

WOMEN VETERANS HISTORICAL PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Barbara C. Pearson-Upchurch

INTERVIEWER: Tamara Shovelton

DATE: 11 March 2020

[Begin Interview]

TS: Today is March 11, 2020. My name is Tamara Shovelton and I will be interviewing Barbara Upchurch. We are at the Joint Forces Service Center in Raleigh, North Carolina. If you could, would you please state your full name?

BU: My name is Barbara C. Pearson-Upchurch.

TS: Can you please tell me when you were born and a little bit about your family?

BU: I was born March 4, 1962, in the city of Youngsville, North Carolina, out in the Franklin County area of North Carolina. Both of my parents are permanently from that location, out in Franklin County. I have two brothers and five sisters.

TS: Five sisters.

BU: I mean, two brothers and three sisters, I'm sorry.

TS: [chuckles]

BU: So five—okay, yeah.

TS: Very good. What was it like growing up?

BU: Growing up, for me, in the rural area, sort of like the farming city out in Youngsville, part of my youth—we migrated up north to Waterbury, Connecticut. My mom—Well, actually, I came from a single mom and a single dad. So my mom, along with my grandmother, we migrated north to Waterbury, Connecticut, and so I was up there until I was probably around nine years old; nine years old. And then my mother decided to come back south, which was primarily most of my mom's side of the family. And my dad, actually.

So that's sort of—Then I went to school out in Youngsville. Then the schools consolidated back in the late seventies, and so most of the students went to—from the

high school area—went to Bunn [High School], North Carolina, so it's quite a distance in the commute, but that's where I graduated from.

TS: From Bunn High School?

BU: Bunn High School.

TS: What did your parents do?

BU: My mother, she—They were both industrial workers, factory workers, I guess you would say. My mother worked at a company called TrayJays[?]. It was a company that made infant clothes back then. I think she did like, maybe, twenty-two years there in her younger youth. My dad, he worked for a company called—Gosh, what was the name of this company? Gosh. I can't think right now. But, anyway, he was there, like, twenty-five years. Almost thirty years, actually. Between twenty-five and thirty years.

My mother went on to another industrial company once that company closed down, and so she was actually there for another twenty years there, so.

TS: Wow.

BU: Yes. But, yeah, so both of them sort of came from industrial work environment.

TS: And you said you have three sisters and two brothers?

BU: Gosh, how did I get that all—

TS: Two sisters and two brothers?

BU: No. What did I say initially?

TS: Initially you said five sisters and two brothers.

BU: [chuckles] Oh, gosh. No. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

TS: That's okay.

BU: Three brothers and one sister. Gosh, how did I get that all confused?

TS: It's all right.

BU: Yeah.

TS: Did you all grow up together?

BU: For the most part, yes. For the most part, yes.

TS: In age where are you at?

BU: I'm the oldest.

TS: You're the oldest.

BU: I'm the oldest.

TS: Oh, okay. What was your favorite subject in school?

BU: My favorite—English. English was definitely, by far, my most favorite subject.

TS: What year did you graduate from high school?

BU: June 1980.

TS: What did you do next? Did you go right into the military, or did you do something first?

BU: Right. Primarily, right out of high school. I graduated in June of '80 and went right to basic not far after graduation.

TS: Were you married, or did you have a partner before you joined the military?

BU: No.

TS: Why did you decide to join the military?

BU: Why did I decide to join the military? Well, primarily, I just remember the recruiter coming to the schools, as they did back during that time; that's where I think they did a lot of their recruiting. And a couple of my male friends, and cousins, were joining, and the recruiter had came to our class and just presented what—you know. And so, we just decided—I just decided to join just based off what he had presented to us, what he had offered to us, as far as the military. So that's primarily why. And it was—I was the only female, and there was, like, five boys; five boys.

TS: Did you consider any other job options aside from the military, or did you just, like, once you saw the recruiter, you were, like, "That's what I'm going to do"?

BU: Pretty much.

TS: Pretty much?

BU: Pretty much, yeah.

TS: Which branch did you join?

BU: Army National Guard.

TS: Did a particular person influence you in your decision to join the National Guard?

BU: I don't know if it was one particular person influence, but the guys that we—we went all in together, they pretty much were some of the influence that kind of made me really decide to go ahead and sign up.

TS: What did your dad think of you joining?

BU: I don't know if my dad really had any influence because, then, at that particular time, my dad and I really didn't—I told you—like I said, my mom and my dad were not married when I was born, so by the time I was that age, my mother—both of them had remarried, so when I made that decision, I don't really think my dad really didn't have a big influence.

TS: What about your stepdad?

BU: I don't think—I sort of made the decision on my own. They didn't really have any influence on whether the military's right for you—neither my mom—I mean, they knew, but I think I just primarily made the decision on my own.

TS: They didn't have any strong objections one way or the other?

BU: No, not one way or the other. No.

TS: Did any of your parents serve in the military?

BU: No. My grandfather served in World War I. Yeah.

TS: That was a tough war.

BU: Yes.

TS: How were women perceived, who joined the military, by the general public at the time that you were joining?

BU: How were we perceived? It seems as though that certain of them were—not the majority, the minority—but to me it seemed like we were perceived just as equal as the males. I didn't really see any different in the training part of—any indifferences. I just didn't see—I don't remember seeing any—I mean, I remember it being very harsh—we thought—the training, in basic training, but I didn't really see any impartial, or anything that made us stand out, being females, that in my mind would have made any difference to me continuing on in a career.

TS: How did your friends and your other family members, like, your siblings, react to you joining the military?

BU: I guess they were—I was moving on, by me being the oldest. They was excited. I think they was more interested after I went in basic training and came back, as to what went on, what happened, because they did come down to the graduation and all that bit. But they was more interested, I think, after I came back; "What did you do?" "What went on?" That training, and what we had--weapon and stuff that we had used.

TS: Your first contract, when you first enlisted, how long was it for?

BU: Six years.

TS: Do you know the specific date that you signed up, or was it just in June of 1980? You don't have the specific, that's fine.

BU: I think it was June the thirteenth--June thirteenth of '80--and I came back, I think it was June, six years was the first. I did the six years and then I didn't re-enlist after that, and I did not come back in until later—later part of the nineties.

TS: Break in service?

BU: Oh, yeah, I had a long break in service, actually, yeah.

TS: The first time when you went away to basic training, was that the first time that you had ever been far away from home?

BU: Oh, yes, absolutely.

TS: How was that experience?

BU: Other than with—Away from family, yes. It was sort of scary. Actually, it was very scary. I just remember on that bus, going to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, just wailing. And I guess being young and never being away from--just not really knowing what I was getting into. And I just remember this lady on the—this older lady on the bus saying--she was like, "What school you going to?"

She was trying to ask me what was going on, and where was I going, and I was telling her, "Well, I'm going to join the military. I'm going to—" I was going in.

And she's like, "Oh, you're going to be all right," and everything. She was trying to console me, but I didn't really have no clue at that time.

And then when I got there, and I hadn't ever been cursed at, or all of that, and I was really fearful of that, and when we got there and I called home and I said, "I'm ready to go home," because they were just, "Get your—" They're screaming and hollering and all that stuff.

