only October, and if I messed up on this job, she will have me out of the job. So, I could not have been more nervous. My husband can attest to the worst weekend, ever, I had in my life. Well, come Monday morning, I get to work very early, and I amass all of my supplies, but I bring only one needle. I knew I would have only one chance, so why bring two needles.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: I have, you know, the linen savers[?], the chucks[?], I have alcohol swabs and the blood tube—tubings and everything that I would need, but I had only one needle. There happened to be a navy corpsman, Chuck Conlin who was in the clinic helping me amass my supplies, and Chuck says, you know "Hey, don't worry about it," you know, "You'll be fine," blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. [All of my clothing had pockets—PT clarified later].

TS: Oh, carrying things around.

PT: Well, now, what we carried most of all is ammonia inhalants, because if we're seeing tourists, and tourists are passing out in the line, generally just take an ammonia inhalant

[makes sniffing noise], sniff under the nose and they wake up. So, you had pockets for your ammonia inhalants, whatever.

TS: Oh, interesting.

PT: So, Chuck takes me to the elevator. Now, I knew that once I got upstairs, I would recognize their room, because I had a tour of their private quarters, and they had this very floral aviary wallpaper, and I would recognize that; it just says, whoa, this blows you away. So of course, though, I did have Secret Service agents that rode up in the elevator with me. They point to the elevator—point to the door for their bedroom. So. [knocks on table] Knock, knock, knock, on the door, and the door is two feet thick; it's one of these humongous doors.

And I hear this voice, "Come in." I open this door, and here, sitting in bed in his pajamas, reading the morning newspaper, is the President of the United States of America, Ronald Reagan. I just had to stop in my tracks.

I said, "I cannot believe that I, Paula Trivette, of little Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, is standing in the bedroom of the President of the United States of America." It was just one of those out of body experiences; I've got to pinch my skin, see if I'm dreaming or what here.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: And of course, on the other side of the bed is Mrs. Reagan, and she was somewhat awake, somewhat asleep. Well, I don't even touch her, and she senses movement in the room, and she kind of opens her eyes a little bit, she closes them back, she just pokes out her arm. Now, you know what a tiny little woman this lady is? And I just, in my mind, knew she was not going to have a vein in her body for me, and I was going to have to get some blood out of a turnip, and that just wasn't going to be possible. Well, she puts out [her] arm, and up and down her arm are ropes and ropes of veins. And I thought "Oh, thank you, Jesus!" Which, you know, keeping in mind, us women, aren't we often accused of being full of nothing but hot air?

TS: [chuckles]

PT: And on the little old people those veins roll and you just go in and there's nothing there; they're rolling around, you can't get anything. And I just thought, "Oh, Lord, spare me." In goes the needle, out comes a wellspring of blood. "Thank you, Jesus, my job is secure. I got it, it's okay!" So, I get the blood, I thank her profusely, I excuse myself, I come out of the room, I'm at the top of the stairs waiting for the—I was going to just come down the stairs instead of the elevator. I'm at the top of the stairs, and here is my navy corpsman, Chuck Conlin, reaches in his pocket with an ammonia inhAllant for me, [both laugh] and I said, "I made it, I did it." It was the most gratifying experience I had at the White House to date.

So, we go downstairs and I just told them—I said, "Oh my god, you don't know what an earthshaking thing this was for me."

Well then, she has the surgery and—I should back up, because there is—in President Reagan's book, *The American Way*, he has two pages of good ink that describe this whole incident that I'm going to tell you about next—is that Mrs. Reagan goes into surgery with all the doctors, there's—this is Dr. Hutton, and they had—oh, that's not Dr. Hutton. This is—Dr. Hutton is not on this page, but I will show you Dr. Hutton.

But anyway, Dr. Hutton comes to tell me—he comes out with to the President and myself. The two of us are waiting in a little office off of her bedroom, and he comes out to tell the president that it is a cancer, she does require the mastectomy. So they had Dr. Hutton, who is a general surgeon, and they also have civilians, and—just so you can have their civilian input, too, so they don't say, "Hey, why didn't you think about this," or blah blah blah. So you want civilian and military input from the medical realm.

So they tell me, "Got to have the surgery," and this is the little room that we're in. And the President was sitting here at this desk, I'm here on the couch. Now, this is [Dr.] Larry Mohr, who—Dr. Hutton has left to go back [to surgery—PT clarifies later], Larry Mohr is still kind of hanging out here, and he's getting ready to leave. So he leaves, but they [the other doctors—PT clarifies later], tell [President Reagan—PT clarifies later], that it is cancer, she's got to have the surgery. They're gone. [President Reagan—PT clarifies later],comes over to me, and you could see a little tear streaming down his cheek. Well, what would you do if the president came to you and had a tear streaming down his cheek? I just reached out for him, I gave him a big hug, I, to this day, do not know what it is I said, I cannot remember, it didn't matter. But it was something that comforted him and gave him some solace that, you know, he was—she was being taken care of. Well, from this incident, I have two pages of good ink in his book, *The American Way*, and that was the art—the quote from—or the—the citing in the—

TS: *Parade* magazine?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: —*Parade* magazine, that his son cited that I was there. So I was very honored to have—of all the other nurses that served there, that he had cited me with that one. So anyway—

TS: Now, is this—in this picture, is that you, there?

PT: Yeah, this is me. In my [white bedside nursing uniform—PT clarifies later].

TS: So you're actually wearing your whites.

PT: I'm wearing my whites. Oh, yeah, there I wore my whites, and—yeah, whenever we're in the hospital setting, then I would wear my whites.

TS: Then you would, okay.

PT: If he went—if the president went for a physical, we would wear our whites, so that we were nurses, but other than that—on the compound of the White House, we never wore our whites, when we were there.

TS: Okay.

PT: And I went and got my little pager—this is the little nametag that I wore, and on this side of my uniform—you can't—you cannot see, the—here, that's the pin—

TS: Oh, right, okay.

PT: —right there, that we wear. So everybody has a different—some kind of pin. [coughs] And so, these are all the doctors that were involved, except Dr. Hutton's not on there. And so, she comes—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: And that was at Bethesda?

PT: At Bethesda Naval Hospital [Walter Reed National Military Medical Center]. And I am her day nurse there, and now, you can imagine—here, in this picture—well, you don't see it, but this picture actually was in the *Life* magazine for the end of the year pictures for the whole year, and this is from October '87. That picture is in there, but I am blanked out of the picture.

TS: Oh, are you?

PT: It is the—it is the exact same picture.

TS: And this is a picture of—Mrs. Reagan is laying—

PT: Mrs. Reagan, yeah.

TS: —on her hospital bed.

PT: On her hospital bed, yes.

TS: I'm just describing it for the transcriber.

PT: She's on her hospital bed, the president has brought her a gift, she's in her little nightgown, and she's in her hospital—this is hospital bed, in the room.

TS: So you were erased from that picture.

PT: I was erased from that picture when it was published by *Life* magazine.

TS: Interesting.

PT: Yes. But this is it. And you see, there is writing on some of these pictures—

TS: Well, we'll have to get a copy of that one, then.

PT: Okay, yeah. And actually, we will get—unless I have another one in here, because I do have duplicates of some of these pictures, but some that have personalization on them—

TS: Yes.

PT: —this one says, "To Paula with many thanks and warm wishes, Nancy and Ronald Reagan." Now, when—and these were added on later. Like, this one was taken—Diane Capps, the nurse that replaced me at the White House, she was living with the Reagans in California after he left office, and she lived with them for many years. I went out there—and I'll tell you that later—for six weeks, to give her a break. And so, she told me to bring—or, to send, actually, when she was there, she told me to "send any pictures that you would like to have him autograph for you," because she knew that with his Alzheimer's, he wasn't going to be able to do that very long. So this one, he did for me: "With best wishes and appreciation for your commitment, from Ronald Reagan." So, most of these that are autographed by him, they are personally done by him, when he had his Alzheimer's.

TS: I see.

PT: That one was his too. Anyway, I ended up being her day nurse, so you can imagine—and in here, they don't show, but she's got balloons and flowers and cookies and cakes and pies and candy, and whatever you want is in that room. So every time I'd walk into the room, she would say to me, "Paula, take a cookie. Paula, take a cookie." Kind of like Polly, want a cracker, Polly want a cracker.

I said "Mrs. Reagan, just because you're sick doesn't mean I need to get fat."

The amazing thing she said to me was, "Why don't you take one home for your boys."

I had no idea she knew I was married, had children, I had boys, but sure enough, I take home two cookies. Little Eric, who is, what, four—three or four years old—let's see, he was born—he's four years old. Two bites flat, the cookie's gone. Evan—

TS: He's the one who said that, "My mom is the nurse for the president—"

PT: Nurse; yes, that one.

TS: "—of the United States of America."

PT: United States of America. He is still saving his cookie for his children.

TS: He still has it. [laughs]

PT: Yes. This is just so funny, because he gets out this black construction paper and a paper puncher. And he's punching holes and punching holes in this paper, and I couldn't figure out what he was doing. But then he gets a white piece of paper, and he draws a big circle, that's a chocolate chip cookie, and all these little black punches are the chocolate chips, that he painstakingly, you know, glues, pastes, slobs onto this cookie.

And he says, "Mama, I'm writing a thank you note to Mrs. Reagan," totally unsolicited.

And I just thought, "Oh my goodness."

Well, you know, by the time he finishes it—he said, "You'll have to help me with the spelling."

I said, "Okay, that's no problem."

So by the time he finishes with this thing, the front of it, you know, looks like a typical first grader, there's glue and paste and, you know, globs of stuff on it. And I thought, "Oh, should I give it to her?" but I had to, because he was so sincere about it. So the next day, when I go to—back to Bethesda, I said, "Mrs. Reagan, you will never know how much you touched the heart of two little boys in sending home those cookies." And I told her, "Two bites flat, Eric's cookies is gone, but Evan has a little note for you here." So I give her this note—this card, and she's reading the card, and all of a sudden—I thought she was turning green, I thought she was going to throw up. But no, here is a little tear, come streaming down her cheek. And I just thought, "You know, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are, when you're sick, you're like every other human being in this world. All you want is a little bit of TLC [tender loving care] and some special attention."

And she was just so touched by that card, that I hope she still has it to this day. I just teared up, [because] she got such a bad rap by the press, because all they knew of her was [that she was an actress and what matters to an actress is her face and figure—PT clarified later]. Well, they just really did not know the real Mrs. Reagan, and she was so devoted to her husband, so devoted to her husband, and I mean, she just really loved him.

But she could not have been a better patient. And in my mind, I thought, "Oh, she's not going to want me to check her incision on her breast; she's not going to want this; she's not going to want that." And I was so wrong, because she wanted nothing but to get well and get out of there, and that's exactly what she did, and she was out in no time flat. And I—You know, I helped her the first time out of bed, to the bathroom, to the shower and all, and she just, you know, she did well. However, shortly after that, and I think it's like—here, I'll tell you what the timeframe was. Her mother dies—now, this is October 29, so probably about the twenty-sixth or so of October, so her surgery is on the eighteenth—

TS: So she's in the hospital.

PT: She's in the hospital, she comes home, like, by the twenty-second or so. A couple days later, within a week's time, he [President Reagan] gets notified. Dr. Hutton is notified that her mother has died. So Dr. Hutton is going up with the president to tell her about her mother dying. Dr. Hutton stops in the medical unit—now, I'm in the White House proper medical unit, because I had tourist duty that morning, [both chuckle] so I'm there for the tourists. He tells me to grab my medical bag, "We're going up to see Mrs. Reagan." He tells me that her mother has died, not sure what her reaction would be, he just wants some medical back-up. So I am standing in this little alcove outside of their bedroom. You knew the very moment the commander in chief spoke to her and told her that her mother had died. I knew the very moment the commander in chief stopped speaking, turns, motions for me to come to the bedside. And I'm looking like, "Oh no, I can see her fine from here. Her chest is rising, she's breathing, she's okay. I don't need to come any closer." [coughs] Excuse me. But he has me come into the room, I'm standing at the foot of the bed. Mrs. Reagan has her hands over her eyes and she's just sobbing, and you just know the chilling sob when you realize that your mother has died. She senses movement in the room and she moves her hand from her eyes, and it could have been anybody at the foot of that bed, but she sees it's me, she sits up in the bed and literally pulls me onto the bed with her and we just sobbed.

President Reagan says to Dr. Hutton, "Where do they find such nurses as Paula?"

It wasn't that, it was I was there at a time—but the irony for me of this whole situation is that here I am in the room with the greatest leader of the free world, the most important man in America, nobody matters right now except me to them; that I was the most important person in their life right now; I filled a need for her. And you would have done the same thing, it's just, you know, I happened to be there. And so, that cemented my relationship with both of the Reagans, in just being there. And then, of course, I went on the trip to Phoenix, where her mother's memorial service was, and then this picture is actually in her mother's apartment. Dr. Hutton—this is Dr. Hutton. Now—

TS: Doing dishes. [chuckles]

PT: —he and I—yes. Dr. John Hutton, physician to President Reagan, and I or we are assigned to do KP [kitchen patrol] in Mrs. Reagan's mother's home just after her memorial service in Phoenix, Texas [Arizona—sic], and that is when Mrs. Reagan gave me the little piece of china there.

TS: Oh, describe that.

PT: But I have that—This is—It is a little plate. I actually received several things from her, but this is one that I truly treasure. And one is a little bunny, too, that I treasure for my granddaughter.

TS: This is about the size of a—

PT: It's one, two, maybe three inches in diameter, and—

TS: Maybe not even, yeah.

PT: Yeah, about three. It is a Lamberton Scammell—it's S-C-A-M-M-E-L-L—piece of china, three inches in diameter. The outside border of it is birds and flowers, just like their bedroom wallpaper, pretty much. [chuckling] And it's on a white background, and in the center of the plate is a vase of—or a basket of flowers. And it's just the cutest little thing, I've just treasured it. I think it's—it was Mrs. Reagan's mother's, part of her china collection and she gave it to me for helping them out in the kitchen. And so, I use it to serve as a holder for a very flat piece of white chocolate which is about two inches in diameter that is from the Bush Presidential Library Foundation, the opening of his library, which I was in attendance at, and this is one of the little gifts that they gave to me.

TS: It just fits perfectly in there.

PT: It fits perfectly in the center of the plate.

TS: That's terrific.

PT: So, that is—this, I guess, would be a donation, though I would hate to part with it. [both chuckle]

TS: I don't blame you.

