

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Margaret Devlin

Conducted by Kevin Haney and Deb Barrett

January 14, 2006

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in partnership with the Library of Congress

(Interviewer Kevin Haney in bold, interviewer Deb Barrett in italics/bold, and veteran Margaret Devlin in regular font)

Part 1: Introduction

This interview is being conducted on January 14, 2006 at the Indian Prairie Public Library in Darien, Illinois. My name is Kevin Haney. I'm working with Deb Barrett, also an interviewer, and I am speaking with Peg Devlin. Ms. Devlin was born on December 25, 1929 in Fairhaven, Massachusetts and now lives in the city of Burr Ridge, Illinois. She is a retired administrative Assistant from Argonne Laboratory and learned of the Veterans History Project from the VFW. Ms. Devlin has kindly consented to be interviewed for the project. Here is her story.

Part 2: Entering the Military

Where were you living at the time when you entered the service, and what were you doing then?

I was living in Fairhaven, Massachusetts where I was born and raised, and I was doing office work. At the time it wasn't known as administrative work, it was just office work.

And when did you enter the Army?

I enlisted in January, 1951.

And why did you choose to enlist?

I felt very patriotic. I had a brother who was a Marine, I had a brother who was in the Navy, and I wanted to be in the Army.

And why did you pick the service branch you joined?

There was no particular reason, I just felt, like I said, it was one of the three. At first I had thought of joining the WAVES, but I chose the WACs instead.

And WAC stands for Women's Army Corps.

Yes, many years ago it was W AAC. That was before my time.

How old were you when you joined?

I joined when I was 21 because my parents - I don't know if you want to hear this - did not approve of young girls or young women being in the military, and they would not sign, because I had wanted to go when I was 18 or 19, but as a result of the strictness that I was raised with, I had to wait until I was 21.

That was at a very different time when women were not in the military.

Oh, that was strictly taboo, especially where I lived. Both of my parents were foreign born, and they just did not believe in this. "No daughter of mine will go into the military." Well, guess what? One did.

Part 3: Basic Training

Where were you inducted, and what were your first days like in the Army?

I was inducted in Fort Dix, New Jersey. It was complete bedlam. I didn't know what I was getting into. I felt kind of lost, yet I was not homesick, if that makes any sense. I was also very thrilled. It was something I had wanted to do for years, and I was actually doing it, so it was a wonderful experience.

Did your brothers, had they prepared you as for what military life would be like?

Well, my brother was in Korea with the Marines, so he was unable to talk with me on this, and my other brother, no he did not, no. I was totally unprepared, but not disappointed.

Now, you were enlisting early during the Korean War. What was the mood like among the other new recruits, male or female, at that time?

Well, because I spent most of my time in Germany, I can only associate that with how the Germans felt about World War II, not Korea.

When you were at Fort Dix.

Oh, when I was at Fort Dix. I'm sorry.

What was the feeling on base, what was the feeling in the country? Kind of take us back to January of 1950 if you could.

Really nothing, there was nothing gung-ho, it was just, we were sort of like one big happy family. We ate, lived, slept together, ate together. I don't remember hearing anything about the country. We were just concerned about getting our basic training done with and then go onto another adventure.

What was your basic training like?

You had to learn how to pitch a tent, how to dig foxholes, everything that a man does. We were on bivouac for a week, you know, just everything.

Oh, so it was similar to the male training?

Absolutely, absolutely. The only thing we had to volunteer for was to shoot a rifle, which I volunteered to do, and to go overseas. Otherwise we did everything that a man did.

O.K. So weapons use was optional for Women Army Corps members?

Absolutely. It was not, you know, they didn't say, you know, shoot a rifle, do you want to, then we had to sign something in order to be able to do that.

How many women were in your group?

It was a battalion, really, there were several barracks, so I had a picture which I sent to the Women's Memorial. I'd say close to a hundred.

Any idea how many volunteered to learn weapons training?

No, I don't remember that, but a lot of them did because it was curiosity more than anything. I wanted to know how to shoot a rifle.

O.K. How long was basic training?