TS: I do have a vague recollection of that. [chuckles]

BU: Yeah, and I just—that was just—Yeah, I couldn't understand that then, but of course, as time went on, and you just knew that was all part of what you was going to be dealing with out the duration, so I sort of got a—

TS: Like, a handle on it?

BU: Yeah, got a handle on it and was able to kind of move forward. But I'll tell you, before that, I just didn't know if could keep—I was quite fearful.

TS: Where did you say you went to basic training?

BU: Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

TS: Can you describe basic training for us--for you--a typical day; things that you might have encountered or done?

BU: A lot of physical training, of course, daily. A lot of class. I guess do you call it—what would you call those type of medical training and all those—I guess soldier's manual training, I guess, is what we would call it. But pretty intense; pretty intense training. Land navigation.

TS: [unclear] [both chuckle]

BU: Yeah. Land navigation, and just a lot of physical, more physical, I think, for me. I just remember it being more physical than anything else. And, of course, a lot of marching and drilling. And, like I said, I think the drilling ceremony training was pretty intense, learning the basics of that.

TS: Was your basic training all female?

BU: Yes.

TS: Did you have female drill sergeants or male drill sergeants?

BU: Male.

TS: Male?

BU: Male drill sergeants, yes.

TS: Where did you go for AIT [Advanced Individual Training]?

BU: To the same location; Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

TS: Was AIT different than basic training for you, in terms of your typical day?

BU: It was quite different. I mean, that was more classroom—more of a classroom. Of course, we still did physical training, but more of the classroom was primarily the bigger picture on a day to day.

TS: What was your MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] that you were being trained in?

BU: 42 Alpha; Human Resources. Which, back then—it's now 42 Alpha, which is Human Resources, but, of course, back then it was 71 Lima, which was considered Administrative Specialist.

TS: Now, because you were in the National Guard, you didn't have a first duty station, you just came back home, correct?

BU: Right, exactly.

TS: In that first six-year contract with the National Guard, did you do any full-time National Guard work, or just the standard once a month; two weeks in the summer?

BU: Right, just the standard. And then I came back and just begin to take some classes and do some other things, and I got a job. So, yeah, primarily it was just--the first six years was just the monthly.

TS: How would you characterize those monthly drills that you had to go to? What, typically, would you do on a weekend drill?

BU: Not a whole lot.

TS: Not a whole lot?

BU: No. I mean--But really, we didn't—I mean, I guess because, too, I drilled at what's considered the headquarters; like, this is considered the North Carolina National Guard [Joint Force] Headquarters. This is the North Carolina headquarters for the National Guard.

TS: Okay.

BU: And at that time, I did drill at the headquarters for the National Guard, and so it was more administrative. So when we came to drill monthly, you sort of did some admin; admin duties.

TS: What about when you would do your two weeks or--I know if you went out of the country it could possibly be three or four weeks, what was a typical two-week drill session?

BU: Well, during my six years, actually, I didn't do—we didn't do any offsite, because most of the time, if you're with a headquarters you're non-deployable, or that--headquarters typically don't get deployed.

TS: Right.

BU: Because they're considered the forces of the units—outside units being deployed—so I never really did, per se, a summer camp.

TS: Oh. So when you would do the two weeks you would just come every day for two weeks, or you just didn't have them at all?

BU: We just didn't have them at all.

TS: Oh, okay.

BU: Because that's been brought up, too, because it was kind of odd. But I think, too, now that I—the years have gone by—when you're drilling at a headquarters, like I just said, that you typically—well, it doesn't have really any training--field training.

TS: Right. Okay. What were your main responsibilities once you were drilling? Your monthly drills, what were your main responsibilities that you had to do or complete?

BU: During routine monthly drill?

TS: Yes.

BU: Pretty much, like I said, pretty much just admin. Maybe doing some records check, maybe checking soldier's personnel record for updates, or things of that nature. Maybe doing some memorandums; some memos. But that was—Maybe did some record filing. What you would typically do in an office environment.

TS: Okay. Do you recall any notable stories of anything that happened in that first six-year contract, or was it just, kind of, regular day-to-day things?

BU: Anything that notably happened within that six years that stood out? The only thing I've got that—I mean, I know this is [unclear], but I--One of my cousins that also went in during the same time frame. This one particular incident that stood out, and it's not, per se, military-related, but I just always can remember that as being a part of that first six years of that tour. We were at drill this particular Saturday morning to find out that his brother had gotten killed in a car accident, and so that was quite an ordeal, and I think we must have dealt with that for a couple days. But, anyway, that's one particular thing that sort of stood out that has—unrelated, of course, but sort of was related to it, but it wasn't what—it always stands out for all of us, now, when we get together and we sort of have some memories of that ordeal that we sort of went through back then. But other than that, nothing really specifically that really stands out in my mind about—

TS: Yes.

BU: Because, like I said, we just—when you're [unclear] soldier and you come to drill, I mean, it's really all the full-timers are there primarily doing their routine duties, so you're kind of just coming in, sort of, and just filling in the gaps; the things that they didn't do on a Monday through Friday. So it really wasn't a whole lot for us to really do on a weekend drill.

TS: Right, right.

BU: Not on a—If you were on a field unit probably so, but when you're Human Resources or those type jobs, you primarily may do, just like I said, a little administrative, but not a whole lot of--

TS: While you were in for this first six years, from '80 to '86, what was your impression of the political and military leadership of the time? So that would have been Reagan [Ronald Wilson Reagan, 40th President of the United States].

BU: Yes. I don't know if I really thought about much about him, who he was, but you're young then and you don't really think much more about what's going on in the political world, or you just really didn't think—you kind of knew what was going on and things around you, but I don't think at that age you really think much about it.

TS: Okay. There's some significant major events that happened around that time, so I'll go through them and if you have any comments on them we'll can do that. The Iran Hostage Crisis was in '79, so that was right before you went in.

[The Iran Hostage Crisis was a diplomatic crisis between Iran and the United States. Fifty-two American diplomats and citizens were held hostage for 444 days, from 4 November 1979 to 20 January 1981, after a group of Iranian students belonging to the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line took over the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.]

BU: Yes.

TS: Did you have any thoughts on that particular incident?

BU: Not really. I don't really remember having much—like I said, sometimes when you're young, at that age, and you don't really see it, or you maybe you--And I just remember, back then, we didn't watch a lot of TV. Unless we talked about it at school,--At my house we didn't really watch a lot of TV growing up, or anything like that, so unless it was talked about at school, which, not like now, everything is a current event. We did do a lot of current events, I remember, because I was a current event person, then and still now,

today, trying to keep up with what's going on around me. But it just wasn't really talked about much then.

TS: Right. How about the Iran Contra Affair in 1986?

[The Iran Contra Affair was a political scandal in the U.S., occurring under the second term of the Reagan Administration, where senior administration officials secretly facilitated the sale of weapons to Iran, which was the subject of an arms embargo]

BU: Yeah. Like I said, I think I remember talking about it on drill weekends and, again, it was just never really thought of. Even in uniform you thought that—more so now, those discussions that we sort of more or less talk about.

TS: Right.

BU: But I don't remember having anything in particular that really stood out, during that time, that really—I just can remember—I know the conflict and what was going on, but really no emphasis put on it.