PT: And then—So we went for the funeral, it was a beautiful memorial service, and then we did KP in her room, and that was getting to be right around Halloween time; it was time to come home for Halloween. But that was a truly—a very heart-rendering [sic, rending] time for Mrs. Reagan, and she did beautifully through everything. I was not needed when we went upstairs, for any medical capacity; my emotional stability was what was needed at that time. And this was just other duties as assigned; in the military, you do whatever.

TS: Did you think about—maybe not at this time, but upon reflection, kind of what you said about how she's just another human being. And when you read things today, about the, maybe, caricature of her—

PT: Yes.

TS: You know, how does that make you feel?

PT: Oh, it makes me angry when the press beat her up. It makes me very angry, because they really—they don't know her. Now, granted, she had this wonderful, wonderful love relationship with her husband, and you know, I would almost have to say maybe to the exclusion of being motherly—a mother to the children. But that's not for me to judge, and—and I won't judge, but you know, you never saw a more loving couple than the

President and the First Lady. And she treated me like gold the whole time, and she was always very good to me. After her surgery, when they would go up to Camp David, I would—if I were assigned to that duty for the day, I went up with them. And right after her surgery I was the nurse that went up there with her and made sure she did her exercises and walked a little bit with her, and you know, that type of thing. But, you know, you didn't have to remind her to do things. She really wanted to do well and get better and put that behind her.

TS: I mean, you could tell. I mean, even today she's still—

PT: Oh yeah, even today, she's hobbling around. Yeah.

TS: [chuckles] Yeah.

PT: Yeah, she still is.

TS: And you would think—because of the—she had a mastectomy, not a—

PT: She had a mastectomy, the left side.

TS: And then—Betty Ford, did she have a—she also had a mastectomy.

PT: Right, and I believe hers was left side as well.

TS: Yeah, and so I was just thinking, you know, in today's society about breast cancer.

PT: Yeah.

TS: It's, you know, with the—what's the name of the pink ribbon campaign, you know, that you see everywhere.

PT: Right. The Susan [G] Komen [Breast Cancer Foundation]?

TS: Susan Komen.

PT: Susan Komen. And I have to tell you, on an aside to the Susan Komen.

TS: Okay.

PT: I have done the sixty-mile walk, breast cancer walk, twice.

TS: Sixty miles?

PT: Susan Komen—sixty miles. I have two sisters who are breast cancer survivors, and I told Mrs. Reagan, when I did it, that I was doing it for her both times. I did it the first time in Atlanta, and then the next year with all of my—with eight of my sisters—

TS: Oh, wow.

PT: —in Chicago.

TS: How fun would that be?

PT: And that very year, as I'm going down to Atlanta, I am notified that I am a "one hundred percent match for a person who has leukemia, and would I donate my stem cells to him?" I was a perfect match—stem cell match. So, in November of—this has been three—it'll be three—it was three years in November; it was three years. So 1997 [sic, 2007][?], I did a stem cell donation to a total stranger, who I'm going to meet this summer.

TS: Is that right?

PT: He lives in Littleton, Colorado, his name is Jeff Lines, he has a daughter who is now in nursing school and a son in law enforcement, and he has family that are in the air force and the navy, and I said, "Jeff, I'm sorry, but right now you have army blood flowing throughout your body." [both chuckle]

TS: That's right.

PT: So I'm just so excited that I'm going to be meeting him finally. My husband and I are going for our White House Medical Unit Reunion in Colorado Springs, and he lives in Littleton, so.

TS: Well, how nice.

PT: Excited about that.

TS: Well, I was thinking, though, at this time—this is in '87.

PT: Right.

TS: And the stigma of breast cancer for women was pretty strong still.

PT: Yeah, it was pretty strong; yeah. So I think she was good for women, you know, to have it and not hide it, you know, or not shut it up so much. Matter of fact, my sister had her breast cancer surgery right at the same time that Mrs.—well, it was following about a month later, she had hers.

TS: Yeah. And now, you'd only been—three or four months, you'd been working there.

PT: July, August, September, October; four months, yeah.

TS: Four months, wow.

PT: So, I was—I was glad that it happened up close so I have cemented, now, my relationship and I felt like my job was pretty secure there now. [laughs]

TS: Well, you know, I'm thinking this might be a good place to just stop—

PT: Stop for now, okay.

TS: And then we can come back. What do you think?

PT: Oh yeah, we'll have to. Oh yeah. It's after five; quarter after five. Oh yeah, definitely, okay.

TS: All right, so thank you, Paula, but we'll figure out when I can come back and we can finish it.

PT: Sure. Look at the calendar and we'll have another session. Or a couple more. [chuckles]

TS: Okay. Yeah!

[End of Interview]

INTERVIEWEE: Paula Trivette
INTERVIEWER: Therese Strohmer
DATE: May 3, 2011

[Continuation of interview]

TS: This is Therese Strohmer and today is May 3, 2011. I—Actually, we're in Greensboro, North Carolina. This is an oral history interview, it's a second segment, for Paula Trivette, and for the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. I'm here with Paula, and also Beth Ann Koelsch is with me, so you may hear both those voices; this is for the transcriber. Go ahead and say, just—

PT: Oh, it's so nice to have you back, Therese! Welcome Beth Ann too!

TS: [laughs] That's a nice booming—Beth Ann, why don't you say something over there, too, so you could pick you up on here.

BAK: Hi, this is Beth Ann.

TS: All right. Well, let's see. Well Paula, the last time I was here, I think that we got about as far as where you were helping out the first lady, Mrs. Reagan, and she had had her mastectomy, and you were in the hospital; you'd been showing me some pictures of that. And so, I think we talked about that. What—What was it that you kind of—we were talking about how you had bonded a little bit with her.

PT: Right. I think that Mrs. Reagan being—the fact that she was an actress, to most of the general public she was a face and a figure, and not the motherly type, not the kindhearted person, but through that particular event, I saw her in a totally different light. The fact that she knew that I had children, that I had a—had sons, just very much startled me in a very pleasant way, and when I brought the card that my son had made for her and I thought she was going to throw up all over it, actually, she cried over it. That, you know, just reinforced all the more that it doesn't matter who you are or what you are when you're ill, you want the tender loving care that everyone wants when they don't feel well. So it very much humanized her, and I saw her in a totally different light there. Though, not out of the woods. I still knew that she held more power in her hand and if I did mess up I may be out of a job sooner than I would ever want to be.

TS: Oh, that's right, we talked about you taking just the one needle [both chuckle] to make sure you draw—

PT: Yes. Up to draw her blood.

TS: To draw her blood, because you would only need one, good or bad, right?

PT: Would not have a second chance.

TS: That's right. Well, now, so what—do you remember what year this was?

PT: Nineteen eighty-seven.

TS: Nineteen eighty-seven.

PT: It was October of '87.

TS: Okay. And so the—President Reagan had another year left in office at that point.

PT: October 17.

TS: Yeah. Well, so what—when you first thought about—when you first got the assignment to go to the White House and—did you have some idea of what you thought it would be like?

PT: No. After I went and interviewed for the position, I did have an idea of what I actually would be doing, but in all actuality of it, no. I just thought, [chuckles] you know, "When I see them, what will I be doing actually, and will I even be face-to-face with them?" You know, because a lot of jobs they do—you may work at the White House, but yeah, you might be down in the dungeon and never see a soul. The fact that we were medical people allowed us to—like I said, we wore pins that designated the proximity that you could be to the First Family, and our pins that we wore, from a medical standpoint, said we could be on top of them doing CPR if we had to be, [chuckling] so we had no restrictions on proximity. And I just—I think I was in such awe about it, and the fact that I was going to be there, that I thought I don't want to mess it and just kind of, you know, be a deer with the headlights there and not being able to function in the capacity that I was hired, actually, for.

TS: Well, how was it like being that close, you know, to the President of the United States?

PT: Well, my very first day when I met him in the [Oval] Office, you know, you kind of rehearse in your mind what you're going to say, and to tell you the truth, I couldn't even remember when I got up there what it is I had rehearsed I was going to say, because President Reagan, especially, was just so stately and so presidential and he looked like he had the power in him. But yet so loving and caring, you could just see the kindness in his eyes, and you know, just the way that he talked to you and he looked at you, you immediately had contact with him. And he, and President Bush as well, just made you feel like you were the only person that mattered when you were in their presence. And I think that takes a special talent, that's a special gift, to make someone feel that much at ease. Mrs. Reagan, it came a little later in time.

TS: Right.

PT: And I did learn—you know, it's kind of an unspoken rule—that you do not speak to them until you are spoken to. And so, I kind of learned that especially with Mrs. Bush one day when I commented on her unmatched shoes.

TS: Oh no. What happened there?

PT: Well, she's—you know, she's known for her pearls.

TS: Right.

PT: She's also known, which I did not know at the time, for wearing unmatched shoes. She wore a polka-dot shoe or a striped shoe or a pink shoe and a green shoe, but that's all summer long, her little Keds shoes.

TS: Oh, I never heard of that.

PT: Well, and I didn't know that either, and here she had just come down from their quarters upstairs and getting ready to go outside, and you know, there are tours all around, it's—it was a summer day. And I look and I see she's got a polka dotted shoe on and she's got a striped shoe, and I thought, "Oh my goodness." I thought to myself, "She gets dressed how my husband does, in the dark in her closet, so they never know what you're going to put on." [laughing]

And—And so, I made the comment of, "Mrs. Bush—" you know, I said, "I hate to say this, but do you realize that you've got unmatched shoes on?"

And she just looks at me and she says, "Yes, I do know that." And by that time I'm feeling, you know, knee-high to a grasshopper, like this. But it was—she laughed about it, and eventually I laughed, too, but I was just mortified that—it was like she was calling me on the spot, she says, "I'm calling your bluff."

But she was—you know, Mrs. Bush wore the pants of the family in that regard, President Bush could not kill a fly.

TS: Is that right?

PT: Yes. She—She was the powerhouse for—for the child—for the family and the children, and she was the one that kept them in line and provided the discipline, and he provided the tears probably. He's a softie.

TS: Well, was there anything that surprised you about working in the—in the White House with either President Reagan or President Bush or [President William Jefferson "Bill"] Clinton?

PT: You know, every day was a surprise. You never knew what it was going to be. Matter of fact, one time with President Bush—whenever they had a function in the White—in the White House, the medical staff, i.e. one person, who was ever designated for that week, would stay in the White House proper medical unit in the event that we were needed. And depending upon what the situation was, if it was a big state arrival and they're having a state entertainment and all—state dinners—then we were up on the floor where all this was going on, just entertaining guests upstairs and not a lot going on, then we'd just wait our time out in the medical unit. Well, President Bush would always let us know when the last guests had gone, and so he would just kind of—it—it kicked me how he would knock on the door to the medical unit like, "Could I come in?"

I said, "Mr. President, this is your home." I said, "You don't need to knock on the door," because there's like an anteroom to where we would do—be doing any examinations or anything like that; it's just—you open it and the secretary's desk is there.

So, he knocks on the door and he says, "Paulita, come out here, I've got someone I want you to meet." So we go in the hallway and it's Don Johnson and Melanie Griffith. And President Bush says to me, "I just want you to know that I know important people too." [chuckles] And that was just—it was the funniest thing, because he, you know—this

is his house, you don't need to knock on the door, for one. The dogs had the run of the house, though, and they should give that lesson to the dogs. You know, put some cloth like I do on my beds upstairs—put some cloth on the couch so the muddy-paw dogs don't destroy all the furniture in the office and anywhere else. But that was—just very—very humanizing. I think that was the biggest surprise, that they were very approachable, and that I was made to feel like I was actually a part of the Bush family. And, you know, he worshipped the nurses.

And then going back, the nursing staff would often talk about why we had such a closeness with the president, and he—I mean, he would just wrap his arms around us and you know, just know—you knew that you mattered to him. So, what, I think, we devised from that was that the medical unit was a sanctuary for him. It was a place he could come, sit down, put his feet up, have a drink of water or whatever he wanted to have a drink of, and sit back and relax knowing that no one was going to bug him about, you know, any questions, any—

TS: Politics.

PT: —political—any politics, that he could just be him, and let your hair hang down or whatever you want, and that's how we ended up with the—the Roger Whittaker fan club [chuckles]. So it was, you know, just—we—I just loved the fact that I was made to feel a part of the Bush family.

TS: Yeah. Now, when you were—when you were working with President Reagan and the—did you notice any, like, any difference as—

PT: In his mental state?

TS: Well, sure, yeah.

PT: Not at all. He was as sharp as a tack to the day that he left office. The only time that I recognized something not quite right was the day of the earthquake in—

TS: In the Soviet Union?

PT: No, in L.A.

TS: Oh, the one—

PT: In Los Angeles.

TS: Okay.

PT: I had gone with President—Vice President Dan Quayle—and I can—if you need the dates I can [unclear].

TS: That's okay, we can look those up.

PT: Had gone with Vice President Quayle to L.A. to visit President Reagan. And Dan Quayle told him, you know, that, "This is Paula, she was one of your nurses at the White House."

And he looks and looks and looks, and he says, "Oh yes, I remember her."

And I knew in my heart—I said, "No, he doesn't."

Because he would have said, "Yes, that is my Gunga Din[?]."

And he didn't say that, and it—just by the look—the look in his eye, I thought, "Something's not right."

TS: And about how long after he had left office—

PT: That was right after—well, let's see, I think the earthquake was in October—

TS: Eighty-nine, wasn't it?

[Extraneous Comments Redacted, Recording Paused]

PT: One March, 1990.

TS: Let me start it again.

PT: Okay.

TS: We found a picture that's got a—

PT: From that visit with President Reagan.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, that's from that day?

PT: Yes.

TS: Okay. And that was March of 1990.

PT: March of 1990. And this was at his office in Los Angeles. So that was March of '90, and let me make sure that—one, two—

TS: Well, that's fine, that's something that we can always correct, too, on the tape. So you—So you didn't notice anything—except for that—I think you mentioned that was one other time in the office earlier, when we talked last, in March, but—

PT: When he was in office?

TS: Yes.

PT: Oh, no.

TS: No?

PT: No, no.

TS: Oh, that might have been the article about his son that he was talking—

PT: His son, yeah, no, because while he was in office, not at all. That was something that just never—never did I see that.

TS: Did you—Actually, what I was going to ask you, too, was, in the time—at the transition—you know, the election when George H.W. Bush was being, you know, politicking—did you notice any difference in them in that, like, atmosphere, you know? Because then you have your—you know, your regular life and then they get into this politicking and campaigning stage. Did you have to go around with—

PT: The difference—I'm not quite—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Just in their demeanor or anything. You know, just—

PT: If I did, I never—no. To me, they were always—I'm not a—not a political person, so to speak, so I didn't just really read into that, but in the public eye, in the private eye—well, actually, no, when he was campaigning, I could—yes, I'll take—go back a little bit on that. Because that was a stressful time for him, and he would get some of the biggest knots in his neck, and that's when we started doing those deep heat therapy on his neck just to keep [unclear]—

TS: Which president are we talking about here? President Bush?

