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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Diana Curry
Conducted by Richard Burks Verrone, Ph.D.
August 8 & 9, 2005
Transcribed by Laura Darden**

1 Richard Verrone: This is Dr. Richard Verrone. I'm conducting an oral history
2 interview with Mrs. Diana Curry. Today is August 8, 2005. It's 1:45PM Central
3 Standard Time, and Diana and I are in the Special Collections Library, Vietnam Archive
4 interview room on the campus of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. Diana, let's
5 start with a couple of basic biographical questions. First, if you could, tell me a little bit
6 about where you were born, when you were born, and about growing up. Before you go
7 there, let me remind myself to ask you, we are recording this for the Vietnam Archive
8 Oral History Project. This interview will be donated to the Vietnam Archive. It's more
9 of a collection of yours and also will be available on the internet, published on the
10 internet basically by the Vietnam Archive. Do you agree to be interviewed and do you
11 agree to that publishing and donation?

12 Diana Curry: Yes, I do agree.

13 RV: Okay, very good. Now, where were you born and when were you born?

14 DC: I was born in Detroit, Michigan, September thirtieth, 1948.

15 RV: Okay. Did you grow up there in Detroit?

16 DC: No, I did not. My father joined the Air Force before I was even a year old
17 and we were promptly stationed to, well, at Selfridge Air Force Base there in Michigan.
18 Then I can't remember exactly where we went after that, but when I was about four, we
19 were stationed in Japan.

20 RV: Wow.

1 DC: He was involved in the crash boats there, picking up downed pilots and stuff
2 during the Korean War, which was still—

3 RV: Right, right.

4 DC: Yeah. Then we came back and we were stationed in Eglin Air Force Base,
5 Florida, for three years. Then we went to France. I'm going to try to make sure I have
6 this all in order.

7 RV: Right.

8 DC: In 1957, we went to France for two years. Then in 1959, when all the
9 military had to exit France, we went to Germany, Hahn Air Force Base, for two years.
10 Then we came back. We were stationed at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona for three
11 years. Then we went to Randolph Air Force Base for three years. Then I graduated from
12 high school there at Randolph High School.

13 RV: I know that's where you met Pat, there at Randolph.

14 DC: Yes, yes, yes.

15 RV: Okay. That's quite a lot of moving for a young lady in the '50s and into the
16 '60s. Your dad was career Air Force, he stayed in?

17 DC: Yes, yes.

18 RV: Okay. Tell me, what memories do you have of Japan, do you remember
19 that?

20 DC: I have funny memories because I was only five.

21 RV: Okay.

22 DC: From pictures and stuff like that, I remember, I don't know if you want to
23 hear some of this.

24 RV: Sure.

25 DC: I have a sister that's seventeen months younger than I am, so we're very
26 close in getting in trouble and everything. One of the things I remember is that we
27 babysat a monkey one time. Some people had a monkey and we had to babysit it. We
28 had a maid called Sumiko. She made popcorn for us one time and we said, "Well, aren't
29 you going to put butter on the popcorn?" So she just put a piece of butter and put it on
30 top of it. We said, "No, that's not right." Of course, we're just tiny. Oh, and we played

1 on the stairs. That was the first time I tried to shave my face like my dad. I have the scar
2 to prove it. I remember doing that, but that's about it.

3 RV: You were there what, age five?

4 DC: I was there at five years old, waiting to turn to six.

5 RV: Okay.

6 DC: Yeah, between four and five.

7 RV: Okay.

8 DC: We were only there a year. I do remember, on the military side, my dad
9 because of what he did was gone for like a month or two at a time. We had to go
10 through—this was in, oh gosh, '54, '53 or '54, I can't remember. I remember going
11 through the drills of, I forget even what it's called now, of us having to exit. My mom
12 had a suitcase with everything in it to get through three or four days until we could get on
13 a bus or plane.

14 RV: Kind of evacuating.

15 DC: Evacuation, yes.

16 RV: Okay.

17 DC: When I was married to Pat we did the same thing. The communists weren't
18 really too bad. Back then, it was mostly the Korean stuff because the Soviets were still
19 kind of, it wasn't too bad yet. That really started the late '50s into the '60s when I was a
20 kid.

21 RV: Yeah.

22 DC: But it was mostly the Koreans, the North Koreans that was our threat at that
23 time.

24 RV: Right, right. You were living just across the ocean from them, just across
25 the sea.

26 DC: Right, right. Most of the Air Force were—they didn't have, from what I
27 understand, the Air Force didn't have helicopters yet. They were still going into having
28 helicopters. Most of the helicopters still even today, I believe, are still with the Army and
29 the Marines and stuff. But they didn't have—this crash boat thing is, they've done a big
30 thing on that, too, because it was an individualized unit. It only existed for about a year
31 because the helicopters did start coming in and taking over their job. Anyway, it was

1 called the crash boats and it was a unit of the Air Force. My dad had some previous
2 Navy experiences and so that's why he was, it was like a PT boat.

3 RV: Right.

4 DC: So he was gone for a long time.

5 RV: Did he join the Air Force ,you said, right when you were born or was he in
6 World War II?

7 DC: My dad was quite a character. Let's put it that way.

8 RV: That's a good answer.

9 DC: He was an only child. His dad died when he was young and he lived with
10 his mom. They didn't get along very well, so he ran away. To make a long story short,
11 he tried to—because they lived in Michigan, he was too young to join the military here
12 during World War II. So he went to Canada and lied about his age and almost got his
13 pilot's wings to fly because that's what he really wanted to do. They found out about it,
14 sent him back. By then, he was old enough to join the Navy, so that's what he did. So he
15 was in the Navy during World War II for a short period of time.

16 RV: Wow. What did he do?

17 DC: I really don't know. I really don't know. But he said he was on Iwo Jima.
18 But that's all I remember.

19 RV: Okay, all right. Tell me, before we talk a little bit more about your dad and
20 his military service and where you went, you mentioned a younger sister.

21 DC: Yes, I have two sisters.

22 RV: Two sisters, okay.

23 DC: My sister Patty, she's seventeen months younger than I am. Then my sister
24 Jeanie is six years younger than me.

25 RV: Okay. So you were the oldest, are the oldest?

26 DC: I am. Yes.

27 RV: Okay. Tell me about your mother.

28 DC: My mom was raised on a farm. My mom and dad met, they were both
29 working in the same department store in Mount Clemens, I think it was Mount Clemens,
30 Michigan, and that's where they met.

31 RV: Okay.

1 DC: She was glad to get out of the farming and stuff like that, was a hard life.
2 She was very excited, but he went out, my dad went out and joined the military without
3 telling her. Well, he just wanted—the money situation was not too good. So that was
4 one way that they could—and he loved to travel, wanted to get out, they both really did
5 want to get out of the thing. I mean, she was fine. She did everything and I learned
6 everything that kept me strong from my mom. She went through a lot of hard times,
7 harder times than I did. My dad was never really stationed overseas without her for a
8 length of time like Pat was, but he was deployed for like a couple of months at a time.
9 She was independent when he was gone. Back in those days, in the '40s and the '60s,
10 '50s, the woman was supposed to be the, not the dominant, but the—

11 RV: The subordinate.

12 DC: The subordinate.

13 RV: Kind of a submissive wife.

14 DC: So she was dominant when she was supposed to be and then she backed off
15 when she was supposed to.

16 RV: You were aware that she, you had observed this?

17 DC: Yes, but I couldn't do that when it was my—I couldn't, I had a hard time
18 doing that when Pat came back.

19 RV: Backing it, back off?

20 DC: Yeah, when he was in Vietnam that was one of the problems that we had
21 was because I had taken care of everything.

22 RV: Right.

23 DC: I had got my bills back. I know I'm not in order here, but—

24 RV: It's fine.

25 DC: I had taken care of all the bills. I was able to save money because I was
26 living at home. Then when he came back, it was his turn to take care of everything and I
27 had already had it all set up the way I wanted it.

28 RV: And you had a child, right?

29 DC: Yes. He had, as far as I was concerned, had no clue how to take care of a
30 child because he was the oldest of his family. We hadn't been around kids together.

1 Anyway, but I did learn a lot of independent-type, I hate to say tricks, but things from my
2 mother to survive some of the hard things that I did go through.

3 RV: That's good to hear.

4 DC: Yeah.

5 RV: Whenever, when we're talking during this interview, please feel free to
6 bring that up, that if you were able to survive certain situations in your life as we go
7 through things, from your mom, talk about that and what you saw from her. So it sounds
8 like she was very hard working.

9 DC: Yes.

10 RV: But also dedicated to your father and that the traveling suited her.

11 DC: Yes.

12 RV: She wanted to see the world like I guess your father did as well?

13 DC: Yes.

14 RV: Okay. So Japan and back to Florida and is this where your memories really
15 start kind of getting crystal clear?

16 DC: Yes, yes, yeah. I started first grade there and back then we didn't have to go
17 to kindergarten, so I started first grade there. Oh, things that I remember from Florida,
18 Eglin Air Force Base is not far from the Gulf Coast.

19 RV: Right.

20 DC: We used to go to the beach a lot. I remember my second grade school
21 teacher. I don't remember her name. I slammed my finger in a door at school. They had
22 to sew the top of my finger back on. That was one big trauma. Then after that, we went
23 to France and that's when things, I remember I was ten by that time.

24 RV: That's an incredible experience for a young girl to have.

25 DC: Well, I didn't know any better. I mean, I really didn't know any better and
26 that was one of the things that Mom as I got older—okay, I'm going to be skipping
27 around here.

28 RV: That's fine. That's fine.

29 DC: Okay, all right. When we moved to France, the flight over was absolutely
30 horrid. My sister and I both were airsick the whole way. It was a propeller flight, you
31 know, no jets for passengers and stuff like that yet. Then when we went to France, my

1 mom tells me we were on a ship for several weeks, well, a couple of weeks or a week, I
2 can't remember. We were sick then and she was using regular diapers and the whole, I
3 mean, we were both little. So, my traveling days were a whole lot better than what she
4 went through.

5 RV: Right.

6 DC: So anyway, once we got to France, I mean, it was just what we had to do.
7 We lived in a—the first town we lived in was called Sampigny, and that's spelled S-A-
8 M-P-I-G-N-E-E (Sampigny). It was outside, it's not there anymore, but it was Toul-
9 Rosières Air Force Base. We were about thirty miles—actually, no. I'm sorry, that was
10 the second town we lived in. First it was Saint-Mihiel, it's M-I-G, I think, U-E-L (Saint-
11 Mihiel). Anyway, we lived there for just a couple of months. Then we moved to
12 Sampigny and we lived in a bakery. Then we moved again to guaranteed housing. In
13 this two years, we moved four times and then we moved again, we were there six months,
14 so we moved four times, well, three times while we were there for the two years.

15 RV: That's incredible.

16 DC: Now we had to boil our water. It was just like going to Mexico, you know?
17 The same with—primitive, but we didn't know. We didn't know any better. My dad had
18 to bring groceries in because we only had one car. He would bring the groceries in.
19 We'd go to the base once a month. I drank a lot of Kool-Aid, didn't have a lot of fresh
20 stuff. I didn't know any better.

21 RV: What was France like?

22 DC: The small town was very nice. It was like in the '50s in the States, what I
23 hear. We could walk around in town in the evening, my sister and I. We would go to the
24 bakery and pick up fresh bread for dinner or go to the meat market or whatever.

25 RV: Could you speak some French?

26 DC: Not at that time.

27 RV: Okay.

28 DC: When I went to school, this was kind of weird, our first day at school, first
29 time we had to go to school, we moved there in December. We had to get up at—of
30 course, my sister remembers a little bit differently than I do, but we had to catch a staff
31 car. He'd come and pick up all the kids, the American kids that lived in this town. This

1 was in Saint-Mihiel the first time. We had to get up at 4:00 so we could catch this car by
2 5:00. Then we went to a bus depot and waited. All these people would come in and then
3 we'd get the school bus and travel for another forty-five minutes to school.

4 RV: Wow.

5 DC: It was the same on the way back.

6 RV: Wow.

7 DC: See I, I don't remember in Florida how I got to school. I think I rode a bus.
8 Yeah, I did ride a bus to school, so that wasn't a big deal. But we didn't know any better,
9 so anyway—

10 RV: That's tough. It sounds like it was kind of a hard life there.

11 DC: It was. It was. The military housing was not very abundant back then and
12 they were—I really don't know the politics of what was going on there, but I know it
13 wasn't—I knew that they were just sending them over like crazy. I know after we moved
14 to Germany after France that the communist threat was very, very high. There was a lot
15 of stuff I'll tell you about Germany later as a kid. I'm not talking about Vietnam very
16 much am I? (laughs)

17 RV: We'll get there. We'll get there. I really want to know, you're really hitting
18 it on the head here with the times as far as France is concerned and what you're
19 remembering. Do you remember how the French people treated you and your sister?

20 DC: Yes.

21 RV: Or, in general, how they treated your parents.

22 DC: Okay. Once, when we went into our second place, we rented it from a
23 family. We got to be—once you got to know the French people, they were your friends
24 for life, but it was a hard crust to get through.