TS: What about the Beirut barracks bombing of '83?

[The 23 October 1983 Beirut barracks bombing were terrorist attacks that took place in Beirut, Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War. Two bombs simultaneously struck separate buildings that were housing Multinational Force in Lebanon peacekeepers. The attack specifically targeted American and French service workers, and resulted in the deaths of two hundred and forty-one American and fifty-eight French peacekeepers, six civilians, and the two suicide bombers]

BU: Does anything stand out about that?

TS: Yeah.

BU: No, not really. Not really.

TS: Or the Invasion of Grenada in '83?

[The Invasion of Grenada was a 1983 U.S.-led invasion of the Caribbean island of Grenada.]

BU: Nothing stands out about that either.

TS: Okay. Do you remember when John Lennon was shot in 1980?

[John Winston Ono Lennon was an English singer, songwriter and peace activist who gained worldwide fame as a member of the rock group, the Beatles. He was murdered in front of his home on December 8, 1980, by Mark David Chapman.]

BU: When?

TS: I mean, do you remember, when it happened?

BU: When it happened. Oh, yeah, I remember. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Things like that you sort of—you hear, you kind of talked about, but I remember hearing it.

TS: What was your reaction to something like that?

BU: Just like anything else [then?]; you just kind of hear it; and unless you're familiar with the group, or whatever, then it's like—it's gone.

TS: Right.

BU: You know?

TS: How about when President Reagan was shot in '81?

[On 30 March 1981, President Ronald Reagan and three others were shot and wounded by John Hinckley, Jr. in Washington, D.C.]

BU: Yeah, that was something that stood out. That was really something.

TS: What were your feelings at that time?

BU: What was my feelings at that time? I guess it was just—I don't know if it was a sadness, or just thinking about a president being shot, and the things that—the fear, the terror, just things that the grownups—well, not grownups, because I was an adult then--but just older people were saying, because they tend, I guess, to talk more about that than the age group that I was in during that time. But just remember it being just—I don't know, I just remember conversating about it and talking about it with my friends--we talked about it--and just a little sadness about it, but that was basically it. Didn't really remember just being very—nothing that stands out, really, other than conversating about it, and just like anything else today, as time go on, it kind of settles down and it goes on away.

TS: Do you remember the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion in '86?

[The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster was a fatal incident in the United States space program that occurred on Tuesday, January 28, 1986, when the Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart 73 seconds into its flight, killing all seven crew members aboard.]

BU: Yeah, I remember that too. Yeah, I was at school. I remember, yeah, that was something that really stood out. What was the female astronaut?

[Sharon Christa McAuliffe was an American high school teacher who became the first civilian selected to go into space. She was killed when the Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart 73 seconds into its flight on January 28, 1986.]

TS: I can't think of her name.

BU: She was a black—was it?

TS: She was white.

BU: Okay, yeah. That's right; that's right, yeah. But that sort of stood out, her being a female.

TS: First female, yeah.

BU: First female. Yeah, yeah, yeah. But, yeah I remember that, yeah.

TS: So you had a break in service.

BU: Yes.

TS: When was the next time that you signed a contract to be back in the service?

BU: In the nineties; in the late nineties. I think it was, like, '98; '98. So I was out a long time.

TS: How long was that contract in '98?

BU: I did another six years; another six years. I was out quite a long time. One of my friends--dear friends--that—her and I worked at the hospital—it was that kind of—here, let me—

[Recording paused]

TS: So now we're 1998, we're getting back into the military.

BU: Okay.

TS: What made you decide to re-up again in 1998?

BU: Reenlist again? Yeah.

TS: And you re-enlisted for the National Guard again?

BU: I did; I did, actually. A good friend of mine which--I worked at WakeMed [Health and Hospitals] during that time--and she was command of a unit here in Durham at that time, and we sort of worked in the same department, and she—when I first met her, knew she was active then, and so she's like, "Oh, how many years you do in the National Guard?" And I told her. She said, "Oh, you [let that?] six years. Oh, you should"—

I was like, "No, I've been out too long. I'm not going to—" And so, as time went on, her and I became friends, and so she just kept bringing the issue up, with me revisiting the National Guard again and reenlisting. So long story short, she, on this particular day, her recruiter came up with her to the hospital and she had him talk to me again, and so I reenlisted again.

TS: Now, when you reenlisted, did you reenlist for the same MOS you had previously?

BU: Yes.

TS: So you were doing the same job?

BU: Same job.

TS: Okay. So this contract was from '98 to 2004.

BU: Yes.

TS: In that time period, where the United States is going through quite a bit overseas, did you get deployed in a combat zone in this time period?

BU: I did. Well, I, actually, in--let's see--early 2003, I went to Jordan [Western Asia].

TS: And how long were you there?

BU: Six months. I was there for six months.

TS: What was that experience like?

BU: Wow, Jordan. That was sort of—We went there and we—I was with the 30th Corps Support Group at that time, out of Durham, and I was part of the logistics side of the house with those guys, and primarily, we—of course, I was Human Resources, so mostly admin. But the tour itself, we--when we got there we really didn't have a specific mission we was falling under—coming down on another unit that was there, but we was sort of there--about almost six weeks before we really took on a specific role.

TS: Yes.

BU: During that time. But we began to run some missions. I wasn't a part of those missions though. When you're in Human Resources you don't really have a whole lot of field missions. You're sort of in the [TOC or TAC?], or in the areas where—But we were in billets, of course, and we were primarily responsible for transporting goods to soldiers that were considered downrange. Of course, again, I was not part of that, but the unit that I was in was primarily funding that mission. And, of course, again, I'm always in admin, so doing—pretty much keeping up with the accountability of the soldiers.

TS: Equipment, supply.

BU: Right, right, and that bit, so.

TS: When you went to Jordan, do you feel like the military prepared you for the cultural differences that you would encounter?

BU: Did they prepare us? Yeah, I guess you would say, somewhat, they did. We had several briefings on—prior to us leaving—on the basic communications, language—in that language—before we left and what the "do's and don'ts,"--because their culture is quite different from ours.

TS: Was there anything that you did personally to help yourself become better acquainted with the cultural differences, to make it easier for yourself?

BU: Did I do anything specifically for myself? Well, read quite a few op [operation] orders and things like that, just sort of—sort of to just kind of inform you of the day-to-day operations and what "do's and don'ts" and what's expecting—all the expectations of your unit, moving forward, as time went on. But I don't know if I did anything specifically to, kind of, prepare myself.

TS: What were some of the common "do's and don'ts" for you, as a female soldier over there?

BU: Well, I think that was just for females, the greeting of the Jordanians. The greets and—what was specific to that—I mean, there was specific way of greeting those guys. I mean, I think women was always—in their eyes, we were told--always were considered the—behind the men. So they sort of instructed us not to really engage, and we were around those Jordanians, primarily, because we were on the same FOB [Forward Operating Base], I guess you would say, with them. So we really didn't have a lot of—at least

enlisted--probably some of the officers did—but we really didn't have a whole lot of communication or interaction with the Jordanians.

We would have to—their prayer times, we would have to be certain that we were not to interfere with any of that stuff. When we saw that going on, we had to be mindful of their cultural—of just things that was around it that was primarily cultural.

TS: Okay.