PT: President Bush.

TS: Bush?

PT: Yes. And—when he was politicking, you know, to—

TS: I would just think that that—you would just either—not necessarily enjoy that sometimes, you know, so—

PT: Yeah—

TS: You would think.

PT: [chuckles] No, it was—

TS: Yeah. But you got to go around—so, one of the things you told me last time was about you—how many nurses were there?

PT: Initially, with—with President Reagan there were four nurses, then we increased to six nurses with President Bush.

TS: Oh, okay.

PT: So, there are two from each branch of service. Originally, there were two army nurses, one navy, one air force nurse.

TS: So when you changed to the six nurses, how did that break down for your schedule?

PT: Well, it was a little less travel, but that was okay because he travelled more. [laughs] So you were still travelling fools[?]. But, you know, it was a blessing that we rotated the travel, so.

TS: Did you have, still, one go, or did you have two go?

PT: One always went in advance to set up the medical contingency plan—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Oh, that's right.

PT: —to wherever they went, and then one would travel with the president. So you always had two, but you never had two go in advance. But during the campaign season, we would leapfrog from city to city to city, so that you—you know, if he were going to—like when we did the train ride, there was someone in each city that we were stopping at on the train—on the train ride.

TS: What train ride did you do?

PT: President Bush had [unclear] in his campaign, he had whistle—whistlestop tours, is what they called it.

TS: Oh, okay.

PT: And there's some wonderful photos in my album about, you know, people that we met along the way, with the whistlestop tours. And the Oak Ridge Boys were one that we met up with. And that was one thing about President Bush, he never missed an opportunity to introduce us to somebody, and would have us come and meet the Oak Ridge Boys, and I got autographs for my kids from the Oak Ridge Boys.

And the—Probably my all-time highlight, though, was when I met [Mikhail Sergeyevich] Gorbachev. We were in Helsinki, Finland, and getting ready to go out to dinner that night. So these little alcoves—I think I talked about the alcove with President Reagan when we went up to tell Mrs. Reagan that her mother had died, and I was standing in this little alcove, and I told you I knew the moment the Great Communicator had told his wife that her—that her mother had died, and then he had become silent and I knew, when he motions for me to come to the bedside; do you remember?

TS: Yes.

PT: Okay. So, with President Bush, when we were in Helsinki, Finland, we were lined up at this alcove up on the second floor of the—it was the ambassador's residence where we met with Gorbachev and we were going out to dinner for the night. So, President Bush calls myself and the military aid over to Gorbachev, and he introduces me, and tells Gorbachev that I am his nurse, I am a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army. The translation comes back as—now, we're all dollied up; we're wearing black tie clothes, I've got this long, you know, black gown on. And Gorbachev's response is, "They don't have nurses like that in our army." [both laughing] So, I took it as a compliment. But it was just, you know—President Bush, he just never passed up an opportunity to include you; just very inclusive person.

TS: Yeah. That's terrific. Did you get to meet any other heads of states like that, or was that—

PT: Not personally like that. I did at the White House. Princess Di and Charles were at a ball there, but I did not meet them personally, because we were once again along the alcove along the side wall. We were to be there, but not to be—the Secret Service agents would to know where to find us [as guests—PT clarified later] in the event we're needed for a medical event.

TS: So you're present, but not interacting?

PT: Right, exactly; yeah.

TS: I see.

PT: So we didn't go up and visit with people at the tables and all, you were there in a—in a working capacity.

TS: So what did you do all that time? I mean, that's a long time, isn't it, to stand around?

PT: It is, it is, yes. But, you know, we—I kind of thought we're like firemen. You stand around, you sit around, you wait and wait and wait and hope that there's never a big fire, and kind of that's the way that it was. You know, you're there with all your medical regalia and just pray you won't need to use it on anything or anybody.

TS: That's right.

PT: And—But it was not bad because then after the—after the party was gone and all the people went home—when they entertain at the White House, they do it in a wonderful way, in a huge way, and I never saw shrimp so big in my life. And when the party's over, if there's shrimp, or whatever's left, all the people who are working the party descend upon the food tables [PT clarified later].

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: The description Paula did with her hands was about the size of a donut. [chuckles]

PT: I mean, they're huge, huge. And they got them in cans; they would come out of cans. I couldn't figure out how in the world—where did they get these shrimp from?

TS: Really?

PT: Yeah. They were the most succulent shrimp, they probably flew them in from somewhere.

TS: So very wonderful food.

PT: Very wonderful food, yes. And so, we were allowed—

TS: And so, you got it after the party?

PT: After the party, anything that was left after the guests were gone is like, you know, you just go in, free food. [chuckles] You go in and get it, and you just wanted to put it in a bag and take it home with you—you know—you get a doggie bag.

BAK: I don't know if you talked about this already, the medical kit that you had, you know, at the ready?

PT: Yes.

BAK: How—I mean, was it camouflaged, was it—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: I actually even have my medical kit. It actually looks very much like your black suitcase. It was—You know, it was black—

BAK: Yes.

PT: —and it had—it looked like a suitcase, because you had—you wouldn't want to call attention to the fact that you had medical supplies.

BAK: Right.

PT: But it zipped open, and on one side you had intubation equipment, which is if you needed to give the president an airway, put a tube in him; that was on one side. Then you had all of your first-line drugs that you would have to give him, IV equipment to start an IV to give him, you know, advanced cardio life support drugs. Then we also carried things like Tylenol, ibuprofen, Maalox; you know, just pharmacy drugs and that for the travelling entourage. But when we would go overseas, we would take huge footlockers of medicines and drugs and what have you, that we would have in the event that we would need it. In—

BAK: Just, sort of, outside the norm?

PT: Right, to—to resupply our bags with it if we used anything, and also, you know, just to have sick call; if anybody needs anything, we're there.

BAK: Just wondering, the paddles? Did you have—

PT: The paddles? Actually, we had a defibrillator that always came with us.

BAK: So that was just in its little black bag?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: But that was not—Right, that was in a separate black bag; that was not in the bag that I carried. It just wasn't something—

BAK: So it was outside the room? I just didn't know how—

PT: Yeah. And we had—And I'm sure that now in the White House, they'll have the AEDs [Automated External Defibrillators] everywhere throughout the—

TS: Lots of places to be able to get them. Sure.

PT: Lots of places, yes. And everywhere we go, we all—we had one, you know, with us, but now through—located throughout the White House proper and the Old Executive Office Building—the whole compound of the White House, I'm sure, is peppered with those things.

BAK: Now, would that be a standard kit that you would carry around, or is that like the super White House kit?

PT: Which kit?

BAK: The nurses.

PT: Oh, the nurse bag?

BAK: Yeah.

PT: Well, it would be—it's super in the fact that it's got life-saving things in it. But it looks like—

BAK: But I'm just saying, what it was stocked with, was that something—like a higher level than the standard nursing equipment?

PT: No, not really; no. Like, we—I did not carry narcotics in there, so if somebody needed that—we did have them, but we didn't carry them with us; they were with the defibrillator and everything else, but they were secured.

BAK: Interesting.

PT: Yeah, so you would have to—you know, and you accounted for them, so you couldn't—and I couldn't dispense them, so I didn't carry them. So the doctor—and that equipment would stay in the doctor's [room—PT clarified later]—like if we were in the hotel, that would stay in the doctor's room, and if he gets word of something then I'm immediately paged and then we go to wherever need be, and Secret Service is there to help you tote things or whatever. But generally, in a hotel, the doctor would stay in the same wing as the president, so he would be right there with all the medical supply

equipment, and I stayed wherever else, and it's always very, very nice where we stayed, but I was not in the presidential wing.

BAK: So you had a pager that you carried?

PT: Yes, yes. We had little—they were—I'm very short-waisted, and my pager was a long, thin pager so. [laughing]

TS: Bigger than they are today, right?

PT: Bigger than they—oh yes, far bigger than they are today. But that was how we communicated, and then we also had telephones, and we carried those.

TS: Oh, you carried them with you; like, a mobile?

PT: Like a mobile phone, yes, and—what do you call—walkie-talkie kind of things. And we had a different frequency with Secret Service than what Secret Service had with everybody else. They communicated—everybody's talking—you know, how the Secret Service is talking into their sleeve?

BAK: Yes.

TS: So you had a lot of interaction, then, with the Secret Service.

PT: Oh, absolutely. They—

TS: I guess you would have to.

PT: Oh, they were my angels, because when you travel, you are the only nurse. And so, if you're going to a foreign country—and generally we would either fly out on big cargo planes to a foreign country, and if you are the only per—the only girl—and usually I'm the only female.

BAK: That was going to be my next question.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: The Secret Service pretty much is male population; there may be a few peppered females in there. And so, when you get to your destination, Secret Service has things down to a science. They've got people there to pick them up, to take them to the hotel, to take them to the sights, blah blah blah. You know, that doesn't always work that way for the nurse. Once we get—like, when I go to survey hospitals, I'll have a partner there to take me through the hospital. But from the airport to the hotel, the hotel to wherever I'm going,

I'm out of luck. So, the Secret Service, that would take you under your [their] wing, and you know, "Come on, Paula. Hitch a ride, we know you're alone. Come on." They were like brothers.

BAK: So, it was pretty ad hoc[?].

PT: Oh yeah.

BAK: So it wasn't that, you know, "I'm the Secret Service assigned to you," it was—

PT: Oh, no, no. And so, you know, they were the ones that took us under their wings. I told my husband back when I first got this job, I said, "Honey, [the] majority [of those I travel with are males—PT clarified later]—I'm one of the token females there. When I travel, it's going to be with men for the most part. We'll be riding together, we'll be at the hotels together, if you got trouble with that, you let me know now." And—Because I have to tell you, growing up—did I tell you this story, about growing up?

TS: I don't think so.

PT: Well, we had two girls' bedrooms, two double beds, there were nine girls; eight of us that would rotate beds. At the end of the month, you rotated the physical bed, because some of the beds were more comfortable than other beds, some of the sleeping partners were more comfortable than others. Some had cold toes, some told good stories, some—some didn't.

TS: Some kicked you. [laughs]

PT: Some kicked you, yeah. Some played catawampus with the bed. But the end of the month we traded bed partners. So when I met my husband I told him that, "I'm used to rotating bed partners every month." [laughter] "And if you've got trouble with that, let me know." He laughed, it was pretty funny.

TS: Well, speaking about—

PT: Back on task.

TS: Oh no, it's fine. It's—Well, it's different to do an interview with you because of the circumstances.

PT: Right.

TS: You know, you're in a position that so few women—

PT: Exactly.

TS: —or men have ever been in. But how—how much of it was, you know, army?

PT: Very little was army. I never actually [felt I was in the army—PT clarified later]—the whole time at the White House, I rarely ever felt I was in the army. And you know, the Secret Service people called you by your first name. You know, except the military people. If you were in uniform then they call you by your name and rank, but I was just used to—and the president always referred to us as "Nurse Paula, Nurse Kim, Nurse Debbie, Nurse whoever." You know, we weren't called by our military rank or anything like that. So it was pretty much an un-army job. I had to buy civilian clothes, I didn't have civilian clothes; I only had army clothes in my closet except for a church dress or two.

TS: Did they give you any extra, you know, money to be able to—

PT: No. Enlisted get uniform allowances and clothing allowances, as an officer you didn't. So it was an expensive job from that standpoint. And you know, traveling as much as—you know, you got reimbursement for your travel, you got reimbursement for your taxi ride to the airport, and you know, as long as you kept your receipts and that type of thing. And you had a per diem, you know; sound familiar?

TS: Yes, we just talked about that on the way over.

PT: Sound familiar? We did too.

BAK: You sound just like Therese. It's the same situation.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: Now, we did get flight pay, which I thought was interesting because, you know, we would fly as our duty on Air Force One or the helicopters or, you know, whatever. So—But I always thought that was very strange, that we got flight pay. I almost felt guilty in receiving flight pay, because it was such an honor to fly on Air Force One. And—although it didn't hurt so much when we were on the cargo planes, because these things are just a hollowed-out [cave—PT clarified later]—have you ever been on a cargo plane? Strap seats on the sides, and if you're going overseas on a long haul flight [it's very uncomfortable—PT clarified later].

TS: Sure.

PT: And then they've got the limousines right in the center, so you don't have a lot of room to move around, and you know, it's cold bag sandwiches and you're the only female and all the toilets are used by the guys, and you know, it's not—not always glamorous in that—in that standpoint.

TS: You want to wait until you get to your destination to—yeah.

PT: You don't drink a lot—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: I've heard that story before.

PT: You don't drink a lot of—[chuckling] of water or anything, so you don't have to go too often; bad for your kidneys.

TS: How often did you have to fly on those? The—

PT: Well, that varied. We could do an overseas tour—an overseas trip once every couple months or once every [unclear]. Every couple of months or so.

TS: Is that why you guys were—kind of negotiated who got to go where—

PT: Right.

TS: —within the group of the nurses?

PT: Right. But generally if you traveled in advance and were setting up, you know, the medical plan overseas, if they had a cargo plane going with communications people, Secret Service people, then you were scheduled to go over with them. If they were going earlier or later than what you needed to go, then they would fly us over on a commercial flight. But of course they tried not to do that, it's much more expensive them having to do that. So—And then coming back, it depends when the flight is coming back. So oftentimes, I would—I would catch a cargo plane coming back, and I may have gone out on a commercial flight. Or you may end up coming back on Air Force One. That happens too.

TS: Oh darn! [laughs]

PT: That's a real treat. Like we came back from Hawaii, when we did the Pearl Harbor fiftieth anniversary, and that was just a wonderful event.

TS: Yeah. What is Air Force One like, then? Can you describe it?

PT: If you've seen the movie *Air Force One*, it's—

TS: I haven't. [laughs]

PT: You haven't, okay. Well, it's—it's somewhat and something like that. As you come up to the cockpit of the plane, the nose of the plane, the president's quarters are under the nose

of the plane, and that's very elaborate. They have a shower and they have beds, actually, to sit in. Then he has a conference room. They have toilets and the whole business there, just exclusively for them. Down the line, there's a conference room, which probably may hold up to fifty people or whatever. It's a very large conference room. Adjacent to that is the medical unit. And that—especially on foreign travel, that's a highly sought-after place, because there are two berths that come up from the wall, so you can sleep; you can lay down and sleep. There's not a bad seat anywhere on Air Force One, however, because every chair you have very spacious [and reclines—PT added later}.