25 RV: Right.

26 DC: Even though, you always heard about—it was still close to the end of World
27 War II.

28 RV: Yeah, yes.

29 DC: This was '57 and '58. They were all very happy that we had been there to
30 liberate them and all that stuff, but they were still trying to build up and as far as they
31 were concerned, we weren't there really to protect them, but we were occupying. This is

1 what I understood, that's why we were kind of resented. We had money, we had lots of
2 money compared to what they had.

3 RV: What they had been through and really devastated their economy.

4 DC: So they were still building. That was one thing that I didn't understand. I
5 had been on my grandpa's farm and that was a poor place. So this was a poor place. I
6 mean, I just didn't know any better. At least we had indoor plumbing, you know? So
7 anyway—

8 RV: Did you see any ruins from the war? Did you see any—?

9 DC: Oh, I'll get to that in a minute. (laughs)

10 RV: Okay. Go ahead.

11 DC: We used to go out, we had to be careful. I don't know, Pat probably told
12 you this because they went to wherever they were at in Okinawa, same thing. There were
13 places marked off where you couldn't go. The roads were blocked off.

14 RV: Where Americans couldn't go or people?

15 DC: No anybody, they had not been searched for mines. There were still live
16 mines in there. There was all kinds of stuff. Well, we would go sometimes in the woods
17 and especially after we got to—the very last place we went was a brand new housing
18 project and there was no grass or anything yet, so we would go out in these ditches. I
19 found bullet casings. One kid found a helmet, found open canned food, things from
20 World War II. So there was still a lot of stuff out there that you could find.

21 RV: Wow.

22 DC: But that was the biggest fear was kids going out and just walking around and
23 getting blown up. I respected that. I agreed. I was old enough to understand that.

24 RV: Was your father, was he really strict with you all when he was there or was
25 he more caught up in his duties and letting your mom kind of run the show?

26 DC: Let me put this up front, my mom and dad got divorced in 1986. It was a
27 very, very hard, hard thing for all of us to go through, even as my sisters and I were
28 adults at that time. So, what I say here is what I recollect. My sisters have a different
29 recollection of—after the divorce, things changed about what they remembered from
30 what I remember. But, of course, I feel like I'm more right because I was older.

31 RV: You were older, sure.

1 DC: But my dad was my dad and I didn't have another father. I didn't know
2 some of the things that he did was probably not right, but he never had a real dad to learn
3 from.

4 RV: Right.

5 DC: So most of it came from my mom. Most of the stuff that we observed and
6 our learning was from our mother. My dad was there, yes, for discipline, yes, for advice
7 when it was needed, but basically it was my mom. My dad did work long hours. He
8 didn't run around. He didn't hang out at bars or anything like that, but he was very
9 involved with his job. I did not feel that we were badly treated. But if you talk to my
10 sister, that's a different story.

11 RV: Well, this is your interview; this is what you remember.

12 DC: Yeah. He was always there when I needed him for anything, if I needed
13 something. Sometimes he was there when I didn't want him to be. (laughs)

14 RV: Right, sure. Did France, was that a good thing for you looking back in
15 hindsight, living overseas in Japan, France, and then you're going to be in Germany next?

16 DC: France scared me because it was kind of foreign. The language was really
17 different. The German language was a little bit closer to the English language. I was
18 thrown right into school immediately.

19 RV: When you went to Germany?

20 DC: No, to France.

21 RV: To France, okay.

22 DC: My classroom, everyone, was third grade and fourth grade together in one
23 classroom. Every Wednesday, we would alternate going to a French boy school. At that
24 time, I don't know if it's still like that, the boys and girls didn't go to school together in
25 France.

26 RV: Okay.

27 DC: So on Wednesday, the third graders would go to the third grade class and
28 then the fourth grade boys would come to our class. Then we would switch the next
29 Wednesday. One of the things I really remember just scared me to death. We went to
30 the—my first time at the French school. They had a model house up in front of the
31 classroom. He was having the American kids go up and say the parts of the house. Well,

1 it was my first day. I didn't know any French. I was so afraid that he was going to, you
2 know—

3 RV: Right.

4 DC: Then he started writing on the board and I couldn't understand the letters.
5 They write in a very fluent, almost old English, not old English, but script, like back in
6 the 1780s and stuff.

7 RV: So you're immediately thrown right into a French school?

8 DC: Yes.

9 RV: At what, ten, eleven years old?

10 DC: Ten.

11 RV: You didn't speak French?

12 DC: Nope.

13 RV: You had to go to all that trouble to get to the school. That must've been a
14 huge shock. Go ahead.

15 DC: Well, anyway, but we did have a partner and the kid that I had was a partner,
16 took a lot of pity on me, we were supposed to be writing stuff down. He finally took my
17 notebook and started writing for me because I was just almost in tears. I didn't know
18 what to do. I didn't know what they wanted me to do. He was giving instructions in
19 French. These kids have already been there for a whole semester or half a year, you
20 know? This is in December. I was trying to get—I was just totally—

21 RV: And you remember that feeling?

22 DC: Oh, it was horrible, horrible. So anyway, got through that. That was okay.
23 Okay, so then we went to Germany, okay, and I did learn French. I mean, I had to learn
24 French.

25 RV: Yes.

26 DC: And especially living in the French towns and stuff.

27 RV: Yes.

28 DC: We learned enough, "How much does it cost? Where's the bathroom? That
29 costs too much," and all that stuff. So I learned enough to get by. Of course, kids pick it
30 up a little bit better. Then we moved to Germany and we lived on base, Hahn Air Force
31 Base, which is a base up on a mountain and it's still there. I don't believe they've closed

1 that one down yet. It's not far from Ramstein and all the ones that everybody hears
2 about.

3 RV: This is 1959?

4 DC: Yes. At that time, 1960, while we were there, the Iron Curtain and the wall
5 in Berlin went up. This is one thing that I feel is unique about me is because I was there
6 when the wall went up. We were in Berlin when it went down.

7 RV: That's very unique.

8 DC: So I remember the feeling of every—at noon, when I would come home for
9 lunch, they went through the series of sirens from all the different things that we had to
10 do with each different siren.

11 RV: In case of attack.

12 DC: Yes.

13 RV: By the East Germans or the Soviets.

14 DC: Yeah, what we had to do. Same thing, my mom had to have the suitcase
15 ready enough for three days. We had to keep a half a tank of gas in the car at all times so
16 that we had, in case there was an exit. That wasn't for us. That was for them because
17 they would confiscate the car and that was the same way when we lived there. You
18 wouldn't have a car anymore.

19 RV: Did you know that at the time?

20 DC: When I was a kid, no. But my mom told me later because I told her that,
21 and she said, "Well, we had to do the same thing."

22 RV: So they would've taken the family car, essentially?

23 DC: Yes, yes.

24 RV: You all would've been left to get out of there on foot.

25 DC: Well, no. What they do is they have an evacuation plan. I learned more
26 about this as I was there with my own family with my girls.

27 RV: You're talking about, "they," being the United States military?

28 DC: Yes.

29 RV: Okay.

30 DC: What they did was, and they had to change the plan, I forget what they
31 called it. There's a certain word that they used to call it. Anyway, I can't remember.

1 They would come get you in a bus. Then they would use—and this is the part that
2 changed, our route to get to the aircraft. It might've been a regular aircraft. It might've
3 been a military, that's the equipment and where they put the tanks and stuff. It just
4 depended. They would have to change the route so that, and that was always secret.
5 Nobody knew how we were going to really ever get out of there, which buildings would
6 be taken first. Your pets would be left behind. Yeah.

7 RV: Did you know that?

8 DC: Yes, I did. But my dad—my husband told me, he said, "I'm going to know
9 before it's time. You are leaving with the kids and the dogs and everything." We've
10 always had dogs, so. He said, "You're going to be gone before anything happens." I
11 said, "Okay." My dad said, "You're not going to leave when everybody else goes." He
12 said, "You're going to go, if you don't have a car, they're going to take the car. You're
13 going to walk. You're going to walk to Switzerland," and that's what he told my mom.
14 He says, "I might not be able to get home." He said, "But you're going to walk to
15 Switzerland and that's what you're going to do."

16 RV: As soon as the evacuation siren sounded, saying that there was a Soviet
17 attack of some kind—

18 DC: That's what he wanted us to do.

19 RV: Wow.

20 DC: Yeah, we didn't have—all we had was a parakeet, I mean, when I was a kid
21 when we lived there. So that wasn't a big deal and he flew away. I don't know. We
22 went through—I went through the whole gamut of the—I'm sorry I'm skipping around
23 here, but the comparisons are—

24 RV: Absolutely, absolutely.

25 DC: I don't remember—I remember my mom telling me that when we lived in
26 Japan, they had a couple of practice evacuations where we went and we sat in a building
27 with our suitcase and everything for a few hours. I went on a couple of volunteer
28 evacuations when we lived in Germany.

29 RV: You and Pat or you and your—?

1 DC: No, my girls. Yeah. Well, Lynn was in school, but Cathy was still, my
2 youngest one was still little enough. They took us and we sat on a, I don't know, it's one
3 of those airplanes where the back drops down.

4 RV: C-130 or C-5.

5 DC: Yeah, where they put the tanks and equipment up there. We had our
6 blankets and our supplies. If we had to go to the bathroom, you had to go to the
7 bathroom in a coffee can with a blanket around you. That was your toilet. So we were
8 all, no seats, and that was one of the things, even if it was a civilian airline that they
9 confiscated, took, whatever, all the seats would've been taken out because the idea was to
10 take civilians back, bring back equipment and troops. Take civilians back, bring back—
11 so there would be no seats. So we were packed in there like sardines sitting on the floor.

12 RV: I find it interesting that you there, well, you were there in France and then in
13 Germany as a little girl fighting the Cold War, basically. Your dad's serving there on the
14 frontline of the Cold War and then years later, when you're married to Pat, you're in the
15 exact same position, but you're in your mother's situation where you're protecting your
16 family and you're right there on the front lines of the Cold War once again, literally in
17 Berlin.

18 DC: In Berlin, we were.

19 RV: At the end there. So were you aware as a child at, I guess, age eleven and
20 twelve, thirteen of the significance of what was happening in the world, the Cold War
21 that the Soviets were the enemy or communism was the enemy? How much did you
22 understand? Because I would imagine that would certainly shape your attitudes toward
23 the communists in Vietnam later where you're thinking these are the same kind of quote
24 unquote, "red tide," that is going to come to Germany.

25 DC: Well see, I see movies. I watched the old—see, I missed about four years of
26 TV from '57 to '61.

27 RV: Yes, living overseas.

28 DC: Okay, as a kid.

29 RV: Right.

1 DC: So I missed a lot of the where they used to hide under their desks and you
2 see it on TV and all this stuff. I'm going, "Hmm, that wouldn't have done any good for
3 us." (laughs)

4 RV: Right.

5 DC: You know we do now. But anyway, so I didn't understand all that part,
6 what that would do if there was an atomic whatever going on because to me that was
7 never a fear. They would never use, as far as I was concerned, atomic warfare where I
8 was living at that time. I knew about the atomic bomb because we learned about it in
9 school and Hiroshima and all that, so I knew that. I knew that we were close to the bad
10 guys. I guess I just, like whenever anything like, I always put it in the back of my mind.
11 I knew there was a plan. I knew what we were going to do. I just would leave everything
12 and leave. I don't know, I don't know how, I just—

13 RV: That was just the way it was.

14 DC: I did like my mom. Yeah, when your time comes, your time comes. I mean,
15 that's basically the way I was looking at it. I mean, I could've got hit by a car walking
16 across the street.

17 RV: Sure.

18 DC: We had—let's see. I'm getting mixed up here. Okay, so we were in
19 Germany.

20 RV: Tell me again where in Germany.

21 DC: Hahn Air Force Base.

22 RV: H-A-H-N, Hahn?

23 DC: H-A-H-N, that means "rooster." (laughs)

24 RV: You remember that? Okay. Where was Hahn located, do you remember?

25 DC: It's on a mountain north of Trauben-Traubach, T-R-A-U-B-E-N. Do you
26 care?

27 RV: No, I do. But go ahead, for the transcriptionists please.

28 DC: Okay, okay. It's Trauben-Traubach, that was the little town just south of,
29 just below the mountain there.

30 RV: How do you spell it, T-R—?

1 DC: It's T-R-A-U-B-E-N. Then I think it's a dash, Trau, T-R-A-U, then B-A-C-
2 H (Traben-Trarbach). Trauben is grapes. Anyway—

3 RV: Is this northern-west Germany or southern-west Germany? It had to have
4 been near the border with Switzerland I guess or close to Switzerland.

5 DC: It's central Germany, but I can't remember if it's more—it's not as east as
6 Kaiserslautern where we were. So it's more to the—a little bit west. So it's more central.