BU: But I don't think it was anything specifically to females, other than just—we just didn't have a whole lot of reaction[?] during that time.

TS: You said you spent six months there, then you came back to the United States.

BU: Yes.

TS: And from that point on to 2004 were you ever redeployed?

BU: No. Let's see. From there up to 2004? No.

TS: And after that six years, did you reenlist again?

BU: I did. [chuckles]

TS: For how long?

BU: I did another six. So that is time I'm trying to make up.

TS: For lost time? [both chuckle]

BU: No. It's like, "Do I want to keep doing this?"

TS: It's still National Guard?

BU: Yeah, all my time is National Guard.

TS: And it's all in North Carolina.

BU: All in North Carolina.

TS: Same MOS.

BU: Same MOS.

TS: Okay. So from 2004 to 2010, did you get deployed overseas?

BU: No, I got deployed in 2011. But, no, during that time, no, I didn't get deployed.

TS: In 2010, you re-upped again.

BU: Yes.

TS: For another six years?

BU: Yes.

TS: To 2016?

BU: Yes.

TS: Okay. And in that period, you did get deployed in 2011?

BU: Yes.

TS: Where did you go?

BU: To Kuwait.

TS: How long were you there?

BU: A year; one year.

TS: How was your time there? Kuwait is culturally different from the United States; it's culturally different from Jordan.

BU: Yes.

TS: So how were you prepared for that, and were there things that you couldn't do that you would normally have been able to do? How do you felt[sic] everything was when you were deployed?

BU: During that time, I was really struggling; I really struggled with that deployment. I really did. And when I think about it now, I still struggle, because it was quite emotional; it was quite emotional. Yeah.

TS: Do you mind me asking what made it so emotional?

BU: Oh, no, not at all. I think it was my kids, more so, then; I had a family. I just really—I mean, it came up so quickly, and it was more so family that I struggled with; with leaving my kids and just—I mean, I struggled, but it's just—2011 was just always, I think, is a time that stood out very—a lot—for me. It was—We really didn't have a whole lot of prepared. Just, like, boom, get ready. Everything happened so quickly, and then you really didn't—I think moms, unlike men, because we're the—

TS: Nuturers.

BU: Nuturers, and we—Everything is sort of centered around the moms, usually, and I think that was why it was so heartfelt for me that particular time.

TS: How did you feel once you were in-country for that year?

BU: I had a lot going on that year. My nephew committed suicide while I was there. My grandfather pas—

TS: I'm so sorry.

BU: Yeah. It just—a lot—I don't know why. I don't know if it was good that I wasn't there, and wasn't here and there during that time, I just don't know. And I deal with that—Still to the day it's just kind of weird.

TS: Yes.

BU: But I tell people that I think post-traumatic stress [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] is real.

TS: Oh, it is. I agree with you 100%.

BU: It is real. And that was the first time I ever thought—because I'm a strong person, primarily, but I think that time--that span of time, it kind of really took me up somewhere. And maybe it was because of the traumatic stuff that my children—My kids were right at the age where they needed me the most.

TS: Yes.

BU: And I had to leave them. I have a hard time talking about this now. Oh, gosh.

TS: I'm sorry.

BU: Because my son, right now, he's disabled because—[crying]

TS: We can skip over this part if you like.

BU: Yeah.

TS: We can. We can move on. So you come back from Kuwait, and did you get deployed again between the time you came back and 2016?

BU: No, that's been my last deployment, 2011, 2012 timeframe.

TS: Did you re-up after 2016? [both chuckle]

BU: Yeah. Sixteen?

TS: Yes.

BU: Well, I had one year, so I just did that seventeen [2017].

TS: Just that seventeen.

BU: Seventeen.

TS: To retire?

BU: Yes.

TS: Did you have to get deployed in 2017?

BU: No, no.

TS: So then you got your twenty?

BU: Yes. Well, actually, I had more than twenty, I had twenty-five.

TS: Twenty-five.

BU: Almost twenty-six years; almost twenty-six years. Wow.

TS: When you were in the military, at any point from the time you first went in and then had the break until the time you went back in, what would you consider your most memorable decoration or award you received?

BU: The most memorable? I would say the ARCOM [Army Commendation Medal] for—they said for—actually, I got two ARCOMS—but, anyway, this one in particular stood out because they said I operated on a higher level of—my skill level—than what was expected of me.

TS: That's always nice to hear, right?

BU: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

TS: What was your highest rank? You said it was an E6?

BU: Yes, E6.

TS: Which is a staff sergeant.

BU: Yes.

TS: In a general way, how were your relationships with your supervisors and your superiors when you were on duty?

BU: During the deployments?

TS: During—either.

BU: Just throughout the duration?

TS: Just throughout the duration. Did you ever see where one area was maybe better than another or was it all—

BU: Actually, I've had some pretty decent leadership. In the last—I've had some encounters that were not so favorable, but for the most part of the career in the National Guard, it's been fairly—I haven't had any times where I really thought I was being singled out for being a female, or being singled out because females being sort of like—

TS: The unicorn of the military? [chuckles]

BU: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

TS: How would you describe your relationships with your peers?

BU: Oh, with my relationships with my peers, I've had some long-lasting friendships. Some that since moved on, been retired years ago, and then since I've sort of came back onboard, but certainly I've had some good friendships and some good experiences with even my senior leadership and enlisted as well.

TS: During deployments, did you feel like your relationships with your superiors or your peers changed?

BU: Changed my relationships? Changed, as far as just the interaction change?

TS: The interactions, the way in which they worked with you, or you worked with them. I mean, obviously with deployments it's always a much higher stress level.

BU: Yeah, it is.

TS: But did you notice any significant changes from being in the rear versus being deployed?

BU: Well, when you're deployed, you're 24/7, you're active duty, and so naturally it's quite different than what--you're back in the rear or just drilling once a month so, of course, you have to up your ante or your skill set and do, primarily, 24/7, what your MOS requires of you, but—In relations to females, males?

TS: Either.

BU: Either/or? Maybe it sounds a little weird, but I really never really had much, or seen, many indifferences or anything, as far as how I was treated. I think the role of the admins or human resources, I mean, you're pretty much—you're stationary. You don't really move around very much, unlike most of the other jobs, skillsets. When you're admin, that's one of the MOSs that really is standard, and they stay pretty much in one general area on a deployment. Medics move around, the field personnel, logistics, they move around, but, of course—but working in the office, I've never really experienced anything that I thought was un-biased [does she mean biased?] or racial or—I just have not.

TS: Did you have a mentor, or did you mentor any soldiers while you were in the military?

BU: Oh, yeah, I've mentored quite—because when I came back in, I was older than a lot of the soldiers, of course, so, yes, I would say I've mentored quite a few soldiers.

TS: Can you describe how that was for you?

BU: How it was? Pretty much just making sure did they stay physically trained, checking on them when we were not in a drill status. Making sure that their schoolings--if they had schools, or they hadn't gone to schools that were coming up that they should be engaging in. I was just trying to—making sure, just kind of motivating them, and just trying to—because I felt like maybe I could have done more in my younger time in the Guard as far as my promotions.

TS: Yes.