TS: Goes all the way back?

PT: Goes all the way back. You have your own television set, and you can call up for video—they hand you a little brochure of all the movies that they have available to you, and you just dial up the movie you want, and you can watch movies to your heart's content. You will eat and drink and be merry the entire way. Now, I never drank alcohol when I was flying—certainly not at all when I was flying with the president, nor the night before his arrival, because I never even—because I would go, like, to—say, if I was coming to Greensboro. If I was here two days in advance, maybe the first day I came I would—because Secret Service, you know, they'd go out and get a beer and you'd go and get a beer with them or whatever. But the night before, alcohol never touched my lips. Because I never wanted to put myself in a situation where they would say, "Oh, yeah, she couldn't start that IV because she had so much to drink last night, she was just weaving all around." Nor did I want—I mean, I just—I'm not a big drinker to begin with, but you know, it was just something that I would not set myself up for criticism—

TS: Right.

PT: —or for failure for the president. I mean, I knew I'm there for a reason and I did not want to jeopardize that position, and the honor that came with it.

TS: Did—You had said in the last—the first segment that we did, you were talking about the medical unit in the White House. It was like a freebie for a lot of the people that worked in the White House.

PT: Right, exactly.

TS: If they had a cold, or—so is that the same, like when you're traveling overseas?

PT: Oh, absolutely. Any of the [travelling entourage could receive medical care—PT added later]

TS: Did like the reporters come up to you for stuff like that too?

PT: Well, White House people. And you know, if it's somebody else and you've got some Tylenol or something, I'll see them. Or you can refer them. We were in Jackson Hole,

Wyoming, and I had one of—one of the Secret Service guys, actually, was having this belly pain, so he came to me and it turns out that he was—that he had appendicitis. And so, we refer him to the hospital, and I took him there, essentially, and you make access just much easier. You know, "This is a Secret Service agent, he needs to be seen now." [chuckling] And so, you know, that was very nice and they appreciated that. Now, if it's something that can wait, then it waits; you just don't do that. But if you know it's a medical [emergency—PT clarified later]—of medical importance you can [facilitate their care—PT added later]

TS: Right, and that's what I was wondering, because you—how long were you the nurse at the White House.

PT: I was there for six and a half years.

TS: So did you have anything happen, not with the presidents, but with somebody else along those lines?

PT: Oh yes, we had people have seizures, guests will have seizures. Guests will come and—We were there for any guests that come to the White House; when they give the White House tours. So you know, people are in these long lines, especially in the summer time, and they're passing out like flies, because they haven't had anything to drink, because they don't know if they'll see a toilet, you know? And so, we would respond to them. That was where the ammonia inhAllants, that I told you about, come in handy.

TS: Oh, right.

PT: And if need be, we'd call the ambulance. I had a friend that came to visit me, and she knew a way to get to see me would be to pretend that she was ill. [laughter] And so—

TS: Is that what she did?

PT: That's what she did, yes, and it worked for her, so that was—and I said, "Oh, you. You're so smart."

But then, you know, you have the doctor there, "Well, what's the problem with this one?"

I said, "Oh, nothing, she's my friend."

TS: Well, do you—was there any particular memorable incident that you remember having to take care of?

PT: When we were in—not Monte Carlo. I'm blanking out on the—on the city. But it was, one of the press had a massive heart attack. And so, I attended to him until the ambulance people got there. It was a foreign city. I can't even think of—Marseilles; it was Marseilles. And—until the French ambulance got there. So I mean, you're there and if you fell out right now I would take care of you.

TS: I would feel really comfortable, actually, if I got ill here.

BAK: Did you ever have press or, you know, local people come up and ask you questions, just, about the president?

PT: Well, occasionally you'd have someone like, you know, "What's the president's blood type?" and you know, "What do you have in your bag?" and—but not so much. I mean, they—because we carried our bags and we wore what everybody else wore, you didn't really have a big nurse hat on that said, "I'm the nurse", you know. But those—the White House press, who'd been there forever—Helen Thomas who'd been there forever, she would know who you are, and if Helen needed something, she wouldn't hesitate to come in and ask you, but as far as presidential information, not so much.

TS: No? Did you have your friends asking you about—

PT: Oh, yeah.

TS: All the time?

PT: "I'm sworn to secrecy, sorry."

TS: That's your common response? [chuckling]

PT: I said, "My husband lives vicariously. He's thinking about it, so why do you think I'd tell you anything more?" But you know, I never took an oath to say—but it was just your honor, your integrity, that you are there for a purpose, and it's not to—

TS: Right, because you're in very close proximity—

PT: Exactly.

TS: —and you see them just in their regular—

PT: And, you know, I do these little talk around towns, but it's something—it's more of an educational and informative thing and nothing that I would ever consider—and I'm trying to think back, would there be a negative light that I would even want to shed upon them. But I had so much fun and so many wonderful experiences that, hey, talk about those, you know, the human—and that really is my point, in humanizing the First Families and letting them know—because actually there was, as I recall, one overseas trip after—after President Bush left office, that I went on the—the Greek cruise—a cruise of the Greek islands—and there was an event that happened there that, you know, I—certainly there could have been pages written, but not going to come out of my mouth. So you're just kind of, you know, sworn—not sworn, but it's just—

TS: Right. Well, even the incident where you talked about before, about President Bush and the prime minister of Japan.

PT: Yes, yes.

TS: I mean, he's very vulnerable.

PT: [unclear]

TS: But he's in a real vulnerable position.

PT: Sure.

TS: And you were talking about the dignity that you wanted to be able to keep, you know, and you did your best to, you know—

PT: Exactly.

TS: —help him walk out of there.

PT: Right.

TS: And—But I mean, just in daily contact, you would think that—you know, that they're human beings in vulnerable personal positions that you want to be able to—

PT: And actually, now that you mention the vomiting situation again, in that box are some of the Japanese newspapers and articles from the vomit incident. So that was—

TS: Well, was there anything about working in the White House that actually surprised you?

PT: From a medical standpoint, or—

TS: Any standpoint.

PT: I—You know, I learned in my medical career never to be surprised at anything. You never know what's going to come—and working critical care, you're not surprised what's going to come in the door, you're not surprised what you see in the emergency rooms, you're not surprised. You just kind of take it in stride. But I'm just trying to think that—I think what, maybe, the masses—the masses of people that try to come to an event such as a foreign [arrival ceremony—PT clarified later]7.

TS: Like a state dinner or something?

PT: Foreign—right, a state dinner, but in the morning of a state dinner, they have the general introduction to America on the South Lawn, and it's a general greeting. The foreign head

of state arrives, there's a great pomp and circumstance and ceremony and they arrive, and it's a fabulous opportunity. But the whole South Lawn is just peppered with people, just masses and masses of people, and I just thought, you know, you look overseas and you see that in England and London with the—all of that, but we actually have that in America. But the White House is just so much smaller, and I think that's maybe what surprised me, is how small the White House is—small—but how large it seems when it's surrounded by people.

TS: Interesting. I wouldn't have thought of the White House as being small.

PT: But it is when you look at all the overseas palaces and things, it's a very small house.

TS: Compared to the—yeah. And so, what did you think about all this pomp and circumstance? Because a lot of it apparently went on.

PT: Well, you know, I was always called Practical Paula, and so I'd have to say, a lot of that is so unnecessary, but on the other hand, if I were the wife of the president of the United States of America, I might want that.

TS: Yeah?

PT: [chuckles] But tradition. I think a lot of it is tradition, and we'll go with that.

TS: Well, as far as the—back to the army part of it. You—Who was it that did your evaluations, then, while you were—

PT: My evaluation—and I have one somewhere in my books over there—Dr. Hutton, who was the physician to the president. He was the physician to President Reagan, and then once President Reagan left office, with President Bush it was—because he was a civilian. [The head of the military office who did my evaluation because Dr. Burton Lee, the physician to President Bush, was a civilian—PT corrected later]. You would not have a civilian writing your military efficiency report. And I'm blanking right now who that person was who wrote my very final OER when I left; officer efficiency report.

TS: Yeah? That's okay. And you—

PT: I'm sure I have that one somewhere too.

TS: And you had said normally the tour is, like, three years, so how did you get to have a six and a half year tour?

PT: Yes. We were once again in Helsinki, Finland, different—different timeframe, and I had served the two and a half years with President Reagan, and so I was actually on the end of my tour doing the six months with President Bush. And while we were in Helsinki, Finland, the President and I were in a holding area before he went out onto stage. And I

just mentioned to him how much I was going to miss the job, and he says, "What do you mean, 'miss the job'?"

And I said, "Mr. President, my time is coming to an end. I'm up for reassignment," you know, "for the nurse corps."

President Bush says, "You can't go anywhere, you're my nurse!"

Very quickly I thought, "Mr. President, I believe you're the only one that can make it happen that I stay here any longer." Now, I'm sure that he did not make the phone call to the Chief of the [Army] Nurse Corps, but I'm sure that it was probably Dr. Hutton who made that call, to the chief of my assignments branch and offered—told them that I would be staying at the White House. [chuckles] But I got a phone call from the—my assignments branch, offering me multiple assignments to leave the White House.

TS: Because it's a pretty prestigious—

PT: Oh, absolutely.

TS: —position, though, that people might have wanted to get into.

PT: Oh, absolutely. And we talked before upon—why it was important that I leave the position. But I said, "Ma'am, with all due respect, my commander in chief has requested I stay. I would like to honor his request," knowing full well I was sealing my coffin with those nails, and that ultimately when I left the White House, reassignment was not going to be pretty; Somalia, Siberia, Florida, who knows where I'd have ended up.

TS: Siberia? I don't think they were going to send you there. [both chuckling]

PT: You don't know. You know, this thing called payback? They have it everywhere, in the military as well. So I decided—I did get the extension, so I stayed on for the next four years. Then, however, knowing that you didn't know who the next president was going to be, that was the end of that tour; not knowing who it was going to be. I knew the nurse corps was not going to buy into, "He wants me to stay."

TS: Right, again.

PT: Again, so I decided that retirement was a wonderful option, because when I first came into the military, the deal that I had with my husband was that I would stay in—and I love the military, and I really—I hated to retire, but my family was my priority, and the nurse corps didn't see it that way. They saw the army as your priority, and like I told you, they didn't issue you a husband, they didn't issue you children, so they're not responsible for them. The JAG Corps, on the other hand, is much more accepting.

TS: That's right, because we had talked about—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: We talked about that.

TS: —how your husband's position, they were more flexible in assigning him to where you were.

PT: Assigning him—exactly.

TS: That's right. That was very interesting.

PT: Right. So—lost my train of thought.

TS: So you're at the end of your time.

PT: Oh, at the end—at the end of my time. So I did get the extension to stay, and—I'm trying to think where I was going with this.

TS: Oh, I'm sorry.

PT: I know I had a place that I was going with it; somewhere. Because I got the extension—oh, not knowing who—who the next president would be, I know that they would not buy into me—"the president wants me to stay," so I elected to retire and I retired. I felt like, you know, I would not only have my cake but I got to eat it, too. And it was a wonderful window of history for me, and I really wanted to go out on top. And I thought, you know, my family—now, if it was going to involve a separation, then it was time to get out, and it may well have, but I wasn't going to allow for that. So, in light of telling that them when it did come time to retire—when they asked me for reassignment after I'd served the additional four years, I then, instead of reassignment papers, I submitted retirement papers.

TS: Right.

BAK: Could the army nurse corps, the director, overrule the president?

PT: They could but they wouldn't.

BAK: So legally they—

PT: If they're—yeah. I mean, certainly, because—actually, you serve at the pleasure of the president. Now, he—

BAK: And he's commander in chief—

PT: He's commander in chief, exactly.

BAK: —so wouldn't he outrank everybody?

PT: Well, but you see, the—you're appointed to the White House. It's not the president selects you to stay, but the fact that I was there and he requested I stay, they would need to, I would think, honor his request.

TS: Now, did the other women that you were working [with], the other nurses at that time, also get extensions?

PT: The nurse that preceded me, Diane Capps, she—she stayed there. I think she was there probably seven years. So she had—

TS: So she was there for some time, too.

PT: She was there for some time, too, and I replaced her. After me, I'm not sure how long they've been staying. But—Oh, it's common that you stay more than the three years. I should say it's not uncommon that you stay.

TS: I see. I see.

BAK: So your predecessor served under Reagan and Carter?

PT: Right.

BAK: Wow. That just sounds like—

PT: And actually, she went and lived with the Reagans and stayed until I went out for his surgery and then she got a break. And then actually—then she left and Laurie, my [friend—PT clarified later]—who I worked with at Moses Cone Hospital, was a travel nurse in California, and then they got her to take my position after the president fell and broke his hip and I had taken sabbatical from Moses Cone. And then she stayed with him until he died.

BAK: And is that common, that the—you know, that each president does not clean house with the nurses?

PT: They do not.

BAK: They do not.

PT: No. There's, you know—in the pecking order of things, the medical unit for—is important as you are when you're needed.

BAL: Right.

PT: For the rest of the time, you're kind of down there in the pecking order.

TS: It's not a political position.

PT: It's not a political position whatsoever. And unless you louse up, you're pretty secure. And that was why I was so nervous about, you know, the fact that, "If I don't get her blood, I'm out of a job."

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: That was with Mrs. Reagan.

PT: My first—My first really official act as a White House nurse.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

BAK: Was to stick her in her sleep. Wow. [laughter]

PT: I came in September—yeah. And I got there in September. I started in September and she had her surgery in October, so I'm there a month; [laughs] "Lord, don't let me be out of a job in a month!" I just thought how humiliating that would be, and here I'd—you know, I'd worked so hard my whole military career—I never had that vision, that "I'm going to work hard to be the White House nurse." I mean, that just never crossed my mind.

TS: Right.

PT: But I've always been a hard-working person, and always been an excellent nurse, and I thought, "Oh, don't let my career fall upon this now!" [chuckling] And it didn't, fortunately.

TS: I remember when we—when you were describing your concerns about working at the White House—

PT: Right.

TS: —because I think your son wanted you to do it more than you did.

PT: Oh, yeah.

TS: How old was he?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Oh, my husband wanted me—my husband did! He was just beating at the bush; "Oh—

TS: Because you were worried about your young boys.

PT: Right.

TS: Because—How old were they, again?

PT: See, I didn't—they were six and four.

TS: Right, so they were really young.