7 RV: Okay, okay. Do you remember how the German people were, how they
8 treated you and compared to what the French—?

9 DC: Well, see, I went to an American school, so I didn't have a whole lot of
10 connections with the German people at that time. We had a German maid. What I know
11 of the German people now are, was when I was there with my husband, okay? My dad
12 said and the same thing happened when we were there with Pat was that whenever you
13 met a German, their husband or their brother or they all fought on the Russian Front.
14 They never fought on the Western Front. So, I as a child didn't have hardly any contact
15 with the German people at all. I think we only had one car. I can't remember. Yeah, we
16 only had one car. Yeah, I don't think we ever had two cars.

17 RV: So had you accepted the military life? Did you understand that, you know,
18 this would be a moving—?

19 DC: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

20 RV: How did all the moving affect you? This is the obvious question to ask an
21 Air Force kid, but how did that affect you? Did you deal with it okay?

22 DC: When I was a kid, it didn't bother me. The longest until we retired here,
23 how old was I, forty-two, forty-three, until I was forty-three years old, the longest I had
24 ever lived in the same house was three and a half years. That was at Eglin Air Force
25 Base, we were there three and a half years. Then we've lived here twelve, thirteen years
26 and that's it.

27 RV: So looking back, how do you think that affected you, all that moving?

28 DC: Me personally?

29 RV: Mm-hmm.

30 DC: I didn't know any different. I don't think—I talked to people and they just
31 go “ugh.” There were people living that their guys were stationed over in Germany and

1 they stayed behind. Some of them didn't make it. It was a strain. I enjoyed the moving
2 until my oldest daughter started going to college. That kind of started separating the
3 family. We acquired more and more stuff. This last time when we went to Germany in
4 '86, I had to have three different shipments. I always would get hyper and excited and
5 upset and make myself sick over it. I had to have a shipment called haul baggage, which
6 is like six or seven hundred pounds of stuff to get you by until your haul, until your
7 regular baggage gets there, all your stuff. This was different because we had to take our
8 own furniture this time. Normally the government provides you with their furniture.

9 RV: This is in '86 with Pat?

10 DC: Yes. But we were going to Kaiserslautern and they didn't provide all that.
11 This is when the moving started to really bother me, okay?

12 RV: Okay.

13 DC: Then I had to take another bunch of stuff for storage for four years. So if
14 you're working, I just don't know how you can do it. I was going to school. So it wasn't
15 that bad. I still had time to do what I needed to do to get it done. So that's the part that
16 really started to bother me. The more stuff we got, the harder it was to move.

17 RV: Right. That makes sense. So you leave Germany and you go back to
18 Arizona, is that correct?

19 DC: When I was a kid.

20 RV: Yeah, that's a huge move.

21 DC: We all got sick because the weather was so completely different.

22 RV: Really different, yeah.

23 DC: Yeah.

24 RV: Now what did your dad do in Arizona?

25 DC: Well, he was stationed at Williams Air Force Base. He was a jet engine
26 mechanic. Okay. He started working on the jet engines. He wanted to fly, but I can't
27 remember why, he was too old, I think, by the time he came back from Korea to go
28 through the pilot program. They had a bunch of young ones that wanted to. So I think
29 that might've been the problem, I'm not real sure. Let's see. He started working with the
30 jet engines in Florida and that's where he really got into the—and that's what he did until
31 he retired was he worked on the jet engines.

1 RV: Okay. So you're there in 1961. You're there for three years, is that correct,
2 in Arizona?

3 DC: Let's see, eighth, ninth, yes.

4 RV: I know it's hard to remember back when we're talking about—

5 DC: Yeah. I have to go by my grades in school. I don't know how many
6 military. You've probably talked to a lot of military people, but when you talk about
7 something about a year, they go back to where they were stationed or where they lived,
8 not by the year. It's hard for me to go by the years. I have to go by where I was.

9 RV: So you see Arizona and you see what for you?

10 DC: Umm, something different.

11 RV: Right. This is middle school. This is junior high school.

12 DC: Yes, I started eighth grade. I'll back up a minute. I went to sixth grade in an
13 attic when we were at Hahn Air Base. Then my seventh grade was in a Quonset hut
14 because they didn't have room in the regular school building for us. Once you got to
15 tenth grade, you had to board at like Ramstein or something like that, but you couldn't
16 stay there.

17 RV: Wow.

18 DC: Yeah. Anyway, so I go there and now I go to a full-fledged civilian school,
19 hadn't been to a civilian school all my whole life.

20 RV: Right. What was that like?

21 DC: The first thing that I noticed was prejudice.

22 RV: Really?

23 DC: I had never encountered prejudice in my life and this is what, what's that?
24 Thirteen, fourteen years old in eighth grade?

25 RV: What kind of prejudice did you see?

26 DC: It was towards the Indian people and this was in '61, '62.

27 RV: This is right at the cusp of the modern American Civil Rights Movement
28 here.

29 DC: Yeah, we lived in a small town, Chandler, Arizona. It's not small anymore.
30 But it was a farm town, ranchers mostly and stuff. But the kids just didn't tolerate the
31 Indian people. They were nasty. They lived with their animals inside their homes. I

1 mean, it was really—I couldn't find anything wrong with, I mean, I never did. When I
2 was a kid growing up, there were black people around us. I never, I mean, there was
3 nothing ever mentioned ever.

4 RV: That's very interesting.

5 DC: So even against the French people that kind of resented us and stuff like that,
6 never was anything mentioned and I saw it first at school when they were talking bad,
7 "We're not sitting over there, da, da, da."

8 RV: Right. What kind of student were you, were you—I know it was difficult in
9 France, for sure. Then you're in Germany on a base school, but tell me about just how
10 you were academically?

11 RV: I was a real poor student in elementary school. I was lazy. I wanted to play
12 outside. We lived in Florida. I mean, yeah, lots of places to play, lots of things to do.
13 When we went to Germany, well, got to play outside before the weather gets bad, you got
14 to be outside. So I really liked to be outside. Then I made a real good grade in math in
15 sixth grade and that kind of showed me that I could actually do something. I was a real
16 poor reader. That carried through to my junior high years and my high school. That
17 made me a real poor English student as far as grammar goes. I knew all about
18 Shakespeare, I knew all about the literature and stuff like that, but the grammar part.
19 This is the part that sucked about being moving around was that once you got up to the
20 junior high/high school stuff, they split up those literature and grammar things back in
21 those days, one semester this, one semester that. When I got to where I was going, it was
22 always the literature they were on. So I missed a lot of grammar. So I had a real low—
23 and when I started college, I had to take a course to get me up to par with the regular
24 college kids when I immediately started. That was the only bad thing. As far as the
25 academics and math and science and everything, when we came back from Germany, I
26 was actually ahead of everybody else.

27 RV: What were your favorite subjects?

28 DC: Math and the chemistry and things like that because I was so poor in the
29 English.

30 RV: Right, right.

31 DC: So that's what I've carried through with.

1 RV: Okay. So, in Arizona, you're there for what? Three years? Then you're
2 going to move yet again, this time to San Antonio to Randolph Air Force Base. I know
3 this is where Pat met you or you met Pat, but tell me about San Antonio. Was it an easy
4 transition, staying within the United States this time?

5 DC: Yeah, it was fine. The weather was different. Arizona at that time was still
6 pretty dry. Arizona was real hot and sticky. Again, we had to have a big adjustment to
7 that. It was the first time we ever had to have an air conditioner in my life. Always had a
8 water cooler or something, never had to have air conditioning before. Went into tenth
9 grade.

10 RV: It's 1964?

11 DC: Mm-hmm. No, '63 because '63, '64, '65, '66—well, I was there tenth
12 through twelfth grade. I graduated in '66, so back up three years or four years. At that
13 time, the enlisted and officers were segregated. We had our own pool. The officers had
14 their pool. So it was the same way in school. It was segregated, basically.

15 RV: Wow.

16 DC: So there was, I didn't realize it, but that was a prejudice of a sort, of course.
17 They had the good clothes. We had stuff from the thrift shop, things like that. That's
18 when I really started noticing what was going on.

19 RV: Which was what, just the—?

20 DC: The clothes that the kids had, stuff like that. Of course, we all hung out, the
21 enlisted kids all hung out together and the officers' kids hung out. We didn't live in the
22 same area.

23 RV: Right.

24 DC: It's not that way now, but it's—well, it is a little bit, but it's not as bad as it
25 was back then.

26 RV: So you're talking about differences between the enlisted families and the
27 officer families.

28 DC: Yes. This is my own personal opinion. The officers kids made a point of
29 saying that "We are better, look at what we have, look what you don't have, look at the
30 car my dad drives, look at this," and so on.

31 RV: How'd you feel about all that?

1 DC: I didn't like it.

2 RV: Now what did you do academically? How did you do there in high school in
3 San Antonio?

4 DC: I did very well.

5 RV: Yeah, okay. Same subject, still what you wanted, what you liked?

6 DC: Yeah. I took, as a matter of fact, I took French because I knew more
7 German. I knew a lot more German than I did French. So I took French in high school
8 and I did very well.

9 RV: What about sports? Did you play any sports?

10 DC: Well, when I was in junior high, I played baseball and basketball because I
11 was tall. When we went to—hmm, I'm trying to remember. I thought I went there in
12 tenth grade. Maybe it was only eleventh and twelfth grade, I can't remember now.

13 RV: It's fine.

14 DC: Okay. We joined the, my sister and I joined the cadets, which is like a pep
15 squad, marching squad. So we didn't have PE (physical education) per se. That was our
16 PE class. I did that for, I think, it was only two years I was there. So, yeah, eighth, ninth,
17 and tenth in Arizona and then eleventh and twelfth. So that was the two years there that
18 we did that. So that was our PE.

19 RV: Were your parents pushing you to go to college or were you thinking to
20 yourself "I want to go to college"?

21 DC: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah.

22 RV: Which one, both or—?

23 DC: Yes, both.

24 RV: Okay. So there was an expectation that you would continue your education
25 and you wanted to?

26 DC: Yes.

27 RV: Okay.

28 DC: Yes.

29 RV: What about going into the military? Had you explored that idea?

30 DC: Yes, but I wasn't going to go in as an enlisted person.

31 RV: Based on what you had seen?

1 DC: Yes. Women were not allowed to go to the academies.

2 RV: Right.

3 DC: I thought at one time I also wanted to be a park ranger because I love the—I

4 love camping and being outside and everything. They weren't allowed to be park

5 rangers, either.

6 RV: Do you remember feeling that?

7 DC: Yeah, I didn't understand it. I didn't understand it. But I mean, I never

8 belonged to a protest group or never did anything. I'd just say, "Well, okay, that's the

9 way it is. I'm going to find something else I have to do, something else that I like to do."

10 So I mean, it was a big deal, but what could I do about it?

11 RV: Right. You decided to move on and do what you could.

12 DC: Yeah.

13 RV: Let me ask you this and you certainly don't have to answer this, but how

14 would you describe your family politically? Were you all politically aware, and if you

15 were, if you did discuss politics or maybe if you did not, do you remember kind of where

16 you all fell on the political spectrum? Did your father vote Democrat and your mother

17 vote Democrat or was it—do you remember any of that?

18 DC: No. They never really talked about it until I was in high school. My dad

19 voted for Goldwater, I mean because we were in Arizona and everything.

20 RV: Right.

21 DC: He wanted Goldwater to be president. I don't remember. Nope, that's all I

22 remember. There was really no push one-way or the other for anything.

23 RV: Okay. Do you remember John Kennedy when you were young?

24 DC: Yes. As a matter of fact, we got a television set. We were getting ready to

25 leave to come back to the States. He was campaigning in—he was getting ready to be

26 elected in '60, right?

27 RV: Mm-hmm.

28 DC: Well, in 1959, someone got a TV set. We were able to get an interview of

29 him and Nixon on the TV. It was real snowy, but that was my first real interaction with

30 what was going on, excuse me, was going on with the—

31 RV: Interesting.

1 DC: Yeah.

2 RV: Do you remember when he was shot and killed in 1963?

3 DC: Oh, yes. Everybody remembers where they were.

4 RV: Sure, tell me about that.

5 DC: I was in typing class in Chandler, Arizona. I was right, tenth grade I think
6 was my last year. There was some hollering in the hallway. The teacher went out and
7 she came in and she said, “We’re all going to the auditorium. The president’s been shot.”
8 Of course, nobody knew it was—he was just shot, that’s all we knew.

9 RV: Right, right.

10 DC: The school was not a big school. So we all went down in the auditorium, we
11 were watching TV. It started getting—of course, this is like one of the first, like the
12 Vietnam War was on TV. This was just prior to live stuff happening in front of you and
13 you don’t read it in the paper or you don’t see it in the evening news, it’s happening right
14 now. That was one of the first times that we’d ever seen anything like that. So they all
15 sent us home. I was crying and crying and crying and crying. We turned the TV on and
16 then they finally told us he had died. We all thought the world was coming to an end. I
17 mean, we’re going to go to war. This is it. He’s the only one that saved us from Castro.
18 The Russians are going to come. This is it. But we were already in the States. Dad
19 would have to leave maybe, but that would’ve been it, you know.