BU: So when I saw soldiers coming behind me, I sort of had a different outlook on it. So, of course, I just started to--sort of pushing and motivating and just trying to make sure that they didn't fall in the same areas that I did by not having someone to motivate and push me as I was moving along.

TS: Did you receive any advanced training or education as your career progressed?

BU: In the schools--military schools?

TS: Yes.

BU: Yeah, I've been to numerous GPC schools. I've been to—

TS: What's a GPC?

BU: That's a Government Purchase Card class. I've gone to FOIA--FOIA and Privacy Act training classes. I've done a lot of—

TS: What's a FOIA?

BU: Freedom of Information Act.

[The Freedom of Information Act is a federal freedom of information law that requires the full or partial disclosure of previously unreleased information and documents controlled by the United States government]

TS: Oh, okay.

BU: And Privacy Act. I've done numerous different schools and classes.

[The Privacy Act of 1974, a United States federal law, establishes a Code of Fair Information Practice that governs the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of personally identifiable information about individuals that is maintained in systems of records by federal agencies.]

TS: Was there a school or special training that you would have liked to attend but you couldn't?

BU: That I couldn't?

TS: Or that you didn't?

BU: Yeah. Well, I certainly wished that I had progressed a little bit more than what I did when I was in, and that was just—I think when you're in the National Guard, you're just one weekend a month, and you don't put a whole lot of emphasis on—unless you've got somebody, like I said, to really just kind of—but you know, it's like one weekend a month, so you struggle to get there, you know?

TS: Yes.

BU: After a while it becomes like, "Gosh, drill again?"

TS: [chuckles]

BU: Then after a while—I think as you get older—especially when you're young, I know you have that mindset, because I hear soldiers now around here that says—they're the young soldiers and they struggle trying to get—and even officers—I hear them now, struggling trying to make a drill; "We can't." [both chuckle]

So I think—I certainly wish I would have gone on to do a senior—got my E7, and went on to do that school that's selected for that promotion board. But, like I said, it takes

some motivation and [unclear] sometimes when you're working and doing other things, and then having the National Guard as a little small piece of your lifestyle, to jump out of that and get in. And then sometimes when you're working in the private sectors, they don't always want you to take off six weeks or two months to go to a military school.

TS: Yes.

BU: But, yeah, I just regret, somewhat, not going as far as I could have.

TS: Did you supervise or command anyone, and how would you characterize your experience?

BU: I wasn't in a command position of course, but as a platoon sergeant, yes. Again, keeping up with the number of soldiers that you sort of manned, and making sure they're at drill on a monthly basis, and making sure that—even outside, their, still, personal needs were being met, sometimes. Because sometimes we have personal issues that go on in between drill sets that sometimes you need to call them and keep up, "How's things going?" or "What's going on?"

TS: How did you feel your subordinates treated you?

BU: Oh, yeah, I had no problems with—Again, because I was older, back--some years now, so they all respect—I've certainly helped several young soldiers get jobs on the federal side; encouraged them to apply for positions that they've obtained. I think that's—Everybody around here tells me that I missed that calling; I missed that schooling to be able to do that. But, yeah, certainly I've—

TS: Did you experience or witness discrimination when you were in the military, either while you were actively working--

BU: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I've definitely seen some of that to some degree. Yeah, I've felt that to where I've had to file a complaint; yeah, I've had to file a complaint.

TS: Do you feel like you were heard?

BU: Yeah, I was definitely heard; yeah, I was definitely heard.

TS: What type of discrimination?

BU: I'm not sure where that exactly falls into the discrimination category, whether it was racially motivated or age. I don't know where it exactly fell, all I know I felt it. I felt like I was being singled out. And I'm not sure, in their mind, why they were taking the steps that they were taking towards me. I don't know what their thoughts was, and still today don't know. But I reported it, and it went through, and it was—

TS: Was it handled satisfactorily to you?

BU: Yes, it was. It was made known that they were wrong, and I think they saw themselves in their wrongness.

TS: Oh, that's good.

BU: Yeah.

TS: That's always good.

BU: Yeah. They saw themselves where they were wrong, and so it was definitely—I'm glad I—sometimes we, as being the minorities, tend to not speak up sometimes because the fear of not being heard, or because you don't have enough grounding to stand. But when it was all said and done, it was made known that they were—Were they reprimanded, no, but they knew they—

TS: What changes did you see in the National Guard over the course of your career?

BU: What changes? Oh, gosh. There's been quite a bit of changes.

TS: I know. Anything that really stands out as a significant change?

BU: Well, we're definitely—now—a new army from what it was back—[chuckles]—It's a new army. I think everybody can see the changes. I mean, there's things now that even when I was in basic that they cannot do right now in basic.

TS: I know.

BU: When I go to some schools they clearly—

TS: Just the way that they treat soldiers now.

BU: The way—Yeah, yeah.

TS: It's very different.

BU: Very, very different. And I told them all the time, I said, "You guys are in a new army now." I mean, it's just quite different. You can see the training is different; the operations is different; the commanding is different. I mean, really, pretty much it's just—Yeah.

TS: It is very much like you say, it's like a brand new—

BU: It is.

TS: Even the army that I was in is not the army that anyone is in today.

BU: That's right.

TS: It is so drastically different.

BU: Yeah, yeah. And I see these soldiers now and I [chuckles]—I said, "Come on." But it's just the way, things to shift. I call it shift that has taken place, and is it a good shift? I mean, I can't even see them as really soldiers like I used—as we used to be looked upon, as soldiers.

TS: [whispering] I don't think it was a good shift.

BU: Yeah, I don't; I certainly don't.

TS: Do you feel that attitudes toward women changed while you were in the service, or opportunities for women changed?

BU: Oh, yes, opportunities has definitely changed, yeah.

TS: How?

BU: What was thought of as a area for men—We have female pilots now, which, years ago, you didn't really see a whole lot of female pilots or aviators, or you see now—or even combat—women in combat—and you never really thought of those areas as areas—

TS: Well, I guess those areas did change while you were in the service, didn't they?

BU: Yes.

TS: That's true.

BU: But, yeah, the way women is even being treated now has changed as far as--I mean, there's a lot of sexual harassment cases that goes on now in the military, and I didn't really see—encounter a lot of that in the younger—in the earliest stages. I don't know why. It just wasn't—maybe it wasn't brought up as much because we were sort of really the lesser, but now I guess because there's more of women, maybe because the light is more shined on things like that now, but you just tend to hear more of those, even—because all of it comes through here because it's the headquarters.

TS: Yes.

BU: So I hear a lot of those type issues now.

TS: How do you feel the military treated you regarding your pay, promotions, and assignments?

BU: I think I was always treated fairly when it came to that. I mean, you're responsible for your own career in the National Guard. Now, in the active army where your actions are more 24/7--but the National Guard, because it's such a small piece of most people, unless--Yeah, so you're responsible for—but I've never been thought of—I wish I would have had more of a mentor, I think, that--

TS: Yes.

BU: Because, like I said, you drill once a month, you go home, you come back the next month and you just—if you're not one of those people to engage, because we're losing a lot of soldiers now because of that; no engagement. So you have to be responsible for yourself and you have to keep yourself engaged once that one weekend a month in order to progress and move up.