PT: Yeah, they were young. And I thought—Because I didn't know how much travel I would have, and I thought, "If I'm going to travel more than I'm going to be home—" like I said, my family was number one in my mind—"and it's a nice pat on the back, but it just might not be the right job for me."

My husband did not see it that way. He just thought, "Oh, what a wonderful [opportunity"—PT clarified later] you know, "What a privilege, what an honor, go for it!"

And I'd say, "Yeah, you could end up losing your wife." [chuckles] And maybe that was more important than me, I don't know! But—not. But it did work out very well for—for everyone.

TS: Was there a favorite trip that you made?

PT: [pause] The Pearl Harbor trip was very—was a very momentous memorial; very somber experience.

TS: Tell me about that.

PT: We had—and I had never been to Pearl Harbor before, so just going there and realizing, you know, this was the war, and this took place fifty years ago, and how many are still buried, entombed, in that submarine below, and wherever else they may be. The memorials that they have there, with everyone's name listed on there, is just a gut-wrenching thing. And as you look—you're over an archway, looking down—it's almost like you hear—you still hear the clanging of the metal there, and I just think, what a sombering[sic] experience. But coming back, it was great fun, you know. And the Hawaiian people are just so warm and, you know, everyone got their leis as we came. So we were joking about the leis; we got lei—we got our leis in Hawaii. [chuckling]

There—There's a fun—couple fun photos of the president and I with our leis on the plane.

TS: Which president were you with there?

PT: Bush.

TS: Okay.

PT: And that was a great thing for him, to go back to Pearl Harbor, and very—you know, he's such a teary-eyed man. I mean, I think America really missed out on the real essence of George Bush, Sr. And he just is—has a heart of gold and he just melts, and you know, he will—as you've seen, will cry at the drop of a dime and will laugh at the drop of a dime too. But just very endearing.

TS: Well, it had to have been really—

PT: People mattered.

TS: Yeah, but knowing the history of President Bush and being the youngest aviator to—

PT: Aviator, yes.

TS: —at that time, and getting shot down, and being pulled out of the brink [of death—PT clarified later]—

PT: Yeah, [USS] *San Jacinto*.

TS: That must have been really emotional for him, I would think.

PT: And he had—And I—At that time there were several of the survivors of his corps, at the time, that were there; you know, his flight mates and all, that were there, that were still alive. So that was a neat thing too.

TS: Yeah? Was there any place that you wouldn't necessarily care to go back to again?

PT: Moscow.

TS: Why would that be?

PT: I mean, the city is beautiful, but I always felt very paranoid.

TS: What year were you in Moscow, then; approximately? You don't have to tell me the exact—which president?

PT: It was President Bush. So that would have been—

TS: Okay. So it was before the—

PT: It was after ’90, ’90—’91?

TS: Was it before the wall came down, or—

PT: No, that was Reagan, with the wall.

BAK: That was Reagan.

PT: That was Reagan with—

TS: Eighty-nine?

PT: Eight-nine. So this was probably like ’90, maybe, when we were over there. But where was it when I first went—was it—yes, when we got off the plane at the airport, they had—this was before the—before the wall came down, too, because I went there before and after. Before the wall came down, when you get into the airport, they had all these guards with their weaponry, I mean, just lining the entire place, and it’s like, you don’t want to step one foot out of space or you’re going to be shot at. And I thought, this is—you know, even for a military person, this is a scary thing. And I just—I was not comfortable the whole time there, even though I could not have felt more secure with Secret Service and all, but still it was unnerving to see people with their weapons, you know, almost drawn position at you, eyeballing as you went. So that was something. I’d rather not go to Moscow. [laughs]

TS: Again.

PT: Again. But you know, the beauty of the Kremlin and all that was gorgeous, which we did—you know, we were able to take advantage of and see in advance of the president coming.

TS: Yeah? [to Beth Ann] Did you have a question that you wanted to ask about the travels or anything?

BAK: No.

TS: No?

BAK: I’ll jump in.

TS: Well, so, I haven’t heard that you had a single moment off of work for you to do anything in your time off.

PT: In my time off? While I'm on a tour—while I'm on a trip?

TS: Just, your time—your six and a half years in the—in the White House.

PT: No, actually, that wasn't the case. I'm talking about when I do travel.

TS: I know, I know, I'm just teasing you.

PT: But no, I mean, it was. You were—Because you had to be available at a minute's notice, and there were times when, if you traveled—like, when President Bush or President Reagan went out to California, to his ranch in California, you're flying there—you may be there for two weeks, and that was a long haul, because once you've flown out there, if he's on summer vacation and you're there, you are there for two weeks. Now, Santa—Santa Barbara's a wonderful place to vacation, but you know, you don't have—and we did have—I did have telephone contact with family, but you're there—but you are always—once he's in town, there's no—what do you call it—going out, eating—eating and drinking, or partying or anything like that, that you are—in general—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: Because you're on duty twenty four-seven, basically, then, right?

PT: Exactly, exactly. If you weren't—and normally what we would do if it was for that length of time, one nurse would take the morning, the other nurse would take the evening events, so that you had a little bit of break time, but if you were the nurse that wasn't up on the mountain, you were the nurse in town, you had all of the traveling entourage to tend to, and you would hold sick call, because they would—you know, they need this, they need that, they need—

TS: You almost wanted to get back to the White House to have a break, huh?

PT: Yeah, pretty much.

TS: It'd be pretty grueling.

PT: Yeah, pretty much. But you know, I—I always did it very willingly and gladly, because that's what we're there for, and I would never want, you know, someone to say, "Well, gee, I went there and she wouldn't even give me a Tylenol for my headache. What kind of people you got working here," you know? I—not only did I represent the White House, but I represented the Army Nurse Corps, and you know, and in that capacity, I always wanted to shine and let people see that, you know, it's a wonderful organization to belong to; think about it for yourself. [chuckles]

TS: Did your family ever get to go anywhere with you?

PT: You know, actually, yes. They did not travel with me, but Kennebunkport, my children came up, and my husband brought them up, and they stayed in a hotel downtown. Actually I had—I had my hotel room, so they could—you know, they could stay with me. And President Bush knew that they had come up to Kennebunkport, so he invited them to come to the compound one evening. So I bring my children to the compound—matter of fact, we had my whole—I've got a little worship room upstairs there that has more pictures and things upstairs, and we can go up there later if you'd like. There's a picture of them.

And so, I had my children, and President Bush is talking to my husband and myself, and the kids are out, just climbing the rocks. Well, I had no idea if you go out far enough on the rocks alarms sound because they're on a peninsula. And if boats are coming in and people jump out of the boat and try to get to the compound, those alarms are going to go off, and Secret Service is going to go out there, you know, with their weapons, to see who's coming onshore. [chuckling] So here we're talking, the kids are climbing the rocks and all of a sudden, there go the alarms and I thought, "Oh no," it's my kids that tripped them off. So the Secret Service says, "Oh, it's just Paula's kids."

TS: [chuckles]

PT: But there's a great picture—President Bush says, you know, "Don't you have a camera?"

And I said, "Of course I have a camera!" So he gave the agents the camera to get a picture of all of us on the compound with him and—and my kids, so that one's a picture upstairs. That was him, he—that was a fun thing. My husband also came with me to the ranch. Well, out to Santa Barbara.

TS: Santa Barbara, yeah.

PT: And we had, you know, a nanny here that kept the kids, and he came for like a long weekend; he didn't come up for the whole two weeks I—that I was there. And President—Dr. Hutton knew that my husband was there, and so he invited him to come to [the arrival ceremony—PT clarified later]. We land—President and Mrs. Reagan would land at Point Mugu, it's a Naval Air Station, and then they'd drive up to the mountain. So Dr. Hutton invited my husband to come to the arrival ceremony. So we're in a receiving line, going through, and Dr. Hutton introduces, you know, my husband. He said, "This is Paula's husband," and—as we're going through.

And then he [shakes the president's hand—PT clarifies later]. Mrs. Reagan stops and she says, "What did you say?"

"This is Paula's husband."

Well, my husband had to backtrack then and so she—she shook hands with him and then was talking. It was a wonderful thing for my husband; he just felt like, you know, he was somebody at the time. But it was a terrific experience for him.

And so then, President Reagan invites him on a tour of the ranch. Well, I was very nervous about this because the ranch is their sacred place, and you just don't get—no, it's actually, President Reagan had told Dr. Hutton to have him come up to the ranch, so Dr. Hutton told my husband to come up to the ranch. And I felt very nervous about it. I said, "No, that's not a place—that's the Reagans'," you know, "place, and unless you get that personal note—"

"I did get it," he said, and well, I guess I have to believe Dr. Hutton. [chuckles] And he did, but I thought, "If word gets out that my husband came up there and nobody else who has family coming [is allowed on the ranch—PT added later]—" you know, I just felt very—what do you call it—self-conscious about that.

TS: Sure.

PT: But on the other hand, I thought, "Okay, so they invited him." And he had the most wonderful time; you know, he hopped right into our little [Humvee—PT added later]. We would—when the president would go and ride horses in the morning, we didn't ride horses, but we travelled along in Humvees, hopping along—hopping along in Humvees, and then we have a big medical hooch there that we stayed in, and after lunch he would always go and trim Christmas trees on his ranch. He wanted to have a nice, even—what do you call it—silhouette. When he looked out he wanted to see these trees beautiful trimmed. So he would do the tree-trimming himself. That was the most unnerving thing to me, when you have your commander in chief on a stepladder with—holding onto the stepladder, and a chainsaw in the other hand.

BAK: Oh god.

PT: I hated those afternoon things, and then I am the Gunga Din that has the ice bucket of ginger ale; that was his favorite drink; to drink the ginger ale. So I'd have the ginger ale, and then when he wanted to take a break from trimming the trees, he'd come call us and we would have a little ginger ale drink. When we were done trimming the trees, he'd come to the medical unit hooch and just sit back and tell stories about his "in theatre" days, and I mean, it was just—you know, he made you feel like you were important, too, and it was just amazing. But once again, it's a place he can just chill out. Secret Service agents were there, his military aide was there, and I told you that he gave me these bottles of wine? Did I tell you that?

TS: No, I don't remember those.

BAK: There's photos of them.

PT: Yeah, there's a picture.

TS: I don't remember the story.

PT: Okay, well, we're at the—at the ranch and he takes me into his tack room, and in his tack room, he's got—where—you know, he had all the—the equipment's there for the horses and riding and all, but he has this little winery; this special little door he opens up and it's all these bottles of wine in there, and he takes out two bottles of wine, and I have them in the family room there; I'm saving those things. And he gives me two bottles and he says, "Give one to the military aide."

And one was a Pinot noir, so I take it up and I give it to the military aide, and he says—no, he says—he says, "Thanks," and then we get ready to leave, and the military aide's leaving his wine there.

And I said, "You're not taking that wine from the president?"

He says, "No, I got a lot of it."

So I took his wine; I took them both. [laughter] I have them both. "I'll take it!" And he gave it to me. "I was sharing with you by his demand." But you know, to me, that was something that, "Oh, I'll treasure that thing forever, I'll pass it on to my children."

TS: No kidding.

PT: And the military aide, that's a guy [unclear], too, you know; they don't have the sense of—I don't know, the hangings-on [unclear] that I have, anyway. Look around this house, I got the hangings-on.

TS: That's right, that's all right. Well, so, did you—did you have any downtime just for yourself, away from the hustle and bustle of the White House, and the traveling?

PT: Oh, yeah, when I wasn't traveling I pretty much lived a normal life. I would—We would go into work—you know, I would get there early and I'd do my PT and shower there in the Old—Old Executive Office Building.

TS: You still had to do your PT?

PT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

TS: Daily?

PT: And I have—I did daily PT, but you had a PT test—

TS: The annual?

PT: —quarterly. Quarterly.

TS: Oh, quarterly. That's right.

PT: And I maxed every single PT test I took in the military, and I passed that on to my children—to my sons. I said, "Now, be like your mama and max those PT tests. I maxed

every one." The only time I didn't take a PT test is when I was pregnant with the two of them, so—I said, "But otherwise, max that sucker!"

TS: And have they?

PT: They have.

TS: All right.

PT: Now, my husband didn't max his all of the time, but— [chuckles]

TS: Well, did you miss being in the surgical unit, because you had done that?

PT: I really did, because you know, bedside nursing, really, I think is my call. And I missed that, but we had to go back and keep up our critical care skills. So, once a month I went back, and that was on the cover of the *American Journal of Nursing*, is me at the bedside, keeping up my critical care skills. We also would go and practice intubation, because that was something, as a nurse, you really didn't do, but if you are responsible for putting that tube down the president to save his life, you better know how to do it, so we practiced that. President Reagan and Bush both have wonderful long necks, and I thought, "That would be an easy intubation." Mrs. Bush, not so much. No-neck people are really hard to get tubes down, so I prayed I would never have to put one down her. [chuckling] But—So you practice no-neck people to get a feel for the difference. And that was—you know, that was an unnerving thing for me, too, to think, you know, "If I've really got to put this tube down her." I was—I told Therese last time, one of the most unnerving—[extraneous comments regarding cat redacted] One of the most unnerving things for me was when you're in the Rose Garden, and there's—you know, the president is there and the whole Rose Garden's full of people, and you look up at the rooftops and you see Secret Servants—Secret Service agents with their Uzis pointed down. The reality hits you, then, that if somebody could take out the president, they could take out me, they could take out anybody here, and that's when the job becomes a sobering job. Fortunately, we didn't have any of that, but we had rotten eggs thrown at us and things like that, in motorcades. [unclear]

TS: Where did that happen?

PT: Oh, up in Seattle. They're not very Republican up there. [chuckles]

TS: They threw rotten eggs?

PT: Pelted rotten eggs, and—oh yeah. It was—in America!

TS: Did you get any other receptions like that anywhere else besides Seattle?

PT: Not too much, no. You know, you get occasional "boo"s from the—but you get that right across the White House, and they—in the park[?].

TS: Sure. Sure. But you—So did you try to stay out of that political realm of it?

PT: Oh, absolutely.

TS: Yeah.

PT: You know, when we traveled in the motorcade, the physician travels separately from the nurse; you want to divide your resources. So I always traveled with the photographer and Marlin Fitzwater [White House Press Secretary under George Bush Sr.], head of—head of the press. Head of the press, and photographer, and the nurse, travel in the same little minivan. And that was always great; it was just fun to travel with them. And it was nice to get to know the photographer, hence the photos. [laughter]

TS: Yeah, that helps. "I'll take a copy, thank you." Well, you said you could get a copy of anything that you were in.

PT: Yeah, that you were in. As long as you know the date and the photographer, you go to the photography office and say, "I was photographed on this day by so-and-so," and you'd get a copy.