I'm going to have to guess on this. Probably 12 or 14 weeks. It's just too long ago for me to actually remember. It was quite a while.

O.K. And were different women, after, you know, from the basic training, were you then going on to some specialized training?

Yes, as a matter of fact there was a time when it was devoted to taking tests, all types of tests, to see what your qualifications were, and I remember, for some strange reason, I qualified for the medical field, and they had thought of sending me to Texas at the time but I had, in the meantime I volunteered to go to Germany.

What type of training were they planning on giving you in Texas?

I don't remember, but it was in the field of medicine.

What types of fields were the women being placed into at that time, what kind of tasks and field operation?

Drivers, cooks, usually administrative from what I saw. Even when I was in Germany the women in the office, the majority of people in the office were WACs and a few German

people (but we're going back to New Jersey.) Yeah, most of it was office work, administrative.

And the trainers, the drill instructors, whatever they were called. Were they male, or female?

Females. Yes, all of them were females. Once in a while there would be perhaps a meeting [cannot decipher] and maybe a male officer spoke, but even when we so called graduated from basic training, it was our commanding officer who gave us a so-called goodbye speech, you know, many of us cried, because we were going different ways.

Do you remember any of your instructors in particular?

I remember Sergeant Cade. She was very good.

What can you tell us about Sergeant Cade

She was very strict. She didn't smile very much. She was a tall thin woman. She went by the book all the time. You could not get close to her. She was rather aloof, but very good at what she did. Very good.

Was there much fraternization between the male and female trainees?

No. No. When we were in training, we never saw any men.

Did you go on leave after the first week, or couple of weeks?

Yeah, after basic training you had the choice of going home on leave, I remember. And, yes, I did because I didn't want to let my parents know I was going overseas, because they were not very happy about that either, so yes, I remember going home on leave. What length of time I don't remember.

How did your parents react when you came home? Were they happy to see you?

They were happy to see me, yeah.

They were still not happy with your decision though.

No. No, it took a long time for them to accept it.

You had been, obviously, a young adult during World War II. What was...did you notice a difference in response during this particular conflict back in Fairhaven to how the people in Fairhaven were involved or not involved or interested or not interested in the Korean War versus World War II?

There was much more emphasis on World War II, much more, there was no comparison. And as I say repeatedly because the Korean War was not that long and was not declared a war until many years later - it was considered a police action and eventually it was declared a war - but the emphasis was on World War II. I had brothers there, because I had five brothers, and most of them were in World War II, so there were lots of stars on the windows, there were blackouts, you stood in line for different types of foods. I was probably about 12 or 14 years old, but I remember distinctly on V - E Day, (which was in Europe), how the people went to church, the bells were ringing. It gives me goose bumps because it was quite a time to see. Korea in my opinion nothing that I can remember, nothing. No OOOh. Nothing.

The forgotten war.

Well, the men from what is it, the most recent war, Vietnam?

The Vietnam War, yeah.

Well, these guys were so despondent because they didn't have a marching band. Well, they didn't do a thing for the people from Korea, so they're all cry babies.

Well, we can get into that later.

Anyway, I'd like to tell you what they called them in Vietnam, too. You know what they called them? I don't know if I'm allowed to say it here. Potheads! A lot of them were taking drugs. A lot of them.

We'll get into your view of things after military service and we can discuss that with you. It should be quite interesting. Now you had decided to go overseas. Now there really wasn't an option for you to go to Korea at the time where the actual fighting was taking place.

No. None at all. Women did not go anywhere near, with the exception I guess of nurses, but, no, women military to my knowledge were not allowed, no, nowhere near the front lines.

And did you think that was a good thing or a bad thing?

Absolutely. Why would I want to go get myself killed? We don't start the wars.

You're of course meaning soldiers by "*we don't start the wars...*"

I meant men.

Part 4: Going Overseas

Of course. Going overseas. Now you had specifically volunteered to go overseas. What were kind of the options did you have, you know, Germany versus someplace else, or you just volunteer for overseas duty and they decided where they were going to send you?