TS: In recent years, reports about and congressional investigations into military sexual trauma and sexual harassment have increased awareness of these issues. What is your reaction to the spotlight on these issues?

BU: What is my reaction?

TS: Yes.

BU: There's so much of that going on now that should be brought to the spotlight because now we do have a voice; we didn't always have a voice, and we do now have a voice. We [chuckles]—The "Me Too" movement is on the move, and it's a good thing that we now have a voice. I think we were always—In the military, because we're such a small piece, if you were—I'm just going back maybe fifteen, twenty years ago—if you probably did bring up something like that, you probably was being looked—I don't know, I haven't experienced it or didn't experience it—but you might have been singled out, I don't know.

[The Me Too (aka #MeToo) movement, with a large variety of local and international alternative names, is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual assault]

TS: That's true.

BU: You probably would have been singled out. So now we have more support. We have more support now.

TS: Yeah. Did you encounter or were you aware of sexual harassment and/or abuse during your time in the military?

BU: Was I aware of particular—

TS: Of particular incidents, or did you have any incidents happen to you?

BU: No, I haven't had any incidents happen to me, but I certainly know of—

TS: Problems?

BU: Yeah, problems, and being in the Admin, of course, I deal with, sometime, the paperwork, the documents that come across or come to us that engages in a lot of that, or sometimes I have to sit on boards that have to listen to things that encounter with some of these cases in the past, so. But, yes, it's something that needs to definitely be addressed.

TS: What was the hardest thing that you had to do, physically, when you were in the military?

BU: Physically? That run. [chuckles] That two-mile run. Yes, that two-mile run. I mean, when I was much younger, I didn't have no issues, but as you're getting older--and, like I said, we're weekend warriors, you do the test once a year, so unless you're an avid physical trainer or a runner or whatever, you have to—and that's something that the military's failing in, with being National Guardsmen, that could be done a lot better. I mean, we typically drill a drill, we don't do any physical training, and so when the PT test comes up.

TS: It's rough.

BU: It's rough. Unless, like I said—a lot of us are physical trainers and people stay engaged with it, but a fairly large percentage do not.

TS: This is fair. What was the hardest thing you had to do emotionally in the military?

BU: Emotionally, was to depart my family during deployments. Yeah.

TS: What was most rewarding about your military experience?

BU: My most rewarding. That I had a opportunity to—for me—in my mind, to engage and defend and represent my country in that uniform.

TS: Yes. I totally get that.

BU: Yeah.

TS: Who were your heroes or heroines during the time that you were in the military? Were there certain people that you really admired?

BU: Yes. The young lady that I told you that sort of twisted my arm to get me back in after I'd been out all those years. She's definitely one of the role models. She was a lieutenant then? No, she was a captain? She was a lieutenant—I think she was a first lieutenant then, and she went on to get her bird, and she became the first African-American female to—in the North Carolina National Guard—to get her bird.

[A bird colonel is a member of the United States armed forces having the rank of full colonel, as distinct from a lieutenant colonel]

TS: Oh, nice.

BU: Yes.

TS: That's amazing. That is very good.

BU: Yes, yes. Yeah, she was definitely—she's just a good, profound leader. She's just a great, great leader. I've definitely had some other people. This one that I know that's sort of younger, that's motivated, she's a female pilot that's very brilliant, very smart, and just--yeah. I've kind of encountered close ties with some great, great people that's since retired and moved on, and then some of the younger ones that's still a part of the organization now that I'd see around here that I've molded, so.

TS: There's a pride there.

BU: It is. It is.

TS: When we think about the second half, or the second three quarters of your military career, and we think about the time that you were in service and what was going on politically and militarily in forms of leadership, do you have any opinions about, say, Bill Clinton [William "Bill" Jefferson Clinton, 42nd President of the United States], or Colin Powell [retired four-star general in the United States Army], or a young George W. [George W. Bush, 43rd President of the United States], Dick Cheney [Richard Bruce Cheney, 46th Vice President of the United States], Barack Obama [Barack Hussein Obama, 44th President of the United States]. Anything like that?

BU: Anything that stands out?

TS: That stands out, yeah.

BU: Anything that stands out that--Well, one thing that stands out, when Barack Obama was the first African-American president. For surely that stands out. That stood out. Yes, that certainly has stood out. Bill Clinton, when he says, "I've never had any sexual relationship with that woman." [both laugh]

[Insert info about Clinton scandal for reference]

TS: Bless his heart.

BU: I know, I know, I know. [unclear]

TS: The best line ever.

BU: Yes, the best line ever.

TS: Till the end of time.

BU: Yes, yes, the best line ever. Yeah, so a lot of things. When Saddam Hussein was taken down during one of our key time in this military organization, those things like that, I just profoundly remember the details and everything, because when you're part of this organization you kind of tend to get briefed and you hear firsthand things that goes on when you're part of those things like that.

[Operation Red Dawn was an American military operation conducted on 13 December 2003 in the town of ad-Dawr, Iraq, that led to the capture of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein]

TS: Oh, absolutely.

BU: Then also state active duty times that I've done within the organization where you're called up for your--Well, you're very familiar with that. Those are some things, too, that have stood out, where we've had to go out, and the storms and help people in the community. And I think for the National Guard, that's one of the biggest things, too, that has really, really—Even now, I think I would put that uniform back on just to be able to go out and help the community, because that's primarily what the National Guard is. That's what—

TS: That's what it's supposed to be, state-side defense, right?

BU: That's exactly what we are.

TS: They're supposed to stay here.

BU: Here. Not there.

TS: Not there.

BU: Go over there, but—

TS: They've been going, when they need to be here.

BU: That's right. That's right.

TS: No, I'm 100% with you on that.

BU: Yeah, and that right there what I think a lot of--what we were kind of moved away from. We do a little bit now with things, but that's primarily what our mission--

TS: What are your memories of 9/11?

BU: I remember that day vaguely, too, don't you?

TS: Yes.

BU: Don't you remember the day, what you were doing?

TS: Everything.

BU: During that day I just remember everything.

TS: Everything. Every single thing.

BU: Everything. I just remember vaguely every single thing. I don't know why things like that just stands out in your mind and doesn't go away. Keep things in your mind that just—yeah, I just remember having very emotional—I remember just calling my family, because I have a lot of family up in New York and New Jersey and those places, people that work at the Transits and stuff up there, and how we were like all on the phone and it was—oh, man, it was just.

TS: And you got deployed very shortly after that.

BU: Yes.

TS: So that—

BU: Yes, and then—Yes, that still right there, it's a timeline that doesn't ever go away, that's so heartfelt. Then to go there to—you know? I've been there and went right during that time, because I'm the type of person, I have to see for myself.

TS: Yes.

BU: To a lot of people they think that's crazy, but I do, I want to see. [chuckles] But, yeah, went there right—well, not right after but it wasn't long after, just to see all that, and then since gone back and see how they—the monument--how they've monumented it--up there. But, yeah, those are just things that--

TS: What are your thoughts on the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell?"

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

BU: Well, I'm not sort of—I'm not prejudiced when it comes to gays and bisexuals and all that stuff, but I certainly wasn't one of the big fans that was really for that. I think that when you're in the military, I think that you should not have to worry about engaging next to—that's just my personal opinion.

TS: That's fine.