TS: And so, how did your—so your husband is still in the—in the army, right?

PT: No, he's retired from the army too.

TS: No, no, at this time.

PT: He's—Oh, at this time, right, right, he's a JAG officer.

TS: And so is he still in DC, then?

PT: Right, and once again, it was his corps that gave him different assignments in that area. When we first came to DC, he was at the Pentagon, and then he went to litigation division at Fort Meade, Maryland, then went down to Virginia and he had different positions in the area.

TS: So he was in that—

PT: So we didn't have to move, and you know.

TS: So you stayed in the same house, and everything.

PT: Right, exactly. And so, I became tour guide extraordinaire to all of the JAG Corps and anybody. It's amazing to me.

TS: Oh, I see, yeah.

PT: Because on the—on the weekends, you could take—if the president was not in the office there, you could take your guests on a more exclusive tour of the White House than what the visitors get. And so—or once they are no longer in, so you can take them the whole West Wing, and take them around and, you know, you have to get permission in advance and they'll let you know if it will be available that day. And so I had more tours—more friends than you could shake a stick at.

TS: [chuckles] Everybody wanted to get that White House special tour.

PT: Oh, everybody. But it was a great thing, and you'd take them into the press room and they had their pictures taken right at the—

TS: The Podium.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: —at the podium with the White House seal and all. And it was great, you know. I can do something to make somebody happy I go for it. But it was like a secondary job for me, you know. If I wasn't there—

TS: I would think so, you know. That would be—That would be—

PT: But one I enjoyed, it was great fun.

TS: So, did you—with the different—what's interesting to me is that you had different services that are—you had the nurses, and the doctors and the military aides from the different services.

PT: Right, army, navy, and air force.

TS: And then you had the one doctor? There was more than one doctor, though, right?

PT: Right, there's one—there is a—the physician to the president, who serves at the discretion of the president. And then the others are army, navy, and air force. And you tried to get—you know, you might have a cardiologist, a general medicine doctor—

TS: So, a mix of—

PT: —a surgeon; you tried to have a mix of them.

TS: Now, what about enlisted personnel?

PT: Enlisted personnel, we had the corps—we have a naval—it was a naval corpsmen, that would provide the supplies for our medical unit, they ordered all the supplies; the drugs, the syringes, the—you know, any type of medical equipment, the bandages and whatnot, stethoscopes, whatever you need, all the equipment for the office, as well as then we have an air force enlisted man who did all of our scheduling. There are two secretaries. I don't know what they have now, but when I was there, it was two secretaries; one was the president—the physician to the president's secretary in the White House proper, the other one was in our medical office in the Old Executive Office Building. And so, they—they were responsible for scheduling our trips. So, when—if you had a trip coming up, or—they would tell you, "You have a trip coming up". If you knew that the president was going to your home town, then you, you know [would have priority for that trip—PT added later].

TS: "I'd like to be on that trip." [chuckles]

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Talk to them, "Could I get that trip to my hometown?" And they were very good about that. Or you would, you know—if you could—you could trade amongst the nurses yourself if—you know, if you had been to a city and you really don't want to go back to LA for the ninety-fifth time, and you know, "I don't mind, I'll go to LA", you know, you can do that.

TS: Well, it sounds like you had a lot of good rapport with everybody.

PT: Oh, you're like family there, because it's such an exclusive—or inclusive group, very small, that you just, you know, became family to everyone. As a matter of fact, [Major General] Kim Siniscalchi, who was the air force nurse at the White House when I was there, her daughter was like four years old. Kim is now the Chief of the Air Force Nurse Corps, and her daughter is twenty-one years old or so.

TS: Oh wow.

PT: Just to watch her grow into just this beautiful young woman is just—it's amazing.

TS: Yeah.

PT: And we keep in touch for the most part, with each other, and that's why they want to have the every two year reunions, which are too often for me.

TS: That's right. [laughter] Well, looking back, so—because you went—let's see, when did you join? You went in in 1971.

PT: Yes. [PT went into the army in 1971 and into the White House in 1987 —PT added later].

TS: And then you left in '93. And so the—even though the experience here in the White House, how did you see changes for women in the military in the nurses' corps? How did that—you know, that trajectory go over those twenty years?

PT: You know, it was a very—it was—like it was happening and I didn't realize it until you look back at it? You know, because I was always, I guess, my own person, and I thought here—and because you're a nurse, that was different too> But the scholarship that I was on, the Walter Reed Army Institute of Nursing scholarship program—used to be in the military that you couldn't be pregnant, and so nurses would get the scholarship, they would go through the nursing program, get their degree, and then get married and get pregnant and not serve back their time, because you couldn't be pregnant in the army. And so that angered me, even—I thought, you know "Someone gave you—it was a gift, yes, but there was a payback expected of that gift." And it was, you know—users; it was givers—givers and users, and so I just thought that wasn't right. But then for the military to become more accepting and say, "Yes, you can be pregnant and be in the military," I was very happy to see that or I would have been out.

TS: You think so, if you hadn't been able to have a family?

PT: Oh yeah. I mean, because I knew I was going to have a family, and so I would stay in, you know, until I guess they would say, "Okay, you're pregnant, you're out." But I would have paid back my time, it was a commitment that I had, and the people, you know, who don't honor their commitments don't shine too brightly in my eyes. [chuckles] So.

TS: Yeah. Did you ever face any sort of, like, sexual harassment or anything like that, or know of anybody who faced anything like that?

PT: No, the biggest thing for me, coming from a small little town in Wisconsin where, you know, you were raised to be friendly and outgoing and whatnot—did I tell you this already? So, I get to Washington D.C., and I was—you don't know how nervous I was about going there; I mean, this great big city and I'm from a little hometown, and so I was very nervous to begin with. Well, you know, when you're nervous, you say hello to people, you try to be friendly. I learned very quickly, you don't do that in Washington D.C. You know, it's almost—and I felt very bad, the fact that I couldn't just on the street say hello to somebody without them thinking you're trying to get picked up! You know? Because I felt like—I felt like, "You are a slut" if you say hello to somebody. I said, "Well, no, I'm saying hello." And it bothered me that I couldn't say hello to someone without them thinking that, you know, there's some secondary gain, "She must want me,"

you know, or something. [chuckles] And that—that bothered me more than anything. But I never, myself, faced any sexual harassment. I think in nursing, it's a close community, you work close with doctors and all. I felt very humiliated many times by doctors, and they would yell and scream at you, and you know, I just wanted to do good. I was very—very impressionable in my early career, and I would cry at the drop of a hat; "Don't holler at me." I learned to tough up, in time, but it was not a sexual harassment thing. It was more of a—

TS: Doctor-nurse power thing?

PT: Doctor-nurse power thing, exactly. And there was a lot of that, but not nearly so much as I've seen in the civilian world.

TS: Oh, is that right?

PT: Oh, when I came to my current hospital position, I said "Whoa, we have some gods here!" [chuckles]

TS: So the idea of having the rank helps, then, as far as that dynamic, as opposed to the civilian?

PT: I think—Right, I think very much it does. And you know, you're respected because of your rank, and—and you know, rank has its privileges to a degree, and much—much more is expected of you the higher you were in rank, and the opportunities that came with being advanced in rank, and that was something that I really admired about the military. And I think I would not be where I am today had it not been for the military. Because I would have stayed in my hometown, I would have been a nurse, and I would not have challenged myself the way that the military forces you to challenge yourself.

Right now at Moses Cone, they wouldn't say to me, "Okay, you're going to be the chief nurse—or, you're going to be the head nurse on such and such a unit."

You have to apply, you have to ask, "Can I be that nurse, can I do this?"

In the military, "Okay, [snaps fingers] here's what you're going to do next."

"I don't want to do that, but I'll do it as a very growing experience." And I thought, you know—and the same thing with the PT test; you know, that you've got to take the PT test and you've got to pass it, you've got to keep in shape. I wonder, would I be—would I force myself to keep in shape if I hadn't—now it's just ingrained in me that you'll be in shape. It's good, it's a healthy thing, and you stay in shape.

TS: Yeah? What other lessons do you think you learned from the military; what did it bring to your life?

PT: It brought opportunity, more than anything. And you know, the military is not for everyone, and we told this to our children, too, but if it works for you, it can be a wonderful thing. And it was a wonderful thing; the travel opportunities, the professional opportunities, the job opportunities that it has for you, the financial opportunity. You

know, I was in the military, I had a job. As long as I didn't mess up, I knew my job was secure. And unlike people today who turn around and their jobs are gone, you know, that didn't happen in the military. But subsequently I see so much more—so much more coming into the military today that I think the standards have lowered, and that bothers me, that, you know, they got to fill a quota, so anybody's in. The height and weight standards, those seem to be out the door when you look at some morbidly obese people in the military; I said, "How does that happen?"

BAK: You feel the standards have—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: They slacked on the standards.

BAK: —have lowered for the Army Nurse Corps also?

PT: You know, that I really don't have an appreciation of because I don't really—I'm not in contact with any current army nurse—you know, army nurses. And I haven't been to a reunion in a few years to see, so I have not been in a military hospital. Actually, I take that back, I will take that back, because our son, this past January, had myocarditis and was a patient in the ICU at Fort Bragg, at—what's the name of the hospital? William Beaumont—not William Beaumont, that's in El Paso, Texas. [Womack Army Medical Center—PT corrected later]. Anyway. I did come in contact with the military nurses there, and of course everything is computerized now, and—but they were as impressive to me as I thought I was in the military; that they carry themselves well, they're very knowledgeable, they're polite, they're helpful, and seemed to know that they represent the military. And so, that was—there's a lot of— lot more civilians, though, in a military hospital, than what there were, I think, when I was in nursing.

TS: Today?

PT: Today, a lot more civilians.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: There's a lot more civilians? What kinds of jobs are they doing in the—

PT: Nursing; civilian nurses.

TS: Oh, really?

PT: Oh, yeah. On—In the ICU, I think I saw more civilian nurses, government service nurses, than what there were military nurses.

TS: What do you think about that?

PT: Well, I—it bothers me. It's a military hospital, they should be military nurses, and where—where are they all? I don't know what that answer is, other than that, you know, people don't want the demands of a military job. They want to be a nurse, but not so much the other mili—the travel—having to travel. If you're a creature of habit and you don't want to travel, you don't want to be sent overseas, I think that's a huge component of why the nurses aren't coming in, because you may get sent overseas and that's probably not on everyone's wish list. You know, as when you apply for places you want to go, probably not everyone's going to say overseas; "I want to go to war."

TS: You mean because of the war?

PT: I think because of the war.

TS: Yeah?

PT: That has to do with a lot of it. And like West Point, so many more officers are getting out after they've paid back their commitment to West Point than what they had in the past, because they're all being sent overseas, and it's much more of an infantry-based job now than—than what it was, and they don't want to go fight the war. On the other hand, some go in it just for that reason, but I think the drawdown in numbers are because of that.

TS: Well, it would be silly of me to ask you if, you know—how you—if you had a daughter, if you—if she wanted to go—

PT: I would—Oh, I've trained my granddaughter right now! She's learning to salute, she's going to go be—she's going to be West Point, you betcha. [both chuckle]

TS: Well, how do you feel about—

PT: There she is, there.

TS: This one right here?

PT: Here, this one, Isabella and William. And see the military in him?

TS: There's the flag on top.

PT: They've got that flag there.

TS: That's right.

PT: They will be.

TS: And you have two sons and they're both in the military.

PT: Correct. And the wife of one is in the military.

TS: And so, that's what I was going to ask you about, your daughter-in-law. What does she do?

PT: She is a Blackhawk helicopter pilot. And both she and my son, who is an Apache attack helicopter pilot, are stationed in Afghanistan right now, they're in different locations.

TS: What do you think about—so she's a combat—

PT: She is a go—get-up-and-go girl. We call them Sky King and Sky Queen. But she is feisty, she is tiny, very petite, little girl, but you know, it's opportunity for her. Her father was—is a retired full colonel in the army, so she has army in her blood as well.

TS: So, what would you say to people who say you shouldn't be in that role, in combat?

PT: Kind of, to each his own. That—I think that women—now—and even on front lines. I mean, there's some good manly women we have, and very fit for duty, more so than some that are there today. And I think that if it's something that they want—I don't think they should be forced to go into a front line position, but if that's they're choosing and they know that, in going into that corps, that that's a possibility, and they need to accept that, that's where they'll go. I did not want to serve on the front line, I wanted to be a nurse.

TS: Right.

PT: But I would have gone, I would have gone willingly, but you know, you pray in the back of your mind—I just don't like war, to begin with, and I'm much more of a peace lover than the war. But, you know, Alice Mary and Eric, our son and daughter-in-law, were in Iraq for a year, came back, now they're in Afghanistan. My son, the doctor son, army doctor, was in the infantry, and he served in Iraq as well. And I just could not be prouder. On the other hand, they were, I'm sure, three of the most highly prayed-after individuals [chuckling] in their—in their units, because that's just the power of prayer; there's nothing else that I can do, other than care packages, which I sent plenty, plenty, every month they get a care package to support the effort. You know, it's just—it's not in my hands, you just pray that—[The Lord will—PT clarified later] see them home alive.

TS: Well, the other kind of controversial, I guess you would say—I don't think we talked about this last time, but the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the repeal of that. What are your thoughts on that?

PT: That's a hard line, for me, because—to me, that's a personal issue, and I don't think it should be something that should be flaunted, and that needs to be up in someone's face. Right now, working at Moses Cone, there is more of that than—than what I ever thought, you know. Now, I had my blinders on when I first came in—into the military. I didn't even know what gay and lesbian was, [chuckles] you know. I was pretty, I told you, I led a shallow life when I was raised. And as long as it's not interfering with their work, I don't have—I don't have trouble with it. As long as they have separate toilet facilities for the men and the women, you know, fine, I don't want men coming in my toilet, nor—and sleeping arrangements and that type of thing, but as far as, you know, gays—my roommate was a lesbian, which I didn't know at the time, but until—

TS: Roommate where?

PT: My roommate in San Antonio, Texas. And that's a whole other story. And she was in the military.

TS: Did she stay in?

PT: She—I don't know if she retired, because I kind of lost track after her when I met and married my husband. That didn't go over well with her, because she wanted me. [chuckles]

TS: Oh, is that right?

PT: Like I said, it's a whole other story of her attack on me. [chuckling] And that's why I say it's a sensitive subject, because, you know, at work, she never would have done that, but on the home front it was different.

TS: Interesting.