I think... It was so long ago but I'm going to see if I can remember to the best of my knowledge. Germany was the main place. You almost didn't have too much of a choice because I don't remember going like, first they'd say Russia or Italy. It was mainly because they had Germany occupied. O.K.? So we went where it was occupied.

O.K. So it would have been Germany. All right, so you went over to Germany. Did you fly over?

No, I took the U.S.S. Blatchford. It took ten long days, ten long days.

What was the trip like?

Oh, it was awful. I got seasick. It was a lot of soldiers drinking.

On the ship?

Absolutely . Yeah, I remember I would not go near that. I had this accordion. I don't remember how I acquired it, through the U.S.O. or something on the ship, and I kept trying to learn how to play it, but I can remember people drinking and having lots of parties.

Was this a troop ship, or what kind of ship was it?

It the U.S.S. Blatchford, it was a military transport ship.

And they allowed drinking on the transport ship?

Whoa, to my knowledge, they were having parties! Why, does that surprise you?

I...I'm just kind of surprised.

When you get a bunch of men?

I understand that, on leave, but on post...

I don't know if they were on duty, but this was probably after hours

O.K., so they had bars on the ship.

[Cannot decipher questions and conversation]

So you were on the ship, and it was men and women on the ship.

Yes, yes, but we were confined to a certain section of the ship. There was no fraternizing until they had these so-called parties which I never attended.

So you could fraternize at the parties, but not otherwise?

Some of the women, they kind of did, but most of the, the majority of the women, we kind of stayed away from that.

Voluntarily?

Um-huh.

What was the sense of the other women on the ship, I mean, what was their motivation for enlisting?

I never asked them. We just knew that we were as a group to Germany, that we all had volunteered, and this was what we were going to do, and make the best of it. Aside from the fact that it was something I would never have done as a civilian. It was opportunity.

So what did you do to pass on the ship? Did you have duties. Did you have duties...?

No, I read a lot. There were musical instruments; I tried to learn how to play the accordion, you know, various things. I remember this thing there were instruments available and you could read, but I tell you from those waves, most people didn't feel like doing too much because a lot of people felt very sick. I remember one night, and this was in January, and the water was very, very rough, so I remember being out there once, and that [ship] was going like, and I said, once was enough, I went back in, I was too afraid.

What was the food like when you were on the ship? Was it good?

It was fine.

Was it... were a lot of people getting sick from the motion of the ship?

A lot of people I noticed distinctly, a lot, yeah.

O.K. So you must have had ...well, fraternizing with each other must have been cut down significantly with so many people getting sick, too.

Yes, I remember the ocean being very rough at the time, very rough. And the lower in the boat you'd go, the worse you'd feel, because there were times we'd have to go down there, I don't remember why, but it was a necessity every so often, and oh, my God [cannot decipher answer].

What were your sleeping accommodations?

It was like bunk beds.

How high?

I'm going to guess and say two.

Just two high?

Yeah, I don't think it was three. Maybe it was three but offhand I don't remember. I can only remember two.

How far down in the ship was it? Was it in the worst part where you had the really rocking stuff?

No, because we were further up in the [ship]. The sleeping quarters were higher up in the boat. The stuff that was really bad was when we were down below.

How many women army personnel were on the boat, dozens? Hundreds?

I would say hundreds.

And you docked directly in Germany?

Yes, in Bremerhaven.

What was the name of the boat? I thought the name of the boat had that name. Remember the boat's name?

Yes. Was it the USS Blatchford *or* was it the Maxburg?

You said Bremenhaven was the name of the town.

Yeah.

But I thought you said earlier it was the name of the boat.

You know, I thought so too. The USS Blatchford going into Bremenhaven.

Part 5: Duty in Germany

Interesting. This was only about five years now after World War II. What were conditions like in Germany when you got there? Could you still see the effects of the war?

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I took lots and lots of pictures, which I should have saved, of the ruins. Yeah, a lot of them still remained there. A lot, a lot.

What was the morale of the German people on the whole?