BU: My personal opinion. I don't want to have to be—and I've had an encounter with that in the military, and--I mean, now it's H-B-L—whatever those letters are—L-G-Q—[chuckles]

TS: LGBTQ+ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, plus other identities]

BU: Yes. Yeah, plus. It's a profound thing, but when it came into the military, I certainly can't take any thunder away from those guys because that's who they are, but I certainly am not one that would want to engage in that type of living a lifestyle in the military. Yeah, should they be treated fairly? Of course. But should they have kept that where they [chuckles]—it's just me—should they have been kept, sort of, out of—maybe so, but.

TS: What are your thoughts about the Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta removing restrictions for women in combat arms in 2013?

[Leon Panetta served as Secretary of Defense, Director of C.I.A., White House Chief of Staff, Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and a U.S. Representative from California.

BU: I don't know. Moving women from arms, I mean--I don't know. I mean, we're now—I mean, we're women of—we have women's rights now that--I feel like we can do—I just was listening on the news not long ago where they're recruiting women firemen, sort of, now.

TS: Yes.

BU: Because you never really saw women firefighters. But now they're thinking--I think some women feel as though that they should be a part of that, and as far as removing women from combat—

TS: No, this is putting women in combat.

BU: In combat. Right, in combat, that's right, that's right. Yeah, I mean, why not?

TS: What are your thoughts about women serving in the infantry, or, like, Special Forces, or on submarines?

BU: Those are—to me—those are close encounters, primarily manned by men, so—but some females now seem to think that they're—they fit that criteria, and so don't want to be discriminated against as being females or women, and so I say, if that's—but some areas, to me—that's just me as being women's lib, I think that some areas should be strictly stuck to men. But like I said, women now are—we're a little different than we were fifteen years ago, as far as—

TS: True.

BU: We're quite different now, so.

TS: At what point did you decide, this is it, I'm going to retire?

BU: At what point?

TS: Yes.

BU: When they—When the government told me that they were going to transition me—my position—I didn't have to think very much from retiring because I'm still—This is a federal position that I hold. And so, they transitioned my position; transitioned me out of the uniform over to—

TS: To the GS [General Schedule; the predominant pay scale for federal employees]?

BU: Yeah, I'm still a GS, right, right--a GS--to civil service. So it was a no-brainer for me just to kind of say, "Okay, I'm done. Let me just—" And so, it was the same, because I've been working here sixteen years, in my uniform; in the uniform.
And so, they transitioned me, like I said, so I said, "You know, I could just give up that uniform and just keep a federal—keep my federal time moving."

TS: That's a plan, right?

BU: Yes.

TS: So when you left the National Guard, you still stayed here?

BU: Yes.

TS: Because you were in the National Guard—it's kind of weird to ask this question, but one of the questions is, like, did you have an adjustment to civilian life? Because you were National Guard, probably not, but you were deployed for a lengthy period of time. That one-year deployment that you had, or even that six-month deployment, did you find it difficult to transition back to being a civilian after being deployed for so long?

BU: Yes. Not the first one, but the one year; the one year.

TS: What made it difficult?

BU: I don't know. It was just something different about that time right there. I just really, literally, cannot even say. I mean, a lot of things took place after that deployment. It did, a lot of things took place. Transitioning back, I just begin to start drinking. Yeah, I don't know; I just don't know what all that was about that. But, yeah, it takes you a little while. And I've seen numerous letters from family members and spouses that has come across me that have stated that—"What's going on with this family member?" because—But it's truly--it's something. It's hard to explain unless you've kind of been in it for someone else, but yeah. Yes. Just like you have to get acclimated to going over there to different things, the culture and the weather and stuff, it's the same thing when you come back here. Can you imagine?

TS: And especially when you have kids. They haven't seen you, someone else has been taking care of them.

BU: Yes.

TS: So then they have to get used to—

BU: Yes.

TS: —Mom said something so I've got to do it, versus whoever was with them.

BU: Yes, and it takes a while. I have a—sort of now here, they both—both parents are gone; both are deployed right now. Just imagine those kids, and they have three kids—three--all under the age of six. Just imagine that right there--

TS: Yes.

BU: --in the National Guard. Parents gone—children—and that's something that you won't ever get back. I tell these people right now, I said--here in the family programs, I said they should have never, ever allowed that to happen, in my mind. But I'm not—I don't sit up there at our—

TS: Send one, when that one comes back, send the other, right?

BU: Exactly. But those are just some things now, in the new army, that goes on that I certainly don't agree with. And I don't agree with it because I've been there, and I see that, and I've seen the after-effects in these things that I know that should not take place because it's effect on the kids, and--but anyway.

TS: Yes. Many consider women in the service to be trailblazers. Do you feel this way?

BU: Women as trailblazers.

[Phone rings. Extraneous conversation redacted]

BU: As trailblazers? Yes, of course, I do consider—Yeah, because we're always considered—even in [the masculinity of us?], but I think that all women, we sort of are initiators of certain things that we encounter, and we always kind of push forward. But I think we are. Certainly more females in the last couple years—well, not a couple years, but ten, fifteen more so than when I initially came in, but the ones that coming in now, they're making—

TS: They're gung-ho.

BU: Yeah, they are.

TS: Have you used your veteran benefits?

BU: Yes. Well, yeah. My GI Bill for school and then things, yes.

[The GI Bill provides educational assistance to servicemembers, veterans, and their dependents]

TS: Have you used any of your benefits in terms of, like, getting a mortgage?

BU: No. I'm just working that right now and I don't know why I have not used that.

TS: I think that's great; that's great.

BU: As a matter of fact, it's funny you just asked, because I just called a lender yesterday, because I told them I did a conventional loan way back when, and I refinanced before and still didn't use the GI Bill. It's the craziest thing.

TS: Crazy.

BU: And so, I just was talking with them just yesterday, and I got some property out that I want to build, and yesterday was trying to explain I want to—one thing is a little different when you got your own property, and trying to build on, so they was just explaining all that process yesterday. So it's different when you go and see a house.

TS: Right. Oh, yeah, for sure. There's a whole different thing.

BU: Yeah, a difference.

TS: Do you use your veteran benefits with VA Health?

BU: Yes, certainly. When you come back, you've got that six-year window--that six-year window--to use the VA, so I'm working now on submitting some claims that I've encountered through my career that I think should be brought to the forefront, so I'm working on some of those issues right now. But, yeah, so.

TS: How have your experiences been with the Veterans Administration?

BU: It's—I mean, for the—I guess, of course, I have that availability, and then I also have--on the federal side I have my own, so I sort of use both. It depends on what—But when I first started [encountering?] the VA I wasn't so happy with—they're a little different when it comes to—and so it took me a little while to kind of get used to the way they do things, I guess. So once you kind of see how they do things, and then you kind of adjust and just kind of fall in line and just follow suit. But I hear it all the time around here, there's all these veterans and stuff, that they hear, that uses the VA, and even [end-day?] soldiers, too, that they—Some has good experience and some have bad, so I guess it just depends on what your need is.

TS: Due to the recent conflicts, the media has focused attention on PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] with service men and women. Have you had any personal experiences with PTSD?