PT: So I did have personal experience, and you know, the fact that I—I was totally blown away to begin with, with the fact that she persisted, was something else that I just thought—

TS: What did you do about it? I mean, what did you—

PT: I did not rat on her. I got married, is what I did, and I moved out! [laughs]

TS: Well, that'll solve it.

PT: But it was—she was kind of a strange duck to begin with, so—and I guess maybe I just—you know, I didn't have gaydar at the time, and so you just didn't—I didn't—and I just tried to follow the Golden Rule, to do unto others, and that's why I say I like so many

things about nursing in the military that most people don't, I'm just a different egg[?]. But, you know, I still work nighttime; I work seven p.[m.] to seven a.[m.]!

TS: That's right.

PT: Most nurses would never do that! I like to float to different units, I'm a flexible resource nurse, I like the variety, I like that. Most nurses don't.

TS: Yeah, they like a routine and pattern.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: They like a routine and their own little house. I say, "I make myself at home any unit I go to, what do you mean?" They like their little nooks.

TS: So did you feel like you were treated fairly throughout your career?

PT: I really do. For the most part, with one exception, and that was what we talked about earlier.

TS: Yes.

PT: Off-tape, and I'd like that to stay off.

TS: That's fine. Yeah. But other than that?

PT: Other than that, yeah. I thought that I was very well respected in the military, and I advanced in rank, kind of, with or above as expected. But I worked very hard, I was not a slacker, and that's what—you know, but I attribute that to my upbringing; I learned to work from early on, and I think overall in society today, this is not a working generation. You know, new nurses coming in don't have [a strong work ethic—PT clarified later]—now, there are exceptions, and I work with some wonderful new nurses, too, but the work ethic is different.

TS: Why do you think that is?

PT: It's a gimme society; everything is handed to them. I had to work for anything that I got, growing up. My children didn't have that. So my children are included in that, I'm not trying to say—but it is a—you know, it's a gimme—you—you want to give your children what you didn't have, and I'm not talking just materialistic things that you want to give them—what you didn't have—but there is a whole lot more materialistic things in this world than what we really need to have.

TS: Do you think they're receptive to mentors? Because we talked a little bit about that earlier.

PT: Once again, I think it's—it's the individual, because there have been some that, you know, want to learn, they want the experience. On the other hand, if you might want to suggest a different way—I know how to do that.

TS: Well, if you had to pick somebody from the military that you could say, "I couldn't have made it without this person. This person was really—"

PT: [Colonel] Carol Reineck.

TS: And why? Why do you pick her?

PT: And she is now a retired colonel. And she's very published throughout the nurse corps. She was my first head nurse, and—in San Antonio. No—Yeah, yeah. Because then my second one was the one that wasn't so good. But Carol Reineck took me under her wing, and she—she was a mentor to me. And I think she—she saw a diamond in the rough and it was really rough, [laughs] and let me know that I could come to her for anything, and she encouraged me to go to this class, go to that class, to, you know, try to—to better myself.

TS: And is that where you kind of got the idea of, "Okay, you have these things you have to check off to progress through your career"?

PT: Right, and you had to do that, but like I say, naïve; I didn't know you had to do this. And so, she kind of said, you know, "Here's what we need to be doing—" career, you know, mentoring, and military mentoring as well.

TS: In what way?

PT: "To advance in rank, here's what you need to do. We're going to send you to this class, you've got to do the advance course, you've got to get to officer basic course," is what you come into and just the different military classes.

TS: Did you pass that on to anybody during your career?

PT: I did. Matter of fact, even now, not in the military, to new nurses, I try to mentor them and pass that on and to say, "Here, let me help you." Students that come in, especially to the emergency room, and that can be just a daunting place for them, and they want to shadow you, and I try to take the time—it's a whole new environment but they need to see—to see what it's like. And I guess I feel like a mother hen, to tuck somebody under your wing and help them along. Laurie, who was the nurse that followed me with President—President Reagan, she was one that I knew—Laurie was a diamond, she never had a rough side to her, and—but she was new into nursing, and so I would dote on her

all I could and help her learn—learn the ropes; who to avoid, what to avoid; [chuckling] "Here's a way to tick off this doctor. Don't do that."

TS: You didn't—You—When we talked on the phone originally, what was your little thing about—how you said the three presidents you served under?

PT: Oh, [chuckles] and it's true. I worked—For two and a half years, I was with Ronald Reagan. For four years, I worked for George Bush Sr., and for ten days, I was under Bill Clinton. And my name is Paula.

TS: [chuckles]

PT: Most people get the joke.

TS: I know, I didn't get it on the phone, I'll have to admit. But—So you didn't have a lot of contact with President Clinton?

PT: Only—Only ten days' worth. But to tell you what a gentleman, again, President Bush was, we went to the debates in Richmond, Virginia. And President Bush takes me up to Clinton and introduces me, and he says to him that, "This is my nurse Paula, and depending upon how the cards fall, she may be your nurse, too." And that's how the cards fell.

TS: Yeah.

PT: And, for ten days, I mean, I barely had a glimpse of him, because the hen-pecking order for the medical unit, I was down a little bit lower.

TS: And that's when you decided to retire and get out?

PT: Retire, yes.

TS: And what was different for you when you got out? How was that different?

PT: Oh, well I—

TS: Besides the fact you're not working in the White House!

PT: Yeah, right, right. You know, the military is a family, and—and I really miss the camaraderie of the military. Now, having a husband also in the military, we have his military friends and then our children, you know, they're in the military. I kind of still feel somewhat connected to them. But to ease the situation a little bit, when we were still in Maryland, I joined a travel agency—not a travel agency, I'm sorry, a float pool—it was like a float pool, a PRN nurse agency [a PRN or per diem nurse fills in day-to-day on a temporary basis] and I worked—

TS: Oh, for nursing—for nurses?

PT: For nurses.

TS: Oh, okay.

PT: Actually, at Walter Reed, they had supplementation to the staff, where some civilian nurses—and so I joined the SRI [Supplemental Resources, Inc.], and I have no idea what that stands for today, I can't remember. But it was an agency that they hired nurses from the outside to come and supplement their staff.

TS: I see.

PT: And so, I joined that agency knowing that I would be working at Walter Reed, and knowing that I had worked at Walter Reed, that would be—I still had military connections there and it was—it was just a great thing. And so, I—I worked a lot of shifts for them.

TS: So that helped ease your transition?

PT: That helped to ease the transition. My hardest position ever was when we moved here to Greensboro and I started at Moses Cone. It was—You know, I had never worked a civilian hospital before, and so I only knew military nursing, military protocols, and you know. I didn't know a soul at that hospital. They, on the other hand, knew that they were getting an "army nurse" [said with emphasis] and people will tell me this now, you know, down the road a little bit, that they had these visions of a big, you know, taskmaster coming in, and when they met me it wasn't quite that.

And I remember telling my first head nurse there—first nurse manager there, I said, "If you haven't already, please don't tell them what my prior assignment was. Let me establish my own reputation for who I am and not the nursing that I've done, and I think that life will be better that way." Well, that didn't quite go that way, [laughs] because once word got out, then I was speaking to the critical care nurse association [American Association of Critical-Care Nurses] and this nurse association and this church and that church, and you know, so—

TS: Your cover was blown.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: I was on the talk circuit. My cover was blown. [all chuckle] So.

TS: Well, what was so different about the civilian nursing as opposed to the military nursing—

PT: Well, the—

TS: —that was hard for you?

PT: I think there was no more rank system, and no—and the military, you had much more respect in the military from the doctors. And I think that was the hardest thing, the God—the God complex. Matter of fact, I won't mention the name, but I have a preceptor at Moses Cone, I was working the surgical intensive care unit, and that nurse is still there, and she's just a love, and she—she really mentored me well, she tucked me in and taught me the ropes, because everything is very different in the civilian world; in just the manner in which patients are admitted, how you do things, how you contact physicians, whatever.

So here we have the surgeon, comes in—well, I've already blown some of it there, he's a surgeon—comes in and she introduces me, tells him that I am going to be on this unit, and that I was—I think she told him that I was an army nurse—but anyway, that I was here and working full time.

He looks me in the eyes, checks me out from my nose to my toes, from my toes to my nose, gets right in my face, "Speak to me in six months," turns around and walks out. That was my introduction to Moses Cone.

I thought, "Oh, this is that southern hospitality I've heard so much about! I think I'm going to love it here!"

And I just said to my preceptor, "What was that all about?" And she tells me not to worry about him. Well, how can you not worry about him? I said, "What [in] the world?"

Well, then, I'm on daytime orientation, and I have one of his patients—the second case scenario where things they should call a code pink for nurses to come to the rescue of a nurse that's being—and this was actually an assault, by the same physician. And had I known better, I should have pressed charges. And the story goes—not the story, the event happened, I had one of his patients who was on a couple medicines that lower your heart rate, and these are IV medicines, so you can titrate them up and down to establish the heart rate that you need to have. So I'm thinking, "Okay, he's going to be coming in on rounds. I think I'll ask him about holding the ten o' clock digoxin." And he's already on another medicine, cardizem[?], that can lower the heart rate and blood pressure. So he comes in in the morning, so I'm thinking proactive, "I don't want to have to call him in surgery, I'll just, you know, ask him about it now."

So I say, "So-and-so, his heart rate's already, you know, at this level. Would you like me to hold his ten o' clock dig[oxin]?"

"What the hell do you want to do that for?" So I tell him, and he says, "You don't ever, ever hold the dig. Do you understand?"

And I said, "Dr. So-and-so, well then—" I didn't argue with him, I said, "Well then, could I decrease the cardizem[?]?"

And he goes, "I'm the doctor. You're the nurse." And he punches me right in the shoulder like that. "You're the nurse. You don't ever question me. Do you understand?"

And I just said, "Sir, for the benefit of this patient [I will always question you—PT added later]. And this is right in front of the patient—

TS: I think I have a bruise.

PT: I'm sorry. [laughter]

TS: I just wanted—

BAK: For the record—

PT: For the record, I punched her! It was a hard poke.

TS: So he's the doctor.

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: And this is right in front of a patient. He's the doctor, you're the nurse; "You never question me. do you understand?"
And I said, "Sir, for the benefit of that patient, I will always question you."

TS: Oh my.

PT: He takes the chart, he throws it on the floor, turns around and walks out the unit.

TS: Wow.

PT: And I thought, "Whoa, anger management problem here?" And in the military, that just never would have happened. You never would have had something like that, and—

TS: You just would have had a conversation about it.

PT: You would have had a conversation about it, or you would not have a job if you had something like that, you know, because—but I—you know, I probably should have pressed assault charges, is what I should have done. [several simultaneous joking comments about Paula punching Therese to demonstrate]

TS: I just wanted to transcriber to know that you got—

PT: I was assaulted—

TS: You got punched pretty good. So— [chuckles]

PT: So that was my introduction. Then I thought, "I got to grow some thick skin here." And really, I think that was much more—the growing the thick skin happened at Moses Cone than anywhere.

TS: Yeah, that's true. You know, one thing we didn't talk about, and I don't know if you had any experience with this, but with, like, post-traumatic stress disorder, did you have—come in contact with that at all, with any of your patients?

PT: I really didn't. When I was in nursing school, you know, we were getting soldiers from Vietnam, but I was too young and just really kind of clueless as to—and I don't think that they even had that title of it at the time, when they were coming back from—

TS: Because you were just a student nurse at the time.

PT: Student nurse at the time, yeah. And then, really, I was not in a clinical environment the last six years—or seven years of my military career, so I really was out of the critical care realm. And then I came to a civilian hospital, so I really have not—don't have a lot of PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder, experience behind me. But there's an awful lot of civilian patients out here that claim to have that [chuckling] when they come.

TS: Is that right?

PT: Yeah.

TS: When they come in?

PT: Yes. And you know, not wanting to pry, but you see PTSD and you think, "Oh, were you in the military?" and you know, it's not just a military thing, it's anything of trauma—

TS: Right.

PT: If you're raped or assaulted or traumatized in any way.

TS: That's true, it's carried over to the civilian—

PT: Yeah, it's carried over into the civilian world.

TS: That's interesting.

PT: You know, in my military mind I thought, "Oh, they must be military!"

TS: Right. I would think so too.

PT: I want to say, "What did you do?"

TS: That's true. Now, did you—did you ever—when you were in in the '70s, you know, there weren't a lot of women in the military. Even though nursing had been, you know, more of a traditional career path.

PT: Right.

TS: Did you—when you look back now, do you consider yourself a trailblazer at all, in any sense?

PT: I did not consider myself a trailblazer. I came into the military—like I—it was out of financial need, I was looking for a scholarship, and when this army nursing scholarship came available, really, I really hesitated. I said, "I don't know if I want to be [in the army—PT clarified later]. Not that I was a woman, but to be in the army. Not a woman in the army, but just being in the army.

TS: You just didn't know if that was for you?

PT: Yeah, if it was for me or not. And it wasn't the fact that I was a woman in the army, but the fact that I was a—I was going to be a nurse in the army, it seemed okay. It wasn't like I was in the real army, it's like this—the real army and then there's nursing in the army. [chuckles] And today, that's very much different. You know, you have wars to go to, but I did not see war. So I'm sure that my opinion is colored by that aspect. But I felt very proud once I got the scholarship and I was a nurse, and you know, then—and I encouraged other friends of mine to come into the army.

TS: Did they?

PT: Actually, one did. But—And that wasn't for her, so I thought, "Okay, well, I tried." But you know, even today when you think, you know, joining the army, a lot of people—unless you know someone associated with the army or you're looking for a job, and I was looking for a job.

TS: Well, do you think that civilians have a different—like, maybe a misperception of what the military's like, or the army?

PT: Yeah.

TS: What kind of perception do you think they have?

PT: Well, like when I came to Moses Cone, they thought I was a big battleaxe, you know, coming into their unit and I was going to—I think they—they see it more as dictators, as in issuing orders; kind of, the—let's see, the basic training type officer in your face.

TS: Drill officer—drill sergeant or something?

[Speaking Simultaneously]

PT: Drill officer, drill sergeant, something more like that, than the actual workings of the military. But you know, nursing—nursing in the military is just different from any other thing in the military; medicine in the army is. You're in a much more secured environment, stateside, and that was the experience that I had. But I think the civilian world is—does not have a complete picture of what it's like.

TS: Of what it's like.

PT: And you see the military movies, *An Officer and a Gentleman*, and that's what—you know, you relate to those movies, and—what was the Goldie Hawn's—*Private*—

TS: Oh, *Private Benjamin*?

PT: *Private Benjamin* and those types of movies. Or the *Air Force One* movie for the White House; *Air Force One*.