Wonderful. I was waiting for you to ask me that question. The German people couldn't have been nicer. They welcomed us with open arms. I got to know a German family very, very well. I would be invited to dinner every so often. I could never imagine those people being in the war, and being there for two years, I felt I was a pretty good judge of that. And we also had this German gal that worked in the office. Her name was Anita, and she eventually left to come to the United States, but they were very nice people. Anita, Eric, very nice people. We'd go into the Gasthauses, which are the restaurants, and they were all very friendly. I don't remember any time anyone saying anything about the Americans, or any kind of conflict as long as I was there.

Did you kind of get around the country, or were you more or less [???cannot decipher the question???

No, I went to Switzerland and a few other countries.

But you were with the same post throughout or, as part of your duty, did you tend to get around the country, or were you pretty stationary in one area?

We were stationed in one area and that was [???] They had military barracks there, and you'd go throughout the country only on leave, or unless you were re-assigned.

What part of Germany were you posted? North? South?

I don't know where [???] is, maybe north, I'm not sure. I'd have to look at a map.

And, were you near the east zone?

Does that mean Berlin?

That would mean East Germany.

We weren't too far. I distinctly remember we were not allowed to go into Berlin unless you would get an authorized pass through the German people, so how close we were and what section I'm not really sure.

O.K. so you never went to Berlin?

No, I did not.

Was there still talk about, say, the Berlin airlift which had just taken place a couple of years ago?

The Berlin Wall, the Berlin Wall, there was lots of talk about the Berlin Wall.

O.K. And what sort of things were going on in the Army? What was an average week like? Were there a lot of concerns about...?

It was just like a 9 to 5 job. The only thing was with my job, I was on call 24 hours a day because you had like, these young G.I.s, there was sickness in the family, and they were called home immediately. I would have them go to the office and type up the orders, and then we would run off on this old mimeograph machine, and they had to leave immediately so it was like any other, you know, and at night we didn't have to wear our uniforms, we could wear civilian clothes any time we were off duty, so it was like being a civilian, really. The only thing was when we were in the office, you had to wear your uniform, and you had to salute when an officer came in, that type of thing.

Was there a lot of concern...did you feel a sense of concern that you were sort of in the midst of this Cold War that was developing, or what was the talk of that? Any sense of that at all?

No, not for me, because I was a woman. I don't know, I don't remember any of that taking place.

What were your living quarters like when you were in Germany?

We had a huge room. It was barracks, and we were on the third floor. We had one room where the men were allowed to come to meet for a date. We were not allowed in the quarters, only that one particular room. I still dream of them today, the barracks, it was

awful. And across this huge foyer, or aisle which was probably about 30 or 40 feet wide, all the sleeping quarters. It was a huge room, and we had one, two...

About how many...?

I'll tell you exactly. We had Pete and Billy next to me, then me, then [Monty???) - there were four. And you had a really awful looking bed, with a thin mattress and you know, the round boot metal (??)

Did you have a footlocker, or...?

Yes, you had a locker and a footlocker, and we also had inspection, you know, they would come in and inspect, you know, and I always had kind of a smart mouth.

Did it get you in trouble?

Yes, a couple of times. Nothing really bad, but I was warned.

You said you went out...did you travel to other European countries while you were over there?

I mentioned Switzerland. Is that European?

Yes.

O.K. Italy, and I saw a little bit of France.

And what was the rest of Europe kind of looking like?

I thought it was really beautiful. Of course I wasn't looking for conflicts or anything from World War II, you know, I'm a people person. I could see that they were very, very good to the Americans, and we used to go in and...I had some German men who were in love with me! And most of them spoke good English, especially in the gasthauses or the restaurants. They all spoke English, and as a matter of fact, I went to school to take up spoken German once so I could go into a restaurant and you know, order some food, you know, not in very good German, but they understood me, so I just loved the German people. I almost became a civilian over there. Mr. Guggenheime who was a German comptroller wanted me to work for him, and I came that close to civilianizing and staying there.

What changed your mind?

I met this guy from New York.

That'll do it!

If I had to do it over again...

So you did some traveling while you worked there. Did you travel in civilian clothes, or did you travel in uniform?