20 RV: Right, right.

21 DC: But we were all scared. We were all really scared.

22 RV: Those are some powerful memories.

23 DC: Oh, yeah.

24 RV: What about Lyndon Johnson? Did anybody know a little bit about him?

25 DC: I didn’t know anything about him, no. Not at that time, I do now.

26 RV: Right, right. Well, tell me about meeting Pat. Were you life guarding? Is
27 that correct?

28 DC: He was the lifeguard.

29 RV: He was lifeguarding.

30 DC: Yes, I caught a lifeguard. (laughs)

31 RV: Good for you, and an older one at that, right?

1 DC: Yeah, I was sixteen and he was nineteen.

2 RV: Okay.

3 DC: I don't know how much he told you, but after I met him, we were engaged
4 when I was seventeen. I was still in high school. Then my dad retired in '66 and we
5 moved to California. He was my first love, first one I'd ever really been with and
6 everything. So I said, "Well, if we move to California," I said, "I don't know if I want to
7 do this or not." So, I flew back and broke up and it was mutual. I mean, it was too soon
8 for me. I was only seventeen.

9 RV: But you were engaged or not?

10 DC: We were engaged, but then we broke up.

11 RV: Oh, okay.

12 DC: I had a ring and everything.

13 RV: Okay.

14 DC: I came back and I said, "Pat, I'm just starting college. I don't da, da, da,"
15 you know, same old stuff. So anyway, then he joined the Army and was stationed at Ft.
16 Ord and would come down every now and then.

17 RV: Right.

18 DC: We were engaged, but then he went—after he went to Ft. Ord, then he
19 applied to OCS (officer candidate school), got OCS and was stationed in Maryland. We
20 were engaged five times. (laughs)

21 RV: Wow. On and off?

22 DC: On and off, very stubborn relationship. But anyway, we finally decided to
23 get married through letters. So he graduated on the fourteenth, I think, of December and
24 we were married on the twenty-third. It took us a while, but we finally got there.

25 RV: This is 1968?

26 DC: 1967.

27 RV: '67. So you met him in '65?

28 DC: I met him in, yes.

29 RV: '65.

30 DC: Yeah.

1 RV: Okay. Well, that seems appropriate that you guys were separated by
2 geography and telephone lines. I mean, that's difficult.

3 DC: It took us a while, but we finally decided that we were right for each other.
4 It took us a while, mostly me, but I was young. I was too young.

5 RV: Do you think that today, you were too young to get married at that point?

6 DC: Oh, yeah. He didn't have a job. (laughs)

7 RV: He was in the Army, though.

8 DC: Yeah, but he was enlisted.

9 RV: Yes, but didn't he just complete OCS?

10 DC: Yeah, it was after he went—

11 RV: That changed things.

12 DC: Yeah.

13 RV: Yes I see. Okay.

14 DC: Not that I was being prejudiced or not.

15 RV: Of course.

16 DC: But I just saw the life, I saw the life of what was happening.

17 RV: That's actually how he described it, as well, that he knew that as an enlisted
18 man, he was going to be limited in his options. He wanted to become an officer, for sure.
19 Now, after you're married—well, before you're married, did you think about, "Here I'm
20 going to now go into this military lifestyle of moving again probably constantly," and
21 that's what you were used to, so that was no problem?

22 DC: Mm-mnh. Because I'd only been—we had just moved there in '66, the
23 summer of '66 to California. We were married. So I was only there about a year and a
24 half. It was no big deal.

25 RV: What did you know about Vietnam at this point?

26 DC: Well, my parents lived on a street, Fiddler Street. There were some kids—

27 RV: In California?

28 DC: In California that had been sent over and some of them didn't come back. I
29 did not know them personally, but some of the young people that I knew out on the street
30 did know them. That kind of hit close to home there. I didn't know anybody who had

1 been going until we actually—we were married and we were stationed at Ft. Hood. Then
2 they were taking people to go.

3 RV: Right, right. Do you remember asking questions or listening to the news or
4 listening to your parents talk or friends talk about why the United States was in Vietnam
5 when you were in California?

6 DC: No.

7 RV: Nothing like that?

8 DC: Mm-mnh. All I really knew was that it was North Vietnam and they were
9 communists and they wanted to take over. To me, it was the same as the communists
10 wanting to take over Germany and all that again. To me, it was very similar.

11 RV: Okay, all right.

12 DC: Whether it was or not, that's what I saw.

13 RV: Right. Did you and Pat talk about the possibility of him going?

14 DC: Oh, yeah.

15 RV: When did that conversation start? When did you first start thinking about
16 this? Was it before you were married?

17 DC: I knew he was going to go. He was a second lieutenant and I knew he was
18 going to have to go. I just knew he was going to have to go.

19 RV: Because of his rank?

20 DC: I kept hoping that things would end. Yes, because he was, yes, because of
21 his rank. I knew this at this time. They were turning out second lieutenants like just
22 because they needed them over there so bad. That followed us through his career. There
23 were so many at his—every time there was promotion time coming up, there was, I don't
24 know how much he talked about that part, but that was kind of a detriment to him getting
25 promoted in certain times.

26 RV: There's always a lot, a numerous amount of other people at the same time.

27 DC: Yes, you've heard of the RIF (reduction in force)?

28 RV: Yes.

29 DC: That sort of thing happened because there were so many at his rank level,
30 offered people early retirement.

31 RV: How did you feel about your husband, your new husband going off to war?

1 DC: Well, I don't know, it was a service. I mean, he was going to have to go.
2 That's just the way it is. I knew that I'd go home. My family was always there for me. I
3 wasn't going to live by myself in Texas. No, I wasn't going to do it. Some of the wives
4 did if they didn't want to go, I said, "I'm not going to live here by myself." Especially
5 since, I was seven months pregnant. Let me back up a little bit.

6 RV: Okay.

7 DC: He volunteered to go. I don't know if he told you that.

8 RV: He did.

9 DC: Yes. That's the little sore spot that I have is that he volunteered to go.

10 RV: Tell me about that.

11 DC: He was ready to go out and kill the bad guys and get rid of them and do
12 great things and all that stuff. My dad was pretty much the same way. I cried and cried
13 and said, "Oh, don't leave me, I'm going to have this baby myself," you know, and
14 everything. But, oh, I accepted it. I didn't accept it. What is that word? I tolerated it, I
15 guess.

16 RV: Well, it seems that you know, I guess he comes home—

17 DC: I supported him.

18 RV: He comes home and tells you, "I'm going to Vietnam."

19 DC: Then he did break down and he finally told me that he volunteered. He told
20 me he was going first and then he said, "Well, I volunteered to go. They needed me to
21 go." I said, "Agghh."

22 RV: Yeah. You obviously weren't happy with that.

23 DC: No.

24 RV: But you did—

25 DC: Well, I wanted him there. I guess I was about—well, it only took us—I
26 don't remember from the time he volunteered to when we had to leave, but by the time
27 we left, I was seven months pregnant by the time we left. I really wanted him to be there.
28 I was scared. I knew my family was going to be there, but it's your first child and all that
29 stuff. What if something happened to him, he would never see her.

1 RV: Right. So he volunteers and you're going to have a baby in two months.
2 That had to be difficult. Were you told how the Army might take care of you and the
3 wives while the husbands are gone?

4 DC: Yes. I could've stayed in government housing. Well, we didn't have
5 government housing. There wasn't any room. We would've had to pay rent. We lived at
6 a trailer, not a travel trailer, but a house trailer. I would've had to stay in that and pay
7 rent, I think it was like \$200 a month. That's ridiculous. No, \$75 a month at that time.

8 RV: Wow.

9 DC: Yeah, it was pretty—but I had a new washer, a new stove. Some of the
10 people that were paying \$85 for a house in town lived in like basic shacks. They had to
11 have their own stuff.

12 RV: Was this government supplied? You all had to pay for all of it?

13 DC: Yeah. Now what happens in the military is you get a government—if you
14 can't get on base or post, they give you extra money to supposedly cover your rent. So
15 when he did leave, I would've stayed there. I think we still would've gotten the money
16 for the rent, but I'm not really sure because he got hazardous duty pay, too. So it
17 would've been okay, but I didn't know anybody. I didn't want to be there by myself.
18 We had friends, but it's not the same thing.

19 RV: Right, especially if you're getting ready to have a baby, I mean, you're
20 going to need some help and assistance.

21 DC: Yeah, exactly. Especially my first one, I was really ignorant.

22 RV: Right. Well, tell me about the time, he knows when he's going to go and
23 you're working your way toward that, what were you thinking and feeling? Did you try
24 to learn more about Vietnam?

25 DC: Well, yes. I looked at the map and figured out where he was going to go. I
26 learned more about the French people that were there and why they were there and then I
27 understood, "Hmm, maybe this isn't so good after—is this about money or what?"

28 RV: You remember thinking that?

29 DC: Yes, yeah.

30 RV: You were educating yourself on this place.

1 DC: Well, yeah, I was kind of upset. Then my dad, was working for Northrup,
2 which is an aircraft company and he went to Vietnam as a civilian.

3 RV: Really?

4 DC: So we learned more about that side of it, too, about his side.

5 RV: Did he go before Pat went?

6 DC: I can't remember.

7 RV: But you just remember accumulating knowledge?

8 DC: Yeah, I think he—I don't remember when he went.

9 RV: That's very interesting.

10 DC: If it was before or after, yeah. So anyway, yes, I did try to find out what was
11 going on. But one of the problems I had was even if I could—I watched the news, of
12 course, every day. Well, okay, lets back up. So anyway, what else do you want to know
13 before he left? (laughs) Because I'm jumping around.

14 RV: Well, it's okay. Tell me about, you know, you made plans to go to
15 California and live with your folks.

16 DC: Yeah.

17 RV: Tell me about wrapping up there in San Antonio and what that was like.

18 DC: Okay. Well, we didn't have a whole lot of stuff because the furniture—

19 RV: Right.

20 DC: Well, the big thing was is how to get me out there. They didn't want me to
21 fly. I wasn't supposed to ride in a car for very long. So we were kind of stuck at what to
22 do. So we decided to just go head and drive and take our time getting out there. So that's
23 what we did.

24 RV: He had, what, thirty days leave before he went or something?

25 DC: Yeah, yeah, pretty much. Then I think he went through San Francisco, yeah,
26 but I couldn't go with him. I was already too far, almost eight by that time.

27 RV: What did you say to him when he left, the last time you were going to see
28 him until he returned?

29 DC: I don't remember. I just knew I was going to be able to see him in Hawaii.

30 RV: Right, you planned for R&R (rest and recuperation).

1 DC: So that's what I focused on. We talked. He told me that we would be able
2 to talk on the phone through the MARS (Military Affiliate Radio System) system. So
3 that's what we were able to do a couple of times. We wrote letters to each other every
4 day, even though I didn't get them every day. I'd get like three or four, five, six in you
5 know, four or five days, whatever. Watched the news every day.

6 RV: What was that like watching the war on TV? This is the first television war
7 for the United States.

8 DC: Yeah.

9 RV: What was that like?

10 DC: It was scary to me. A lot of the times I'd say, "Well, he's not with them.
11 He's not with them." As a matter of fact, I don't really remember if he told me what unit
12 he was in because I knew he was ordnance. I knew ordnance weren't grunts. They
13 weren't on the ground. They weren't fighting with their weapons. They weren't—he
14 was in the back at a fire station, whatever they call it.

15 RV: Firebase.

16 DC: Fixing equipment or going and digging stuff out and fixing it. So he wasn't
17 actually in the line of fire, as far as I knew. Then I found out that he was with the 1st Cav
18 for the first six months he was there.

19 RV: Yes.

20 DC: By the time I got his letters, he wasn't there anymore where he had been
21 because they moved. They moved constantly for that first six months. Then I don't
22 remember where he was the last part, but he was pretty sedentary I think by that time.

23 RV: Yeah. So did you immediately start writing the letters and all of that?

24 DC: Oh, yeah.

25 RV: Okay. How long would it take for your letters to get there and his letters to
26 get to you on average?

27 DC: Sometimes four days, sometimes a week.

28 RV: How could you differentiate between which letters to read first?

29 DC: I would look at the date at the top pretty much because it would leave—they
30 had like—I think they had it back then, SAM, the military postmarks would be on the
31 thing.

1 RV: Right. Okay.

2 DC: Sometimes I'd open up the wrong one first.

3 RV: What did the Army do for you while he was away for that year?

4 DC: I didn't really need anything, so I never even asked. The only thing, this is
5 kind of horrible, the only thing that Pat kept pounding into me and my mom and dad and
6 my sisters is that if anything happened to him, they were going to come to me first, not
7 his mom and dad in San Antonio. It would always be—he got promoted to first
8 lieutenant there. He said it would be somebody his rank or higher and a minister, a
9 military minister. If anybody else, MPs (military police), anybody else comes to the door
10 and says anything to you about me not, I've been hit or anything, there shouldn't even be
11 a telegram or anything like they did in World War II. He said, "Don't believe them. You
12 call, you call." I think it was, oh, what was that one that was—there was a military
13 instillation in Long Beach there. Get a hold of the chaplain and stuff there and they'll
14 take care of it or the Red Cross.