BU: Yes, I think so; I think so. Yeah, I mean—Yeah. I'm certain that when this deployment—this last deployment—I always hear people talking about PTSD and even uniform[?] there's things, but you're like, "What is that? What is that? You never—" but until you—Yeah, it's just—to me—I analyzed it to find out; it's just things in your mind that you encounter after a traumatic event that happens in your life.

TS: Yes.

BU: I think a lot of people--like, I know police officers probably experience it, and firefighters, and anybody that has anything traumatic, because when anything traumatic goes into the brain, it sort of stays there long-term. And sometimes—my doctor said, "You might not experience it right then, but maybe ten, fifteen years later up the road, it's when your brain starts to kind of saying—brings it back to the forefront, and then you start engaging in—" But I do know for a fact that, just looking at myself, and I—people

know me, and I'm a fairly strong-willed person, but I do know that from 2011 to 2012, 2013, that something definitely took place with me that I kind of—that I sort of lost some mental—I mean, because I didn't know, I didn't see it, but everybody else saw it. And even my doctor was telling me that, and I'm saying, "No, I'm fine. No," I'm thinking to myself, but then at the same time I saw things that was happening that—I guess acknowledgement of, sometimes, that you—other people can see that you can't see, and then it's just—I mean, there's some things you can't get back, time lost, but I'm at a better place now, thank God. But that PTSD is definitely—It's real.

TS: Yes.

BU: It is!

TS: It is; it is very real.

BU: I didn't have a clue. I guess, like I said, unless you know what it is. Some people, you know the word PTSD, and like, "What is that?" Well, until you gather the information that falls under that right there sometimes, and you see it within yourself, then you know. Because I was having these crying spells, I didn't know what was going—I mean, really wailing—wailing. It's, like, what is going on? I mean, it was the weirdest thing.

TS: Yes.

BU: It was just the weirdest—and I think all that emotional trauma that I experienced when I was deployed, from my nephew, and then my son, and then my grandfather, and then it's, like—and then I was already emotionally over *there*, away from my children, and my son needed me the most and I couldn't—there wasn't nothing I could do about it. I'm still having to deal with that even today, with him. And so, that's why I get emotional, but it's okay.

TS: That's totally understandable.

BU: Okay.

TS: How has your life been different because of your time in the military?

BU: How's it been different? How's it been different? How's it been different? Well, when you put that uniform on, there's different challenges that you have to—and in--the National Guard's a little different from the active army—because I know when I'm deployed I'm still active Army. National Guard, one weekend a month, you don't really—you tend not to experience too much unless you go, like--I've been to Egypt on a tour for three weeks, four weeks; eight[?] annual trainings. So you kind of go to those little things like that, too, that kind of takes you away from your family in the course of your time.

I mean, I've traveled, literally. I've probably been to almost every state in the—literally—from training to—I really have—which has been a great thing, but I've—I think some of the things that's most rememberable is the travelling that I've encountered. Some

of the heartfelt is—with the National Guard—is leaving your family. Well, I guess it would be active army, too, but having to leave your family, and have no control over the movements that's required of you. But I've had certainly some—this organization has really been—it's been really, really good for me; The North Carolina National Guard. It really has. You have some bumps and some bruises along the way, which is anything else that you encounter.

TS: Right.

BU: But for the most part, the whole cycle of it, it's really been—it's really been—

TS: It's been a positive in your life.

BU: Oh, yes, absolutely.

TS: Have any of your children served in the military?

BU: No.

TS: Would you, or did you, encourage them to join?

BU: Well, I was sort of—my daughter—I thought, maybe. My son at one time talked about it. He was talking about the marines early on, and I sort of thought my daughter at one point may have—might would have--she was sort of thinking about the National Guard, but she went on to college, so then she's, "No, I don't know if I want to do that or not."

TS: [chuckles]

BU: So then my son, after his encounter of his illness, of course that sort of took that away from him.

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

BU: Oh, absolutely. I think every teenager, when they graduate from school, should have at least three years in the military.

TS: I agree with you.

BU: I'm serious.

TS: Before they go to college.

BU: Before they go to college, I just really think that—

TS: We need conscription.

[From 1940 until 1973, both during peacetime and periods of conflict, men were drafted to fill vacancies in the U.S. Armed Forces that could not be filled through voluntary means; also known as conscription]

BU: Yeah. I really just think that [chuckles]--when I say that, it's like, "What?" But I just think it's a great foundation that's laid at a young age to where—

TS: It gives them time to think, too; figure out who they are and what they want to do.

BU: Think—yes. It's good discipline, it helps them to get up to—because, I mean, for me, it did it. And even until today, I know things that I did back then that set the pace for me today.

TS: Pay for college.

BU: Yes, and I get up, I mean, and everything. I mean, I had to make up my bed, even 'til today, did I learn from when I was eighteen years old, that's the first thing you did, when you got out of the bed in the military, in basic training, was you make that bed up, and then you—you know what I mean?

TS: Yes.

BU: So things that sets the pace, I think, and so certainly, yeah, I definitely would highly recommend these young kids, but they're fearful now of the military, and there's deployments, and the wars, and things that take place now. That's what I hear a lot of, even from recruiters that's saying that's just typically what they hear, "I don't want to go." They're a little fearful.

TS: They have grown up in the era of deployments.

BU: Yeah, for sure. Even National Guard.

TS: What does patriotism mean to you?

BU: Patriotism, what it means to me? It means to me that I'm going to stand for, serve, and protect my country. Being patriotic is having a belief in a—standing up for something that you believe in. It's defend, protect, serve. The colors, the red, white, and blue. [chuckles]

TS: Yes.

BU: Just, overall.

TS: Is there anything in particular you would want a civilian to know or understand about what it's like to serve in the military that they may not understand or appreciate?

BU: Certainly, that being and wearing that uniform is something that we take great pride in, and I think that in civilian, on the outside looking in, I think that you should be giving outright most respect. I think we should be taken—given accountable for what we do. Sometimes in the civilian world—I mean, I've encountered back years ago, when you're working in the civilian sector and you're having to go for three weeks, or the drill weekends when it's your schedule to work on the weekends, that all that should be taken accounted for, and we should not be, sort of, have to be penalized for that. We do have to—We have to fit these criterias a lot of times because that—

I hear it now from—matter of fact, the kid that works right here, he told me that—he's not a kid, I call him a kid. He's not a kid, he's an adult—but he was working a company that was holding that against him. And they really were, when he was—he's with the engineers, and he would get put on assignments that he had to leave them, and, of course, they terminated him for that. Yes, they did, in a way to where it was legal, where it was legal. But I think that the private and the civilian sectors need to be held more accountable for how they treat women and men in uniform. I think that we should be given all our due diligence that we are worthy of.

TS: Absolutely. I 100% agree with you.

BU: A hundred percent, yes. I just think that—Yeah, I do.

TS: I don't have any more formal questions. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

BU: Anything else that I would like to add? No, I think you've done an excellent job [both chuckle] in interviewing me. You've made me bring out things that I just hadn't had—way back then—that I hadn't really given much thought of in the last couple years. But, yeah, it helped me, I guess, too, to kind of see the surround—the whole element of my career in the National Guard, just from you asking me these questions that, like I said, that I had to bring back into my recollection. But no, I don't have anything else that I need to add.

[End of Interview]