Civilian clothes. You had that option, we didn't have to wear uniform, only when you were on duty. Otherwise your time was your own.

Was there any discussion of what was going on in Korea during that period, even amongst the troops? Did anybody rotate in from the war zone?

Not in Germany, no. Not to my knowledge, no. Basically it was a very wonderful part of my life. I tell my two grown up children that there were two times in my life that I was truly, truly happy. Number one was being in the Women's Army, and number two was when I gave birth to my children. One taught me about life, and my children taught me all about life.

Any particular memories stand out in your mind? Was serving in the Army everything you kind of hoped it could be?

Well, I didn't know what to expect. I do know that I made wonderful, wonderful friends. As a matter of fact my daughter got a hold of this one guy I know in Germany on the Internet on her computer, and I talked with him after so many years, I nearly fell over. It's amazing, you know, but some very good friends, and now that I know she can do this, you know, I'll probably, if they're still alive, I'll contact them. I made wonderful, wonderful friends. You have to remember, I came from a very strict background. My life was so "you can't do this" so that when I met people who were caring, and we lived together, and I had so many good times, it was so wonderful. If I had my life to live over again, I would stay there and civilianize and stay with Mr. Guggenheime.

Why did you not reenlist? You talk about it being a very happy time...

Because I had met this guy from New York.

He was serving in the military at the time?

Yes. He was in the Army. He had been drafted. He was from New York, and he left about six or eight months before I did. Oh, yeah, they wanted to make me a sergeant, yeah, and just to get two stripes, it's amazing what I had to go through. They had all this big brass, we used to call them, all these older men, who are probably...I'm probably their age now, on that board, all looking at you with a stem face, and you come in, and

you got to have shiny shoes and shiny brass and make sure the hair is right, and you got to salute these men, and they start shooting questions, one by one.

And you were a corporal.

Um-hum.

What type of questions were they?

I don't remember. I just know I was so nervous, and I thought I had totally flunked, but I did not, I did get my stripe.

Were they questions about military life?

Military, I'd say a combination of all kinds of questions, and just kind of firing them at you to see how quick you could answer them, you know? And I remember I did. How well I answered, I don't know.

Because you met the guy from New York after that!

I had met him before that. It was very interesting, and yet my children, neither one of them ever even thought about going into the military.

Part 6: Discharge

So you were in Germany for two years?

A full two years. All I had was the basic training at Fort Lee, or was it Fort Dix, one or the other.

Fort Dix.

Fort Dix, and from there I went straight to Germany and spent the entire time there. And I flew back. As a matter of fact I was scheduled to come back on the ship again and I said, "Oh, my God, another ten days," so I went up and saw my friend Mr. Guggenheime, and he took care of it and changed me to a plane.

So, it was a regular passenger plane?

Military... MAT...Military Air Transport. Up and down. Up and down! And there was this baby that cried for 24 hours. I turned to the pilot, and I said where's my parachute? He was hysterical.

And were you discharged back in the United States then?

Yes, that's the way it was. Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, I believe I was discharged in.

That was in Virginia?

No. You see, when I enlisted in the Women's Army, I left California. I had taken the test for the Women's Army in Massachusetts, and at that time things were not too well between my family and I, and I just wanted to get away. I had mentioned that, so I thought they'll forget about me, so I went, my sister-in-law came to visit us in Massachusetts, so I went with her to Long Beach, California, and when I was in Long Beach, California, they sent me a letter, my family forwarded it to me, I had been accepted in the Women's Army, and I had to report for duty January 1st or something, and boom, I was gone. So I was on a train from California all the way back to...

A train took you back to New Jersey, then a boat for ten days after your training, and then a plane back from Germany.

Yes.

So you were discharged then about January '53 or '54? Or, when was the discharge?

'53.

1953.

January 2nd, I believe. I should have brought my discharge with me.

Part 7: After the Service

So, what did you do immediately after your military service?

I had to readjust, because of the change in time, I couldn't sleep very well. I don't know how many the difference in hours was. I looked for a job immediately, but it was like I had jet lag you know, and I just couldn't sleep, and I remember waking up in the middle of the night. I couldn't... It took quite a while for me to readjust. And the atmosphere was so different. I was used to being with all these women, or, being on my own, and here I am back...