15 RV: Okay. How much did you think about that?

16 DC: About every day. (laughs)

17 RV: Really?

18 DC: Yeah, yeah.

19 RV: Especially with the new baby.

20 DC: Yeah. I was young when he left. Everything was going to be hunky-dory
21 and nothing's going to happen to him. Until Lynn came along. Then we went to R&R.
22 She was four months old when we went June or July. He had lost one of his friends. I
23 said, "I've been talking to some of the other ladies around here and some that were in the
24 hospital with me." I said, "They're not going to bring their babies because it's too much
25 trouble and we never had a honeymoon. Do you want to just have a honeymoon?" He
26 said, "No, don't come without the baby. Don't come without her," because his friend
27 never saw his son.

28 RV: Right, Chick Chandler.

29 DC: That kind of hit home to me. It just never—I was so busy it never really hit
30 home until he said something like that.

1 RV: He told you that in letters, “Here’s what I want you to do?” How did you
2 feel about that bringing Lynn out there?

3 DC: Oh, it didn’t bother—I mean, I was traveling. I could do anything, no big
4 deal. I was trying to make his R&R as comfortable as possible.

5 RV: Sure. Did the Army provide you any kind of instructions for how to act
6 during R&R, what not to ask, how to do things?

7 DC: I don’t know who told me, and I don’t know where I learned this, but they
8 said he might act a little funny with like loud noises. If he jumps out of bed in the middle
9 of the night or if he just acts a little weird at stuff. A couple of times, he did actually do
10 that. There was a—

11 RV: In Hawaii?

12 DC: Yeah. There was a loud noise outside or a siren went by or something and
13 he jumped out of bed and got down on the floor. So I’m glad somebody, I don’t
14 remember who told me about that. So he was awake. So I didn’t have to wake him up. I
15 was aware of that and told him it was okay. So he did have a little bit of, I mean, it’s
16 understandable.

17 RV: Sure, sure. Now in his letters to you before you went to see him in Hawaii,
18 did he tell you where he was located and everything that was happening, that he was
19 getting mortared and rocketed at this base?

20 DC: No.

21 RV: And the danger that he was in?

22 DC: Not till he came back, he didn’t tell me. He really didn’t tell me. I never
23 pushed him to tell me anything because some of the stuff I knew was so horrible.

24 RV: When, in Hawaii?

25 DC: No, when he finally—well, in Hawaii and after. I just let him talk. He
26 talked about his friend and he talked about some of the stuff that he had to do. I don’t
27 remember if it was before or after some of the stuff. He asked me the other day, he said,
28 “I didn’t tell you a whole lot about stuff that went on over there, some of the stuff I did.”
29 I said, “Well, you told me some, yeah.” I said, “I don’t remember a lot of it, some of it I
30 like to push back. I don’t like to remember a lot of it.” I said, but this is not very nice, I
31 said, “But you told me about the crispy critters on the concertina wire. You said you had

1 to do that and that wasn't very much fun." I said, "But that was kind of horrible and I
2 really didn't probably want to hear too much more than that." I don't know how I feel
3 about all this, but a lot of it is what he had to do over there and then what I had to take
4 care of over here. If I had been over there with him, then I would've had to probably
5 help take care of the same things, not very pleasant. I don't know if I could talk about it
6 either. Another thing is that his dad, he told you about his dad, was a prisoner of war.

7 RV: Yes.

8 DC: So he told me his dad never really talked about a lot of stuff until he—I
9 mean, gosh, Pat was already forty-five, forty-something like that and never really liked to
10 talk about anything that happened, never told his mother anything. So that was always
11 also in the back of my mind that I shouldn't really—there's stuff so horrible that he
12 doesn't want to tell me and why should I make him feel bad about stuff? If he ever had
13 to do anything really, really horrible, I don't know if I'd want to know about it or not,
14 unless he needed help, unless he needed help with trying to get over something that was
15 so horrible.

16 RV: Sure, okay.

17 DC: So I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing.

18 RV: Well, it seems like that's just the way it was for you all.

19 DC: Sometimes I think that's the only way I got through things because it was
20 back here. I just concentrated on what things that had to be done and that's what I did.

21 RV: Well, it seems like up to this point in your life when he does leave and go
22 over that, in your life, you were faced with a situation, whether it be traveling all that
23 distance to school in France or having to cope with a foreign language at a young age or
24 whatever, that you just dealt with the situation as it was. You took care of business and
25 you moved forward. It seems that that is, if I'm hearing you correctly, that's how you
26 dealt also with his service in Vietnam when he left you seven months pregnant that you
27 saw it as a service as you said and that you didn't have much of a choice. This was the
28 way it was going to be.

29 DC: Right. That's exactly right.

30 RV: Did your parents support his involvement in his military career?

31 DC: I think so, yeah.

1 RV: How about his parents?

2 DC: I don't know about his dad. I think towards the end, he was real proud of
3 him.

4 RV: Towards the end of Pat's career or—?

5 DC: No, his dad's life.

6 RV: Okay.

7 DC: Pat had a lot of problems with his mom and dad. He dropped out of school.
8 He spent a lot of money. Pat had a middle brother that was always supposedly the
9 favorite. Oh, could I say that? Sorry David. (laughs) So, he was always not really the
10 bastard son, but having a problem at home. So when he finally did make good and did all
11 that, I think—because Pat became a battalion commander. I think he proved himself
12 finally to his dad. His mom, I think her boys were just still her boys no matter how old
13 they were and what they were doing. I don't know how she felt about him being in
14 Vietnam. But she still treated him like boys up till her time.

15 RV: How much contact did you have with his family when he was in Vietnam?

16 DC: I think I talked to them about once or twice a month.

17 RV: Okay.

18 DC: Because they were concerned about the new baby and everything. I let them
19 know because I don't know how much he wrote to them. Unfortunately, I'd get like a
20 letter here and a letter there and I could just tell her what I knew at that time. By the time
21 I talked to them, he still wasn't where he was supposed to be, you know?

22 RV: Right. But they would find out the news through you eventually.

23 DC: Yeah. If we both heard something different on TV or something scary on
24 TV, we'd call each other.

25 RV: Okay. Well, why don't we go head and stop for today.

26 DC: Okay.

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Interview with Diana Curry

Session [2] of [2]

Date: August 9, 2005

1

2 Richard Verrone: This is Dr. Richard Verrone. I'm continuing my oral history
3 interview with Diana Curry. Diana and I are again in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of
4 Texas Tech University in the Vietnam Archive oral history interview room. It's August
5 9, 2005. It's 10:10AM Central Standard Time. Diana, why don't we continue with
6 where we were? You all had met in Hawaii. Pat was on R&R and you took Lynn out,
7 four months old. You spent a week together.

8 Diana Curry: Yes.

9 RV: That must've been very strange and good and sad and everything kind of in
10 between. Here's Pat seeing his daughter for the first time. Can you tell me about your
11 emotions of anticipation? What did you expect to see in Pat? Did you have, like
12 something, some forethought as to what you might expect from him emotionally,
13 socially?

14 DC: Well, I had heard from other people that he probably would have changed a
15 little bit because he was under a lot of stress, of course. We talked about him with the
16 loud noises and everything and he'd wake me up in, you know, the floor and all that. It
17 was what I expected was true. I expected him to spend a lot of time with Lynn, which he
18 did. I thought it would be more like a honeymoon-type thing and, of course it wasn't
19 because we had Lynn with us. Of course, she was going to be wherever we went.

20 RV: She's a four-month-old baby.

21 DC: Yes. We did find—we did go out to dinner one time without her.

22 RV: Right.

23 DC: We found a babysitter-type place that took the kids. Of course, a lot of
24 people were there with their little kids at that time. I do have a couple of funny stories to
25 tell about that.

26 RV: Okay, sure.

27 DC: First of all, he wrote me and he said, "I've talked to some guys that have
28 been already there." He said, "There's no disposable diapers in Hawaii." This was when
29 Pampers were just starting to get, you know. I used cloth diapers because my mom said

1 they're better. Pampers were really kind of rough. So I had a whole suitcase of just
2 Pampers.

3 RV: You packed an entire suitcase of diapers?

4 DC: That's all I had was a whole suitcase full of Pampers and then a suitcase for
5 her and I clothes. Of course, I got there, there were Pampers in the stores. They were
6 terribly expensive, but you know—but we were prepared. Then when I got there, I don't
7 know what I was thinking. I took a coat, this is June or July, I can't remember. I took a
8 coat. I just don't know what I was thinking, be prepared. Had all her stuff so she'd stay
9 warm and everything. Of course, it's Hawaii.

10 RV: Sure.

11 DC: I lived in California. I knew it's not, you know. Anyway, so I get there and
12 there were about four or five women that had their babies that their husbands hadn't seen
13 on the flight.

14 RV: Really?

15 DC: So we were talking and everything.

16 RV: Were you all sitting near each other?

17 DC: Yeah, because what they did was they put most of us up front because
18 there's room for the babies and all their stuff. They used to have little—it was like a
19 cardboard box that you could put your baby in to sleep and everything because they were
20 too little to put—

21 RV: Right.

22 DC: They didn't have infant seats and all that stuff back then. Well, I did have
23 an infant seat, but it wasn't—it didn't have to be strapped down or anything. Anyway, so
24 he told me what was going to happen when I got there and, of course, the routine where
25 he was going to be there when I got off the plane. He wasn't—we all were expecting our
26 guys to be right there and they weren't. We had to get on a tram thing, a bus and be gone
27 over. I said, "He's never going to find me. He's never going to find me." No cell phone
28 back then, nothing. They said, "Oh ,no, they're all going to be there when they get your
29 bags. They'll be there." So we got there. They weren't there, but our bags were coming
30 off and so we're standing there with our babies and everything. So this one girl that I sat
31 with said, "I'll watch the babies, you get your bags and then you watch the babies and I'll

1 go get my bags.” So that’s what we did. So she went and got her bags and I came back.
2 Then I went and got our bags. By that time, Pat, and I didn’t recognize him from the
3 back. He was over there talking to the babies. Of course, he was talking to the wrong
4 baby. As I was walking up, the lady says, “No, no, the other one, over there.” So that
5 was kind of funny even though I had sent pictures and everything.

6 RV: Sure. Did he look different to you physically?

7 DC: Yeah, he looked very tired and strained. He did. He did.

8 RV: Okay. What was it like for the two of you seeing each other? This is after
9 what, four months or six months?

10 DC: Let’s see. He left in October, November, just yeah, the end of October.

11 RV: So that’s seven months.

12 DC: Yeah. It was, of course, we were really, really excited about seeing each
13 other. I was so happy to see him. I was just so happy to see him. I missed him a lot, a
14 lot.

15 RV: Did that surprise you that you missed him so much or—?

16 DC: No, no. I missed him even, you know, I was at my mom’s house. But I was
17 more comfortable. I always had stuff around me, people around me. My sisters were
18 still living at home. My grandmother was living at my mom’s house also. So there was
19 always activity, something to keep me busy. We would always go do stuff. We went to
20 church and things like that.

21 RV: It sounds like you had a great support network.

22 DC: I did. I really, really did. But I missed him and having my own place,
23 which I didn’t realize again ‘til I went to Hawaii. He had rented a small apartment-type
24 thing. So we had a kitchen and all that stuff. So it was almost like having our little place
25 again. Even the short time that we had been together, we hadn’t even been together a
26 year when he left.

27 RV: Right.

28 DC: As a matter of fact, he missed our first wedding anniversary. So, you know
29 how you save the top of your cake?

30 RV: Yes.

31 DC: And you eat it a year later?

1 RV: Yes.

2 DC: So we had to save that for two years.

3 RV: Well, you make do.

4 DC: Yeah, so anyway. Yeah, it brought home that we should be together and
5 have our house and have our life. It was kind of hard.

6 RV: Yeah. Do you remember what you said to him when you saw him there at
7 the airport?

8 DC: Gosh, no, I just remember that we squeezed each other so hard, forgot about
9 Lynn for a few minutes.

10 RV: Poor Lynn.

11 DC: Yeah, but I don't remember what we said. I really don't.

12 RV: What was his reaction to Lynn? Do you remember?

13 DC: Oh, he checked her over like to make sure she had all her fingers and toes all
14 that stuff, you know, and was afraid to hold her, just typical type thing and everything.
15 Of course, I wanted him to hold her right away, but it was the mechanics of getting from
16 the airport to the apartment and then deciding what to do and all that stuff.

17 RV: Right. Was it almost surreal to kind of be in Hawaii and seeing your
18 husband who's been off at war?

19 DC: Yeah, because I had never been to Hawaii before. I had never been to
20 Hawaii. I really didn't care where I was, actually. I had lived in southern California with
21 the beaches and everything. It didn't really affect me. It was almost just like being down
22 in Huntington Beach Area to me. The only thing that I found was—

23 RV: Huntington Beach you said?

24 DC: That's where my family lived in that area there. Actually Seal Beach was
25 where my mom and dad lived. So it was very close to the beach. We used to go to the
26 beach all the time. So what I noticed was everything was real expensive. Of course, we
27 had saved a lot of money. So we spent a lot of money that week.