TS: I'll have to go see that one. What about the idea of patriotism. When you think about patriotism, what does that mean to you?

PT: I cry every time the national anthem comes on, every time I see an American flag flying. I think just having served in the military, I have such a pride with our sons following our footsteps. Never in my wildest dreams did I think that our sons would be—would be in the military, and the fact that they chose that profession and have come into the military, you never saw two more proud parents than my husband and I. And you know, I—I'm who I am today because of—of the military and the blessings that the military had for me, the opportunity that I had with them. Had I not received the army nursing scholarship, I would not be the same person I am today. And I'd probably [be] one of those in the civilian world saying, "Oh, the army, no." And—Because, you know, familiarity endears you to something. What you don't know, you kind of mis—misjudge.

TS: Is that maybe one of the reasons that you like to go and do some of the talks too?

PT: It is, because—well, that as not so much the military, but as representing the White House and letting the presidential—the president and families be seen as human beings.

TS: So that's like your theme when you do those talks?

PT: Yeah, it's to personalize them. Because I can tell them—and out of interest, yeah, to say that there are these positions available, and—and I think I do speak for—speak well for the military, and they think, "Wow, this opportunity," and that's a great thing. But my—my secondary thing is to personalize the presidential families and to say that, "I'm

going to tell you how I came to be a nurse at the White House, what I did as a nurse at the White House, but the most fun thing you're going to enjoy are the stories that I have of my times at the White House and how—how I felt endeared by the first families and how they are really people; they're real people." [chuckles] So.

TS: That's right. We certainly have talked about quite a lot. Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you wanted to add?

PT: Let me just page through here, because I had a couple notes here.

TS: Okay. I can pause it for a second.

PT: Yeah, pause for a second, and how about something to drink?

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, we took a little snack break and Paula's been very generous with some yummy food here. But there was a couple things you wanted to add that we hadn't talked about? You were saying that your husband got invited to Camp David?

PT: To Camp David, and—break it for a second, because I need to find where that was.

[Recording Paused]

TS: Okay, go ahead.

PT: Shortly after President Bush came into office, it was a Sunday morning, our family was getting ready to leave for church and the phone rings. As a rule, I usually don't pick up the phone when going out the door, but I did.

It was the president's military aide, and he said, "Paula, President Bush would like to invite you and your husband and children up to Camp David this afternoon, unless you have other plans."

I said, "I believe we would love to be there."

And we lived within an hour's drive of Camp David, so we drove up. You are met at the entrance to the camp by the camp officer, who takes you to your own little cabin. All of the cabins there are—have names of trees on them. The chapel that was built there is the Evergreen Chapel, and one entire side of the chapel is just glass, to enjoy the beauty all around you. It's most—the most spectacular place. So we are given bicycles—I thought—did I tell you this?

TS: I don't remember, but—

PT: Okay. So we're escorted to our cabin, and then you ride bicycles around the camp; they try to keep down on the emissions. So our children wanted to—Evan, the historian of the family, wanted to go and pitch horseshoes at the horseshoe pit where Gorbachev and President Bush had pitched them the week or two before that time. So we get on our bikes and ride over to the horseshoe pit. As we're finishing with the horseshoes, here comes a golf cart and the lights are on, the horn's honking, the beams are flashing, and it is President Bush, who jumps off the cart to come meet my family—meet my sons, my husband—pops the kids on the back of the cart, puts my husband and I on and takes them on a tour of the camp. We end up at—they have a gym there, and it's traditional to play—every guest has to play wallyball, and I thought they were just making fun of volleyball. But there is an actual sport called wallyball; it is like volleyball that's played off the walls of the gym. Secret Service agents play, anybody up there, all the sons and family played wallyball. Well, fortunately for me, I had my two children to tend to, but by husband did play wallyball with them, and that was just—it was great fun watching them. We spent the day up there, the kids wanted to watch a couple movies and you know, you're just free to do whatever you want on the camp. And before we left, each of us received certificates for being invited guests at Camp David. So our children had yet another thing to take to school to show and tell. They had the most wonderful show and tell pieces—

TS: I bet.

PT: —of all their times there. And then it was Christmas—

TS: Was that the first time you had been?

PT: That's the first time—well, not the first time. I had been there.

TS: You had been there before?

PT: I had been there before, yeah. But he had wanted to meet my—meet my family, so he invited them up for the day. Whenever the president goes to Camp David, we rotate the travels to camp too. Everything is rotated. So you're up there for the weekend. [coughs] But you never, as a rule, bring your family up there to stay with you because that's their personal place.

TS: So this was a special—

PT: So it was a special thing that he invited them up. And it wasn't—it was just for the day, not the whole weekend.

TS: And then you said your husband got invited at a later date?

PT: Right. This was—I'm trying to think if it was Christmas or Thanksgiving—and sorry, I'm just blanking right now. It was either at Christmas or Thanksgiving that we were invited up, and did not eat the meal with the First Family, but with all the other guests on—on the compound. And for my husband to be invited back again, just to spend the time up there was just—he—he just felt so included in everything, and for the most part he did live vicariously—

TS: Yeah?

PT: —on everything that I went and did, but he had great memories of Camp David. And that was when President Bush had his ventricular fibrillation incident, that that was up at Camp David, and our doctors there were the ones that, you know, diagnosed that and then he went to Bethesda Naval Hospital for the treatment and everything after we were working that up. So then we became his nurses in the hospital. That was maybe one thing I didn't tell you, that when the—or maybe I did. When the president is admitted to a military facility, that we would take over as his nurses, because the military protocols were the same and you know, the equipment and whatnot. If it's a civilian hospital, we would work in tandem with the civilian staff. So mainly, number one, he's got a familiar face; number two, it's a security thing. If you're going to be giving drugs to the president, I'll pick the drugs from wherever I want and give it, just in case you have maybe a republic—a democratic—democratic nurse caring for him. [chuckling] But it's just a security thing.

TS: Right. And so, you're writing about your experiences too?

PT: Well, yes—yes and no. Right after I left the White House, I thought, "I need to write this down." And I have been, over the years, getting things a little bit more organized. But I did start, and for quite some time—and I probably had a good hundred and fifty pages or so written, but as I began writing, I thought, you know, I really need to go back to my growing up and bring that into the book first, because that's what makes the story, for me, so special; just how my particular family situation, growing up with seventeen children in the family is a little bit different from the ordinary, and those experiences, to bring that. But—And I really want my children, my grandchildren, to know and appreciate how I got the job, what I did in the job, and then to kind of tell the stories that I tell when I—when I do these talks. I have the material all there, it's just a matter of finding the time. Well, you know, my kids were in high school, and then they were in college, and then they got married, and now we're having grandchildren, and I'm still working, and I said, "I've got to find the time. I've got to do this." But when I went out to the Reagans—I told you I have a title for my book; maybe not. I received—When I went out to care for President Reagan after he fell and broke his hip, I received a gift from Mrs. Reagan upon my departure, and—I could get the gift.

TS: Okay.

[Recording Paused, Extraneous Comments Redacted]

PT: Something that was wrapped in beautiful red package with bows, and I thought, "This is lovely." And I have to preface to say, when I was there, Mrs. Reagan was very concerned about who was going to take care of the president after I left. And I would try to tell her, "Don't worry, we'll find somebody. It'll work out, it can be done, we'll find something," blah, blah, blah.

So the day that I leave, she presents me with this gift, and I open it up, and it is this red leather plaque with the words inscribed "It can be done."

And I said, "Mrs. Reagan, isn't this what I've been telling you all along? It can be done, don't worry about it. We'll get somebody." [all chuckle]

She says, "Yes, yes, that's what I thought. I want you to have it." This plaque, she said, sat on the president's desk for the eight years that he was in the Oval Office. I asked her who gave it to him, she did not have any knowledge of its original source. But amongst the several things in my house, I have little descriptions on the back of it so when I'm dead and gone my children will know what's valuable and what's not.

TS: Don't throw this one out, right?

PT: This says, "This plaque was a gift presented to me on Tuesday, February 20, 2001 by Nancy Reagan as a token of appreciation for caring for President Reagan at his home in Bel Air, California, for one month following surgery for a broken hip. The plaque, she said, had been on the president's desk in the Oval Office for his eight years. The origin of the plaque is unknown."

If you look at the magazines from when he died and they have the oval—the desk in the Oval Office, this plaque, you'll see it's on that desk.

TS: You see it in the pictures.

PT: And it says "It can be done," and that will be the name of my book. [chuckles]

BAK: Great.

TS: Oh, that's terrific.

PT: It will be *It Can Be Done*. So, it can be done, I just need to sit down and make it happen and get it going. And I don't know if I will ever publish it for the world to read, because it's really something that, you know, I want to get my memoirs down and kind of—what I'm doing right now, for them too, and I'll probably have a lot more stories to tell.

TS: One question I guess I have been meaning to ask you is, when the—President Reagan did break his hip. How did you—why was it that you got called out there?

PT: Mrs. Reagan called me out there.

TS: She wanted—

PT: Actually, Joanne Drake, her personal assistant, made the phone call, and I was actually at work. I came home from work, there was a voice—my husband told me there was a voicemail message from Mrs. Reagan's office, and that—"Would I return the phone call?" So when I called her, she, you know, said he was in the hospital at the time and she was looking for someone that she knew and trusted to care for him after he was released from the hospital, knowing that Diane, the nurse that preceded me at the White House—she had been living with them, but Diane needed a break. She had been there—I mean, you talk about never having a day off; she never had a day off. And when I went out there, I had one day off in the month that I was there. Otherwise, I was—but it was a pleasure.

TS: Right.

PT: And the one day that I had off, we went to his library [chuckles] in Simi Valley; his presidential library. So I'm still really here. I'm just—what did you—I'm just—

TS: No, I had just—was wondering how you had gotten that call.

PT: So then I called and talked to her, but I ended up taking a leave of absence from Moses Cone to go out there for the time, and I knew that—and she wanted me to stay as long as I could. We still had a son home, here, in high school, and so I couldn't just up and leave, I had a husband who kind of wanted to still have his wife around now and then. [chuckling] Although, you know, he—he was always a game player, and he would—whatever I needed to do was fine by him, and he would support it. And he was—has always been very supportive.

TS: Do you still stay in touch with President Bush?

PT: Oh, absolutely. I get emails from President Bush.

TS: Yeah?

PT: We email jokes back and forth sometimes, and he's got better—much better jokes than I do.

TS: Well, be sure to tell him I said hello. [laughter]

PT: As a matter of fact, the Points of Light tribute to him—

TS: Oh, yeah.

PT: This was very interesting. I had received an invitation to this Points of Light Tribute [Awards], which was January [misspoke, March] twenty-first at The [John F.] Kennedy Center [for the Performing Arts] in Washington D.C. Well, it was—looked like it was a ten thousand dollar a person—

TS: Plate?

PT: —ticket. Actually, it wasn't a dinner. As it turned out, it wasn't a dinner, it was a ticket to attend this event, but I thought it was a—I thought it was a dinner thing. At that price, it should have been a dinner. So I just kind of—usually I keep anything—any invitations to things I get, I keep them, I save everything, and I don't know why, for some reason I just said, "Well, I'm not—" you know, "won't be going to that." So I kind of pitched it on the trash pile.

And then our nanny that we had, her daughter got married March nineteenth in Washington D.C. and so we were going up for the wedding. Couple days before we get ready to leave for the wedding, I get a call from President Bush's office, from the secretary, saying that President Bush would like to give me two complimentary tickets to attend this Points of Light tribute at the Kennedy Center March twenty-first, "Would you like them?"

I said "Of course I would like them!" So I took my daughter-in-law, who had never been to the Kennedy Center or been to anything presidential or whatnot. And so, we got all dollied up and everything, and Rosie, our nanny, watched the grandkids while we went to this event.

And so, I emailed him back and thanked him for, you know, the tickets and his generosity. And he said to me—he emails me back and he said that—he says, "It's going to be a gangbang of people. In case you don't recognize me, I'll be the old codger in the wheelchair, but still full of life, and loving, and loving you."

And the most tender moment, and it was a heartbreaking thing, was when they wheeled him in in his wheel—he's now—he's now wheelchair-bound because of this Parkinsonitis that he has; it's a form of Parkinson's disease. And I know that just has to be killing him, because he's so active and so vibrant. And in his mind, and you know, the rest, he is, but his legs just won't do what his mind commands them to do. But to see him shuffle and have President Clinton and Mrs. Bush help him sit down into the chair, just broke my heart. I just thought, "Oh." But he is a same man, it's just his legs aren't working.

TS: Aww.

PT: So I think the nurses have to do a rally around the man mission, maybe next summer sometime.

TS: There you go. That sounds good.

PT: It just seemed like every event that the Bushes have is upstaged by the next one. We were invited to their fiftieth wedding anniversary and then we went on the—on the cruise—the

cruise to the Greek islands, and then they had a forty-one at eightieth [41@80] birthday party for him when he jumped out of the helicopter—jumped out of the plane. And then the commission—the christening of his aircraft carrier, the commissioning of his aircraft carrier, and he continues to invite, you know, all of us. And there is a scenario for when he dies that, you know, the nurses will be there, and the military office at the White House is—you know, if we move, change phone numbers, we better be sure to contact them with that information, so when the time comes that we will be requested to be there, or invited to be there, I guess. We don't want to think that—

[Speaking Simultaneously]

TS: But that's neat—

PT: —that far down the road; that's going to be a ways down the road.

TS: But that's neat that he's still including you as part of his—

PT: Oh, absolutely. And there is a plan in place for that, as there was for President Reagan.

TS: Well, I don't think we could—we could stop talking for a week, Paula, and never get everything down, but.

PT: When I give these talks, that I used to do around town, I tell them that we could do the sleepover version; they could bring their sleeping bags next time. And I tell them I can—you know, the longer you have me here, the more stories you'll hear. So if you just want a story or two—because they'll say, "Come and talk for fifteen minutes." Well, fifty minutes you can't even get started on. So we'll do the sleepover version next time.

TS: Well, I think we've done about two hours, so I think you're—

PT: I think that's pretty good.

TS: Yeah.

PT: But I am—you have other questions at any time, just feel free to call me, and—I've had a wonderful career, been very, very blessed in my life and I like to shout it from the mountaintops, that, you know, I—I have had—I've been very blessed and I'm very grateful.

TS: Well, I'm very privileged to actually be able to have a chance to talk with you and learn about your experiences, and thank you so much for the time you've given us.

PT: You're very welcome, and I can't wait to come to the museum.

TS: Oh, good! Sounds good, all right, well, thank you.

PT: You're very welcome.

[End of Interview]