Were you living with your parents again?

Yeah.

They were probably glad you didn't reenlist.

I'm sure they were.

You know, when I was in the service they were constantly asking me either to participate in the picture or something that was going to be put on tape, you know, so it was [?? the right?] of a lot of things. As a woman, you know, I don't think about them in there about World War II. I had enough of that when I was young, and when I was not in the military, or, when I was in Korea, I was just concerned about my brother. He was wounded there so you know I didn't notice - getting back to what you asked earlier - the German people, there was nothing about, "We don't like Americans," there was no protest, nothing, they were nothing but gracious people.

Um-huh. So rather a change, let's say.

Absolutely.

Now, did your brother come back from Korea about the same time you came back? Or before, or after?

I think he came back later.

O.K. Did he talk about his experiences over there?

No, No. He did not. He, every once in a while, as a matter of fact he's supposed to come and visit me probably sometime in early Spring, but he has very seldom talked about his experiences in Korea.

O.K. So this is almost like comparing a contrast between the military wartime Army and the peace occupation sort of armies, almost completely different...?

In other words your brother was in the military in a war zone and you were in the military in an occupation zone.

There was a vast difference. Oh yeah. He was exposed to danger 24 hours a day and I was not. I was having a good time. I was, I had a very stable job, I had, I didn't worry if I was going to live from one day to another. I was very secure over there, and I can tell you the Germans were very gracious. They treated me like one of their own. And the lady that I was there with also. I can never remember in my two years in Germany when someone said anything [??? off ??] to American women, and I don't remember seeing any fights or any hostility between American G.I.s and the German people. I saw none of that. If anything, I used to see the American G.I.s. fight with one another, but not with the Germans. Never saw it.

So, the Korean War would have ended right after you, a few months after you came back to the United States. And you had talked about your memories when you were younger about VE Day and that sort of thing. What was the mood in the country when the Korean War ended, in the summer of '53?

I don't remember that. [-----] The only vivid thing is World War II. The Korean War? I can remember nothing. There were no parades, no bands, no nothing.

You came home and that was just it.

Yes, I do remember, I think, the governor of the State of Massachusetts gave veterans, I think, a \$300 bonus, mustering out pay. Yes. I remember that [distinctly?]. Years and years ago.

All right. So there was no, like the G.I. Bill of Rights. I mean, where was that? 'Cause a lot of World War II guys talk about their going to college and that sort of thing after [???] Was there anything like that after Korea?

No, well, sure you had those opportunities if you want to, you know, but I never [????]. I should have.

What did you do after you came home?

Oh, after I acclimated to, you know, the difference in time, I went out and got a job. I went back into administrative, that's my field. I had wanted to go to college but then here again, I was, you know, girls don't go to college, girls get married, girls have babies, and I said guess what? I don't get married, and I don't have babies at least for a long time, so I just went back to my old routine, but I was a different person.

What was different?

I had met people from all phases and walks of life. Made a big difference. And just living in one little small town all my life, it's like you're in, not a cave, but you're so confined.

You're isolated from everything.

How large about was Fairhaven when you were there in the fifties?

When I was living there? Probably the population was probably, I'm gonna guess now, maybe 4,000, but it was [???Haven] and North Fairhaven, but, you know, probably a few thousand people.

So this was just a huge difference from small town Massachusetts.

Oh, absolutely it was. Absolutely. That's why I say [??????] You asked what my feelings were. It's like I was in Hollywood, here I am on this big ship, here I am, what's happening to us. Am I dreaming, you know? So it taught me an awful lot, it gave me a lot of stability, a lot of maturity.

Confidence?

Absolutely. And I proved that one time with one of the sergeants who, got very angry with me, you know. They were pitching tents, and I remember talking with this one girl, I wasn't paying attention, and she said "Corporal Medeiris, you get over here and pitch this tent," because I was just goofing off, I wasn't paying attention. [??????] I was laughing [??????] and I [?? Bang, bang, bang ????] I pitched the tent, she didn't say a word. I was just being a smart Alec.