28 RV: Now he was able to send money home every month?

29 DC: He did. As a matter of fact, he was really good. He played poker. He won
30 quite a bit of money.

31 RV: Over in Vietnam?

1 DC: Uh-huh.

2 RV: Now he didn't tell me that.

3 DC: Oh, he didn't? He actually did tell me and so he sent the money home that
4 he won. He kept a little bit, but he sent most of it home. I was able, like I said, we were
5 pretty much had no debt. Of course, he was a second lieutenant when he left. He had
6 debts that he had to pay that we were still trying to pay off when he first got into the
7 Army as a lieutenant. So I was able to get a lot of stuff paid off, the car and all that. So
8 we had a real good fresh start when he got back, but while we were there, we spent a lot
9 of money. We did see all the sights. We rented a car. We drove around the whole island
10 in about an hour. It's real small. I mean, it's real small.

11 RV: Did it surprise you that it was so small?

12 DC: Yes, yeah. I said, "I don't think I could live here very long." To me, it was
13 claustrophobic almost.

14 RV: Okay. Do you think in hind sight that it was a good idea that you brought
15 Lynn out there?

16 DC: Oh, yes, definitely. Oh, yes. Yeah, if anything had ever happened to him, at
17 least he had that.

18 RV: Right.

19 DC: Oh, yeah, definitely.

20 RV: Okay.

21 DC: I was more worried about taking her for he and I to be together because
22 that's what he wanted until he lost one of his friends. Then the whole picture changed. I
23 think the big part was that we never did get a honeymoon. So that was, I thought was
24 going to be what it was going to be. But we did have one when he came back. My mom
25 kept Lynn and we took a ride up the coast.

26 RV: Okay. So was there a sense of disappointment then from you?

27 DC: No, no, no, no, no, no.

28 RV: Okay.

29 DC: None whatsoever. I was more worried about him and what he wanted
30 because this was really for him. I didn't really need the R&R. I just wanted to see him.

1 RV: What did he do differently? Did he eat a lot of steak or, you know, do things
2 where he couldn't, things that he couldn't do in Vietnam? Did you notice things like
3 that?

4 DC: I think a lot of—he wasn't a big fresh vegetable eater type person, but he ate
5 I think more like vegetables and things like that. I think they ate pretty good over there.
6 I don't think as far as he was concerned, he had a lot of—like back in World War II and
7 stuff. They've changed however they feed the troops any more, but they make it a little
8 bit better. They found out that they perform better if they eat better food.

9 RV: Right, right.

10 DC: No, I don't think—we ate a lot of pineapple, fresh pineapple, breakfast,
11 things like that. I can't think of anything else. He's always been a steak and potato man.
12 So it's not really, was anything really different. He had heard of a bunch of places to go
13 and to see and that's what we did a lot.

14 RV: Okay. How much did he talk to you about Vietnam?

15 DC: Not a lot.

16 RV: Did you ask him?

17 DC: No, no I didn't.

18 RV: You just let him bring it up if he wanted to?

19 DC: Yes. I don't remember if he brought pictures, if this was then or after. At
20 that time, I don't remember him talking a lot about it. He did talk a lot about the young
21 men that did pass away.

22 RV: Had he written about him in letters to you?

23 DC: Yes, yes.

24 RV: Before he was killed?

25 DC: No, no, it was after. It was after. I think—I don't know. That really hit him
26 hard that he died. I didn't realize how bad until when we were stationed in D.C. and we
27 went to the Wall and it hit him pretty hard.

28 RV: So he talked about this gentleman in Hawaii?

29 DC: Yeah. We talked about him and what he did. I don't remember if he told
30 me how he died or anything. I don't remember that. Just that if anything ever happened

1 to him, this was what he really wanted me to do was to make sure I brought Lynn, but
2 basically that's what I remember.

3 RV: Did he tell you or was there any conversation about "If something happens
4 to me in the next five months when I go back, here's what I want you to do"?

5 DC: Yes. Well, of course, the practical side of it, I was to go back to school. I
6 could stay wherever I wanted. I probably would've stayed in California. The money that
7 I would be getting, I told you about the visit from the officer and the thing. He was to be
8 buried in Ft. Sam. He wanted to be buried at Ft. Sam.

9 RV: These were things you talked about in Hawaii?

10 DC: Mm-hmm.

11 RV: Wow.

12 DC: Yeah.

13 RV: But not before he left?

14 DC: Mm-mnh. I don't think it hit either one of us when he first went over. He
15 was, I hate to say excited, but we were both very young. A lot of the—and he wasn't
16 alone in that. A lot of the young troops ,and I saw that in the troops that we know now
17 that are in Iraq, the ones that we know that are now majors and colonels, they couldn't
18 wait to get over there. They have families and stuff now, too, and they're families are
19 older than Lynn and ours was. It's what he was trained for. His job was getting to, being
20 put to good use. There was nothing that I could say to talk him out of that, I mean
21 nothing.

22 RV: The excitement that you mentioned, it's very common in war.

23 DC: Yes, and I was proud, I mean, I was proud. You know, my dad was in the
24 military, he served. Of course, we saw results of that. Of course, at that time, we didn't
25 know that hardly anything was going to get done for all the work that everybody did over
26 there. So I mean, he was doing a good thing. He was saving the world for democracy.
27 That's what we did.

28 RV: Tell me about how Diana Curry was before Hawaii and how Diana Curry
29 was after Hawaii. What changed for you as far as your personal outlook, your view of
30 the war, your knowledge of the war and kind of the big picture?

1 DC: Okay. For me myself, I was pretty dependent before he left. After Hawaii, I
2 realized that I would probably have to be more independent. So then I was prepared if
3 something did happen. I had a daughter that was dependent on me and so I had to
4 become very independent. I did not want to have to be dependent on my family. As far
5 as the war, my view after, I think I paid a little bit more attention to what was going on,
6 more about what was going on in our government and what the president was doing or
7 not doing, who was actually running the war. I did not understand. I couldn't tell like
8 who's winning and who's losing type thing, I never really was aware of that. But I did
9 know that from what Pat was telling me and from what I heard from other people was
10 that the military was not running the war, the civilians were running the war.

11 RV: Pat told you this?

12 DC: He told me that. I heard that from other people that I knew that had come
13 back. That's what was hurting a lot of the military. I think some of them got, not
14 depressed, but discouraged because they felt like they weren't really doing much over
15 there, accomplishing what they were sent over there to do. That was more towards the
16 end, not really what I knew at the time. That was more after he came back and we saw
17 what was going on.

18 RV: This is, you were in Hawaii in 1969, is that correct?

19 DC: Yes.

20 RV: Okay. How would you describe the two of you as a couple before and then
21 the two of you as a couple after you saw him in Hawaii? Did anything change?

22 DC: I think before, we were like just playing house. I was doing the wifey thing
23 and he was doing the husband type thing. I think after Hawaii, it hit home that this was
24 going to be a forever and more not just having a house and doing the wifey thing and the
25 husband thing, it was going to be a family, our own family. It wasn't playing house
26 anymore, it was really serious. I think, this is my own personal opinion, is that young
27 married couples don't get to that point for about two or three years. It's still, the
28 mechanics of trying to just get through life and everything and going to work and now the
29 wife works and everything. I think it hit home for me a little bit sooner than it does for
30 young married couples today. It could've been lost in a second. It didn't hit home 'til
31 after.

1 RV: Right. How was it leaving Hawaii? Was it difficult leaving Hawaii?
2 DC: Oh, yeah, it was horrible. It was horrible.
3 RV: Can you tell me about that?
4 DC: I wanted him to come back with me.
5 RV: Did you think about kidnapping him?
6 DC: If I could've got him in my suitcase, yeah. I was worried about him going
7 back, even just flying in because I knew flying in was just as dangerous, just trying to get
8 to where he was supposed to be because you heard about them getting shot in the
9 helicopters all the time. So I don't remember if I had him call me through the MARS
10 system or if he just—I can't remember what we did. But he wrote me as soon as he got
11 there. So I knew he got there okay.
12 RV: But that still takes a week or more for that letter to get back to you.
13 DC: Yeah, yeah. But I don't know if he called me halfway. He had to stop. It
14 wasn't a direct flight.
15 RV: You go through Okinawa or the Philippines, perhaps.
16 DC: I can't remember. I think he—I'm not sure, but I think he called me like
17 halfway there.
18 RV: Okay.
19 DC: Do you remember what you said to each other, "I'll see you in California,"
20 or—?
21 RV: I don't remember. Of course we said we loved each other.
22 DC: Sure.
23 RV: Some couples—
24 DC: Okay, we were going to meet in San Francisco when he got back.
25 RV: You planned this?
26 DC: Yes.
27 RV: Okay. I was going to drive up there with my friend and then she was going
28 to fly back so we'd have a car and then we were going to have our honeymoon down the
29 coast. I'll tell you about that part later. But I don't really remember what we said, but we
30 did say, "Well, I'll see you like in San Francisco," whatever, our plans.
31 RV: Right, you made your plans.

1 DC: Yeah.

2 RV: Okay. I know there's some couples have said they had little catch phrases
3 they would say to each other, or they just simply did not say goodbye in some situations
4 because they didn't want that to be the case.

5 DC: No, I don't think we really said like a goodbye-goodbye. Of course, we'd
6 been separated a lot and we just, it's "I'll call you when I get there," "I'll see you,"
7 whatever. Even now, he goes on trips and stuff like that and it's just something that I've
8 gotten used to or I go somewhere. So, we're pretty independent and dependent at the
9 same time. I don't know how to explain it, do our thing. Like I said, the bad part when I
10 was leaving was back here I wasn't in my head, I wasn't thinking about really what was
11 going to—I just wanted to be with him. I wasn't going to think about what was going to
12 happen. Except I was worried about him getting back in there, that's what I was worried
13 about.

14 RV: Right, right. Let me ask you this, and this is kind of a larger general
15 question. How does a young couple deal with a war being inserted into their brand new
16 marriage? I know you don't have much of a choice.

17 DC: It was a true test, I guess. Like I said, I was really lucky. I was able to go
18 back home to my mom and dad and my sisters. They helped me a lot.

19 RV: How did they help you?

20 DC: A lot of it was with Lynn. I was a brand new mom. When I first got there,
21 it was only a three-bedroom house. My grandmother had her room and my mom and dad
22 had their room. When I got there, they moved out of their room and took a smaller
23 bedroom and my sisters and I slept in the one big room, their master bedroom because I
24 was pregnant and I needed to have—of course, they had a bathroom right there. So it
25 was very convenient for me. Then after Lynn was born, this is above and beyond, my
26 mom and dad and my sisters all slept in the same room and they gave me the small room
27 to myself with Lynn.

28 RV: Wow, that's incredible.

29 DC: Yeah.

30 RV: So just a ton of emotional and literal support for you.

1 DC: They both went to the hospital with me on the middle of the night to have
2 her. Then when it was time to take care of her, if I wasn't nursing her or something,
3 whenever she cried, she got very spoiled very quickly because she had four moms, my
4 two sisters and my mom and me.

5 RV: Right.

6 DC: I mean, whatever she wanted, she got.

7 RV: Is this the first grandchild?

8 DC: First grandchild for both sides, yes.

9 RV: Wow. Have you told Lynn about this stuff? Have you told her these
10 stories?

11 DC: Oh, she knows, yeah, because I have pictures and everything, so she knows.
12 We'll talk about when he got back at a later time, but she didn't know him. She was ten
13 months old when he came back and she would not go to her, would not go to him. It took
14 her a while to get used to him.

15 RV: How did she react to him in Hawaii?

16 DC: Of course, she was only four months old, she didn't. She was used to people
17 holding her all the time, so it was no big deal.

18 RV: Okay. Well, I wanted to ask about some more things about Vietnam and
19 what you experienced. Tell me about those MARS phone calls. How often was he able
20 to get in touch with you that way?

21 DC: Not real often. I think they kept them limited, but because I was pregnant
22 and the only way he was going to be notified was through the Red Cross. It took them a
23 couple of days to get to tell him after she was born. We didn't know that until later. But
24 I'm not going to get into the details, but I had a feeling that I was going to have her. She
25 was two weeks late. So there was a two week—we had the due date and then she was
26 two weeks late. So there was two weeks that he was on pins and needles just waiting and
27 waiting and waiting to hear. He wasn't hearing anything. So he called one morning and
28 I had a feeling she was going to be born that day.

29 RV: Really?

30 DC: But she was actually born the next morning early, but I went into labor that
31 afternoon. But I didn't want to say anything because it's my first baby, I didn't know.

1 So he called about nine o'clock that morning and this was on the twenty-fifth of January.
2 My mom or my dad answered the phone or whatever and they said, "It's Pat. It's Pat.
3 He's on the phone. He's on the phone." So I said, "Okay." So I got the phone and
4 you're talking and there's other people listening the whole time and you have to say over
5 when you're done. Well, he goes, "Diana." I said, "Yeah." He goes, "Where is the
6 baby, over?" I said, "It's still with me, over." You hear this giggling. I didn't want to tell
7 him what I thought was happening. I had a sign that I might be having her soon.

8 RV: Why didn't you want to tell him?

9 DC: Because I didn't want it to go on for—because it was going to go on for
10 another week. See, she was going to be induced probably the next week and I didn't
11 want him to get his hopes up and then not hear anything. So I don't know, I didn't want
12 to say anything. I was worried about that. So I just told him, "Still with me." Of course,
13 we didn't know if it was going to be a boy or a girl, all that kind of stuff.

14 RV: Did you want a boy or a girl? Do you remember?

15 DC: I really didn't care. I think he wanted a boy. He had two brothers, I had two
16 sisters, so. I'm not used to boys, so I probably leaned toward having a girl.

17 RV: Okay. When she was born, were you able to—how did you tell him this?
18 How did you get the information to him?

19 DC: My mom, my dad, I think, had to go on a trip, so it had to have been my
20 mom. We had all the information for the Red Cross, called the Red Cross. I used to
21 work for the Red Cross, also. So what they do is they call the hospital there for the
22 information, da, da, da, da, and all that. Then they send a message. I don't know how
23 they did it back then, but it was on the—we used to type it on the computer. Then it was
24 sent to the servicemen and they would get the message either by way of their commander
25 or whatever.

26 RV: Do you remember how he recounted, how he got the news?

27 DC: I don't remember how he got the message. I just know it was a couple days
28 late.

29 RV: Okay. When's the next time you were able to talk to him after that?

30 DC: I don't know if we were able—I don't remember if we talked anymore after
31 that or not. I really don't remember.

1 RV: Until Hawaii?

2 DC: Yeah. He sent flowers for Mother's Day, let's see, in April. So that was
3 May, yeah. He sent flowers and I sent him pictures with me with the flowers with the
4 baby in the backyard for Mother's Day and all that stuff. I sent a lot of pictures, a lot of
5 pictures.

6 RV: You all were writing almost every day?

7 DC: Every day, yeah.

8 RV: Wow. How much did that help you? Was that a good reassurance for you
9 just to sit and write him every day?

10 DC: Yeah, it was. Of course, my life was changing also because I had Lynn. So
11 it was something different pretty much every day that that was happening. But I really
12 wanted him to be apart of that. That's the part that I didn't like him being gone. He
13 missed a lot of that. I think that's why he is the way he is about the grandchildren. He
14 was gone a lot when the kids were little. I think that's why he's such a good grandpa
15 now is because he wants to be a part of all their stuff that they do and everything. He
16 missed a lot of birthdays and things like that.

17 RV: Right, okay. I wanted to ask you about what you saw on TV. Vietnam is
18 the TV war, the first television war for the United States. What was that like for you to
19 see that every day on television and knowing your husband is in it? How did that change
20 your outlook on the war?

21 DC: We watched the news every night. They showed a lot of stuff. They really
22 didn't show a lot of bad stuff like they do now. Like I said, before Hawaii, it still didn't
23 hit home. I didn't realize that he was with an infantry unit. I still thought he was still in
24 the ordnance. Okay, so I didn't realize that he was on the ground and actually running
25 and fighting and all that stuff. It wasn't 'til after Hawaii that I realized exactly how bad it
26 was and how dangerous it was. That's when I really got scared. What I was watching—
27 my dad took me to see the *Green Berets*, of all things. Of course, I believed it all. When
28 Pat got back, he said it was not anything like that. He won't even tolerate talking about
29 it.

30 RV: Then said that or now?

1 DC: Well now, well back when he got back, you know, I told him that I'd seen
2 the movie and everything and he says, "Diana, just don't believe any of that stuff."

3 RV: But did the TV, after you saw him in Hawaii and you're still seeing and
4 you're realizing, "Okay, yeah he's in danger every day, every night his base could be
5 attacked, his base could be rocketed or mortared every night." Did you watch less TV or
6 more TV? Were you interested?

7 DC: No, I watched it every day. I watched it every day. I wanted to know what
8 was going on.

9 RV: Do you think it was good for the country to have kind of this war on TV
10 every night, reporting from the front? Because everything before this was censored,
11 World War II stuff—

12 DC: Yeah, well, it was still censored. I don't think we got the true story. I don't
13 think they could, at that time, they couldn't show us as much as we see now. A lot of it
14 was not—they didn't show to me what I remember is a lot of it was from the
15 commentator, not really on the ground watching the troops do a lot of stuff. I don't
16 remember. All I remember is them showing the map and showing where our troops are
17 or where they were, they couldn't really show a whole lot, talking about this happening
18 here and this happening there. I don't remember a lot of seeing the troops doing things
19 like you see now. You see going through bushes and all that kind of stuff.

20 RV: Right, firefights.

21 DC: Yeah. I don't remember seeing a lot of that.

22 RV: You mentioned earlier that you couldn't tell who was winning or losing the
23 war.

24 DC: Right.

25 RV: Even watching TV and hearing the reports and—

26 DC: I couldn't tell.

27 RV: How about your parents or you sisters, for that matter?

28 DC: My sisters were pretty indifferent. I don't think it really affected them
29 except through me. They were really worried about Pat, you know, and everything. We
30 did have, well, we did have—one of the guys that was in our little group that we had, he
31 went to Vietnam, was back a month and then he went to Korea.

1 RV: You're talking about your group in San Antonio or your group from
2 California?

3 DC: In California, the surfer group that we had, our friends that I went to school
4 with for a while. He came back and he had his hand blown or got hurt pretty bad.

5 RV: In Korea or Vietnam?

6 DC: I can't remember.

7 RV: Okay.

8 DC: So they sent him home and he wound up going right back to Korea. So he
9 was back-to-back two places. So there were people that we knew that were going over
10 and getting hurt or whatever and coming back. My sisters knew him and everything. I
11 don't remember how my dad felt. I really don't. My mom was pretty much the same as I
12 was, just worried about Pat. I don't know why I couldn't tell who was winning or losing.
13 I don't know why. I don't think there was any winning or losing going on there at our
14 time there. Towards the end in the early '70s, it kind of did turn the other way for them.
15 But while we were there, it was just like hot spots going on here and there. That's all I
16 could remember, putting out fire over here, fire over there, whatever.

17 RV: Right. Did you watch Walter Conkrite?

18 DC: Yes, but I don't remember much.

19 RV: But you remember seeing him?

20 DC: Yes.

21 RV: Okay. Was he considered kind of the trusted voice of the news?

22 DC: Yes, yes. But I still don't think we got the true picture.

23 RV: What do you mean by that?

24 DC: It was kind of the opposite of what we have now. It's all the bad stuff. I
25 think they tried to put the best foot forward and showed most of the good stuff. They did
26 say some people were killed and all that stuff, but it wasn't all negative. We did hear
27 some of the good stuff that was going on. So it was kind of backwards from what we're
28 getting now.

29 RV: It was more of a balance then—

30 DC: Yeah, yeah. So probably, I don't know why. I don't know why.

1 RV: Well, that's interesting that you mention that, that you say that. It's
2 something that's been said before that it was hard for the United States public watching
3 from afar to see exactly what was going on. What they had was the news, they had
4 government spokespeople, and they had the military spokespeople. That's all they had
5 going on. It was difficult to find out truth. Now this war was a very different kind of war
6 for the United States. Did you notice this? Did you start to realize or was this later that
7 you thought more, "Vietnam's different? It's on TV."

8 DC: Yes.

9 RV: And it's not like World War II.

10 DC: No. Like I said before, I think it was more or less what I thought, what I
11 saw that was really different was the guerilla warfare and the fighting. It wasn't like a
12 whole, like a division or a battalion going in and taking a mountain or a hill or something.
13 It was a small unit, not even a whole company, just like four or five guys going in and
14 taking a foxhole or like I said, it was more guerilla, more small units going out and doing
15 things. Because I had lived in Germany and France, I knew kind of the history of what
16 was going on and how the war was fought. So this was, you couldn't see your enemy in
17 Vietnam. I mean, it was really hard to see them. They fought at night a lot whereas
18 during World War II and World War I, you could actually see your enemy. I know there
19 were some night fights, of course, going on, especially predominantly. But anyway,
20 that's what was different.

21 RV: Is that hindsight or did you kind of start to recognize that?

22 DC: No, I knew that right—when I got back from Vietnam, when I really started,
23 not Vietnam, from Hawaii, that's when I really started to pay attention. I knew and a
24 little bit from what he told me. He loved the helicopters. They were their friend. What
25 was the helicopter? The Cobra.

26 RV: The Huey or the Cobra.

27 DC: The one with the guns.

28 RV: The Cobra gunship?

29 DC: The Cobra, that was their best friend. That was their lifeline, getting
30 supplies right away, getting men in, getting men out. I remember him talking about that.

31 RV: In Hawaii?

1 DC: Yeah. See, some of the stuff I'm starting to remember, how scared he was
2 the first time because there was no door, just a little strap thing.

3 RV: Yeah. Did he talk about what war sounded like or smelled like, gunfire,
4 how loud rocket attacks could be, anything like that?

5 DC: Yeah, I think that's—he does have some hearing loss because mortars, I
6 guess they called them, the incoming stuff. He said, “You don't know how scared you
7 can get until you can fit under your steel pot.” Which is your hat, his helmet. That's
8 about it, the sounds—he didn't talk too much. He didn't like to talk about the death part,
9 which was fine with me. I didn't like to hear too much about that. He did tell me that
10 they did have to—the Viet Cong came that one time swarming over the concertina wire
11 and that was the only way they could stop them because they didn't have the. So they
12 had to use the fire, whatever that's called.

13 RV: Do you remember him talking about the enemy about, you know, “The Viet
14 Cong, boy they're tough,” or “Boy, they're dumb?” What kind of comments did he make
15 upon North Vietnamese or communism enemy in general? Do you remember any of that
16 talk in Hawaii?

17 DC: It was hard to tell sometimes who was your enemy and who wasn't. He
18 said, you know, they'd come in and they would be spies with the wash lady or the little
19 kid or whatever, just like in some of the movies that you see. It was like that. You
20 couldn't tell sometimes if they were your enemy or your friend.

21 RV: Okay. As he's getting closer and closer to coming home, how are you
22 preparing? What're you doing?

23 DC: Well, I was getting my stuff ready to go on my trip. I don't remember if we
24 knew where we were going to be assigned or not. That's always something you want to
25 know, where are you going to go. I think we knew we were going to go to Aberdeen
26 Proving Ground, that's in Maryland. So I was preparing for that. We were going to go to
27 San Antonio first to visit with his parents. So we were making plans for that. I was
28 preparing just for the trip, basic trip stuff. Like I said, when he got back and when we got
29 settled, one of the problems that I did not foresee was the giving up of some of the
30 control that I had. We did have some difficult times with that and him wanting to take

1 over the finances and things like that again. Not just the finances, but control of the
2 household stuff. Because I hadn't had a house.

3 RV: Right.

4 DC: So I wanted that and he did, too. So there was a conflict that we had to get
5 over, but we got over it. We figured out who's going to do what and everything.

6 RV: Right.

7 DC: It took some time.

8 RV: Right.

9 DC: We had to go back through the newly married stuff all over again because
10 we had both changed a little bit. I had grown up a lot. So did he. So we had a lot to deal
11 with when he got back.

12 RV: How hard was it being a female with a child, husband at war, in America in
13 the late 1960s? What was it like? How would you describe that?

14 DC: Well, like I said, for me, it wasn't bad. I had support. I didn't have to worry
15 about a job to help make ends meet. I didn't have to worry about that. As a matter of
16 fact, I did go back to school for a little while. I went back to school and took a couple of
17 classes.

18 RV: Working on your college degree?

19 DC: Mm-hmm.

20 RV: Was that there in southern California?

21 DC: Yes, uh-huh.

22 RV: Okay.

23 DC: It was called Central Texas no, no, that was the first one. Cypress Junior
24 College, nearby. I've been to seven different colleges.

25 RV: Good for you.

26 DC: Anyway, I've lived all my life trying to get it done. But anyway, I was
27 pretty independent. I had a car. I mean, I was pretty lucky. I really was. I didn't have to
28 worry about too much except for him being gone and making sure he's going to come
29 back. I had food on the table. I had support. If I had by myself in an apartment, I
30 probably would've gone stir crazy. I probably would've tried to get a job or something,

1 finish school, do something. I don't know if I had to do that, but it just never crossed my
2 mind. It was always I was going to go home if he ever had to go anywhere.

3 RV: I wanted to talk to you about the transition when he came home and how
4 you all worked that stuff out, depending on your personality at the time and then
5 depending on what the man's experience or the woman, mostly in this case the man's
6 experience in Vietnam whether it's a heavy combat role or a support role and their
7 personality. All those ingredients go together of how people get back together and go
8 forward and the civilian in the United States out of war zone and the war's still going on.

9 DC: Yes.

10 RV: It's on TV every night.

11 DC: Yes.

12 RV: Before we talk about that, I do want to hear about, he comes home and you
13 know the date he's supposed to be there. You're going to meet him with your girlfriend
14 and tell me what happens.

15 DC: He told you already, I know he did.

16 RV: He did tell me, yes. I have a benefit of knowing because I interviewed him,
17 but I want to hear what you think about this.