Did you ever, when you came back and you said it was so different, did you ever consider reenlisting?

Well, I was still in love. I had seen my boyfriend from New York, and we made plans to get married a year later. So that was my life 24 hours a day at the time, you know.

So you married that man from New York that you met...?

That's how I got the Devlin name, yes.

Now, as the Cold War progressed - now obviously the Berlin Wall went up in 1961 and other things were happening over in Germany - did your, the fact that you had been over there seem to make that more real for you, maybe than for some of the other people in the States at the time?

Yes. [???? the Berlin Wall went up] But you did need that one pass to get in Berlin. I don't remember why it was considered restricted area, but you could not get in. American personnel could not get into Berlin unless you had that pass.

[????????]

And it kind of frightened me a little so I never made the attempt.

Did anybody you know go to the Eastern Zone?

Um-huh. A number of them did, but I don't remember what their feelings were or what they thought. It's too long ago.

In the 1960's obviously the United States went into another conflict in Vietnam, the war in Vietnam. What were your attitudes or the attitudes of other Korean-Euro veterans toward that situation?

I'm not sure I know exactly what you're saying.

How did you feel about the Vietnam War? I mean, you were a female veteran which was unusual.

Well, because as I told you before, I mean, I felt when they were discharged they were acting like immature babies. They wanted a parade, I don't know, what were they fighting about over there? They wanted a parade, they were just so upset, so many rumors, so many things coming in, these guys doing drugs all the time, you know, what are we fighting? Are we fighting a drug war. I found it very confusing. What is going on? And like I said, they were called Potheads. Most people were very much against that, that I can remember.

All right. So there was a lot of camaraderie between [?????]

Kind of mixed emotions. What is going on over there? Where are all these drugs coming from? That type of thing. And they were doing drugs, no doubt about it.

Have you ever joined any veterans' organizations?

The VFW in Darien. I don't attend meetings. I should, I did when I first joined, but then I was the only woman there, and I kind of felt out of place, and I shouldn't because they're all very nice gentlemen but you know, I don't like selling poppies or marching in parades, I did enough of that in my day.

Do you have any reunions at all that you attend?

With the VFW?

Or in general.

No, but like I told you I'm going to have my daughter get hold of some of these people from when I was in the service, see if they're still around. Especially the women. I remember all their names and what states they lived in, so it's amazing what you can do with a computer, and like I said, she got hold of this one man I knew, so I would seriously consider a reunion with one of them if they are still alive.

How do you feel nowadays about women who are serving in the military? Obviously in your time women didn't serve any combat roles. In more recent years there's

some combat service by women who are non-medical personnel. I mean, what's your attitude on that as a veteran?

Well, I think it's very noble when women do go into service, especially today, but I'm very much against a woman going to the front lines. I don't know if I misread or didn't pay attention on TV, but these women who are mothers with children back home and on the front lines, I think that's - I can only say awful. Why would a woman want to do that? Why do they want to take that chance? See, I don't understand it, so I can't really give you a very good answer. I can't understand what their thoughts are. What are you doing here? Like they used to say to me when I was in Germany, what is a nice girl like you doing in the military? Well, I used to say, you know, back in Boston, Massachusetts they had a temporary draft for thirty days, I says, and I'd have a straight face, I said, and I was one of the women drafted. Yeeeah? They'd believe it until I'd start laughing. I had some of them convinced. Until they draft me, and I have to go to the front lines, I see no need for that. I don't understand how they think.

And you say none of your kids went in?

No! my son abhors anything about the military. My daughter, she's too busy with her career. Which is fine, you know.

Is there anything we haven't covered in this interview that you'd like to express before we go off the record at all or anything we haven't mentioned that you'd like to bring up?

I'm sure there is, but right offhand, I can't think of anything, other than it brought back some wonderful, wonderful memories, and it was a pleasure doing this. I can only repeat that it was a very tantalizing wonderful marvelous time of my life, and if I had to do it over again I would do it in a second.

O.K. Well, thank you very much.