18 DC: We were having breakfast. It was, I think, a Saturday morning, Saturday or
19 Sunday morning, I don't remember exactly because my dad was home. Lynn was in the
20 high chair. She had breakfast all over. The doorbell rang and my mom answered the
21 door and she said, "Oh, my God!" I said, "Oh, my God, what?" you know. So I go
22 running out there. So I hugged him. I hugged him and he hugged me really hard and my
23 mother was stuck between us. And she couldn't get out. Of course, he comes in. We're
24 all talking and everything and he goes and tries to pick up Lynn and she just screams her
25 head off.

26 RV: She's like, "Who is this man?"

27 DC: Yeah. Of course, he's I mean very, just aggressive.

28 RV: He was in uniform?

29 DC: Yes, yes. So he surprised us. So I'm thinking, "There goes all of my plans."
30 But it all worked out.

31 RV: Right. What did you say to him, "What're you doing here?"

1 DC: I know. I said, “Are we still going to go on our trip?” I was just so happy to
2 see him. Yeah, yeah, we were just so happy. So that was great, it was great.

3 RV: What did you guys do that first week or so?

4 DC: Well, he rested. He slept a lot. He slept a lot. He wasn’t sick at that time,
5 but he did come back with some kind of a flu-like thing, which hits him every now and
6 then.

7 RV: It still does?

8 DC: It’s still in his system.

9 RV: Really?

10 DC: Yeah. Not a lot, but other service people have said that they came back with
11 something and it was never diagnosed. They never could figure out what it was. It’s not
12 malaria or anything, but it’s like malaria, something that comes back. It’s something like
13 the flu that hits him about every three or four days, I mean, four, three or four days and
14 then he’s over it. But he slept a lot the first couple of days and then we left Lynn and took
15 our trip up and came back. I think he had a whole month, so we had lots of time. Then
16 we went and spent a week or two in San Antonio. Then we drove up to—we had a
17 Mustang and we had to buy a roof rack for all the stuff. I was such a new mother. I had
18 everything. We took the playpen. We had everything. So I just probably took a whole
19 lot that we really didn’t need to take.

20 RV: I mean, that’s a huge move across country and he’s coming back from the
21 war and you’re going to see his parents and family.

22 DC: Yeah, yeah. So he becomes a—he was a first lieutenant when I came back
23 and then when he came back a year—it was every—it was a year later he became a first
24 lieutenant and then a year later he became a captain. So he was able to get a company
25 when we got up there. That’s what was nice about the war is they were promoted pretty
26 much very quickly.

27 RV: Right, right.

28 DC: Moved into government housing, we had to buy furniture because the trailer
29 we had had everything in it. So the mechanics of just getting settled took about three or
30 four months.

31 RV: How’d the government help you in this?

1 DC: Well, we got housing, but as far as our furniture, of course, like I said, I had
2 saved money. So we had the money to buy furniture and everything. They had a stove
3 and already a refrigerator, we didn't have to worry about that, but we had to buy
4 everything else. Yeah, because we still had the crib for Lynn. I don't remember. I don't
5 think they gave us furniture in the States. No, we didn't get furniture in the States.

6 RV: Were the government officials, were they—when he was away, were they
7 helpful to you at all? You said you didn't have much contact with them?

8 DC: I didn't have that much contact, no. The only time I would see, in the
9 military is if I went to the doctor or anything like that and I would get my ID card, I'd go
10 to the commissary, PX (post exchange), stuff like that.

11 RV: Overall—

12 DC: I didn't need to see a chaplain or anything like that because we had our own
13 church that I went to. So as far as anything like that, I didn't really need it.

14 RV: Overall, were they helpful in general before, during, after Vietnam kind of
15 transitioning, I mean or was it just—?

16 DC: It was just us. We just thought that's the way it is. The conflict we had
17 when we got back was basically I spent more time with Lynn than I probably should have
18 because I was alone now with my baby and I didn't have all this help. So in order to get
19 everything done that I didn't get done, everybody else helped with I did myself. Okay.
20 So I was very focused on her and keeping the house and doing all this stuff that I had
21 done before. Before he wasn't in the picture, so I didn't have to worry about catering to
22 him and doing things for him or if he wanted to go do something. So it was all of a
23 sudden I had to get a babysitter, I had to do this, that, and the other. So that was kind of
24 hard for—as a matter of fact, I had a neighbor across the hall that we used to trade
25 babysitting because we were both real nervous about leaving our kids with anybody else.
26 We were very, very overly protective of our kids, which I think was probably typical at
27 that time because we were by ourselves for a while. That was the basic conflict was that.
28 Plus I had saved money and he comes back and we're spending money, we're spending
29 money, he wants to buy a new car and bought all this furniture. We're going back in debt
30 again and so I was upset about that. I think it took us probably, oh, about six or seven
31 months to really get it together.

1 RV: How'd you do it, just talking, figuring it all out?

2 DC: Crying, hollering, and screaming. Yeah, about that, yeah. Finally said, you
3 know, well—and he smoked a lot. He smoked a lot back then. Of course, my dad
4 smoked and I was kind of not really into it yet and I wasn't used to it being in my house.
5 I had my place that I could go. It was all over the house. So I personally just made a
6 decision, "Well, I'm really glad he's back and I'm not really happy with some things the
7 way they are, but if I want to live with him, I'm going to have to accept some of the
8 things that he does and just deal with it." So that's basically been my philosophy for a
9 long time.

10 RV: Has it worked?

11 DC: Huh?

12 RV: Has it worked for you?

13 DC: Yes. I'm getting off the subject again.

14 RV: It's fine.

15 DC: But when we were in Germany the first time with our kids, they were—

16 RV: You and Pat?

17 DC: Yes, they were seven and three, something like that. I can't remember.

18 They would show on TV, we had these infomercials all the time over there. Yeah, we did
19 have TV then in the '70s. They were really cracking down on smoking in the middle
20 '70s, I mean really, I mean, it was a fear factor, basically. They showed a mom and two
21 daughters standing over a grave of a military person who had died from smoking.

22 RV: Wow.

23 DC: That was the message. The girls were really getting obnoxious about getting
24 pap to stop smoking understandably. "Oh, Dad's going to die. Dad's going to die," and
25 he would start to get really mad at them. I mean, I bought him one of those ashtrays, I
26 don't know if you remember where the thing spins around. Well, he would light a
27 cigarette, stick it in there and the girls would go, (makes sound) like that and pop it out.
28 It was a brand new cigarette. Anyway, I finally sat them down and I said, "Look, we
29 both love Dad. We all love Dad. If he gets sick from smoking the cigarettes, at least
30 we've had him for this amount of time and he's happy. Let's not make him unhappy."

31 RV: Right.

1 DC: They finally accepted that, they did, as young as they were, they did. He
2 finally did quit smoking. I realized too, shortcoming that people that smoke or have an
3 addiction, they're not going to quit unless they really want to. Yeah, I don't care what it
4 is. So anyway, he finally did quit on his own in the '80s. So anyway, but that's just
5 another story about the military and how they kind of approached that smoking thing and
6 how I dealt with it.

7 RV: Yeah.

8 DC: If I want to have a relationship with this person, then I'm going to have to
9 accept some of the idiosyncrasies.

10 RV: Let's take a break for a moment.

11 DC: Sure.

12 RV: Okay, Diana, going forward. I wanted to ask you more of a personal
13 question. All these are personal questions, but about something you might not want to
14 comment on.

15 DC: Okay.

16 RV: Feel free not to. It's about your spiritual existence and growth before he left,
17 during the war or during his year and then after. Did you sense anything changing within
18 you? For example, did you pray more or did you become more distant? Do you have
19 any comments on that?

20 DC: My family was not really, really super religious. We went to church when it
21 was convenient. I'm a Lutheran. When I was in junior high and stuff like that, I went to
22 Luther Lake. It was a good organization to belong to. So I did a lot as a kid. Then when
23 my dad retired, we joined a church in California. He was a Presbyterian. He became
24 Lutheran and we would go to church every Sunday, but it wasn't anything really religious
25 like. While Pat was gone, I prayed every day. I prayed every day. I probably don't as
26 much now as I did then, but I didn't think of it as being overly religious. Pat had a few
27 problems with religion. He was raised a Catholic and I think some of that kind of put me
28 off a little bit, too. We've had some not-so-good experiences with the church. The first
29 one being I was on birth control. Before we got married, Pat went and talked to a
30 minister, a priest and he basically called us murderers because I was on the birth control

1 pill. So that was his deal with that. So that kind of put a sour note in it. Then, of course,
2 we joined the church. We got married in the church. Then we found out that our—

3 RV: Married in the Lutheran church or Catholic?

4 DC: The Lutheran church. He didn't want to have anything to do with the
5 Catholic church.

6 RV: He didn't or you didn't?

7 DC: He didn't.

8 RV: Okay.

9 DC: I was not—no. Back then from what I understand is that if you get married,
10 if you marry a Catholic and you're religious about it, your kids have to be Catholic and I
11 wasn't. I wanted my kids to have a choice. Now I baptized them in the Lutheran church,
12 but as a matter of fact, my youngest daughter became a Baptist. So no big deal, as long
13 as it's up to them. I'm just not going to force them into any super religion thing.

14 RV: Sure.

15 DC: Then we found out that our minister that married us was excommunicated,
16 so he got kicked out of the church. I said, "Does that mean we're still married?" So
17 we've had some sour notes with the religion. We've tried going to the Lutheran church
18 here. We just started camping a lot and just kind of lost touch with it. Our church is
19 nature and outside.

20 RV: So during the war, you were daily praying for Pat's safety and return?

21 DC: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

22 RV: Okay.

23 DC: We did go to church.

24 RV: Okay. Tell me about the anti-war movement and how that affected you.

25 DC: Personally, it didn't really hurt me. Like I said, even during the war, we
26 kept a low profile because we didn't want anybody to know that there was a military
27 family member that was connected to our household. Okay? That was—

28 RV: In California?

29 DC: In California.

30 RV: Can you explain that? Why?

1 DC: Because of and that's today, it's still today, the people or crank calls about
2 your spouse.

3 RV: Then?

4 DC: Yes.

5 RV: Okay.

6 DC: I didn't get any. There were crank calls going around, people coming to the
7 door and saying your spouse has been hurt or dead or whatever. Sometimes there were
8 harassment phone calls going on about "Why are you over there killing women and
9 children and da, da, da, da, da. Don't you know what's going on?" So that was going on.
10 I personally did not have to deal with any of that. If I did, I probably—if anybody did
11 call, I probably didn't hear about it because they wouldn't tell me.

12 RV: So you were aware that this was a possibility?

13 DC: Oh, absolutely.

14 RV: So you did not—?

15 DC: We were warned about it before they left. We were all warned.

16 RV: The military did?

17 DC: Yes, yes. Because of that and that's—yeah, I was aware of it. It's been that
18 way up 'til actually Iraq, the first Iraq.

19 RV: What do you mean it's been that way?

20 DC: The military has always been pretty much the bad guy, had to keep a low
21 profile. During the first Iraq, we were stationed at Ft. Hood. We were getting ready to
22 retire. He might not have been able to retire. We didn't know whether he was going over
23 or not. There were men posing as MPs that would go up to the women's houses. They
24 were raped and hurt. When I worked for the Red Cross, I got a call from a mother who
25 said that her son had called, she had a message on her machine that her son was at the
26 airport in Austin and that he had been hurt. He lost his arm and was waiting for her to
27 pick him up.

28 RV: This is during Vietnam or Desert Shield, Desert Storm?

29 DC: This is Desert Storm. So I'm saying, these are the things that happened. So
30 she wanted to know if I could find out about it. I said, "Don't you go to the airport until I
31 found out what's going on." Her son was Secret Service on a boat that didn't exist out in

1 the ocean out there. It took me a while 'til I finally found him, he was fine and he called
2 his mom and said he was okay. So those are the things that go on. So people back then
3 during Desert Storm, people put yellow ribbons on their trees. "My husband is over
4 there." But now it's totally different, you know, everybody has them on their cars and
5 everything, yellow ribbons

6 RV: What about the Vietnam vets?

7 DC: The Vietnam, I just kept a low profile. I just did not let everybody know,
8 you know, strangers or anything like that. We just said, you know.

9 RV: Don't you find that odd that America's fighting a war and you have service
10 men and women doing their duty to serve their country and yet you all can't—?

11 DC: It made me angry. I've always been a hawk at heart as far as going in and
12 getting things taken care of. I've never been a dove as far as trying to get things taken
13 care of. If they're going to fight, we're going to have to fight to get them out of there. I
14 mean, you just can't because it goes on and on and on and on and on. Because of my
15 military background, not me personally, but what I've seen and what I know, it was
16 awful. I couldn't understand why these people couldn't understand why we were over
17 there and why these men and women did what they had to do. Some of them were over
18 there. They were scared to death. They didn't want to be there, but they did go. We had
19 some young kids that went off the deep end and wound up getting locked up because they
20 didn't want to go, young kids. Well, they were our age. But they took a lot of drugs and
21 did a lot of crazy things and they wound up in trouble because they were scared to death.

22 RV: Did all this kind of having to keep a low profile come as a surprise to you all
23 that, you know—?

24 DC: Yes, yes.

25 RV: When he got into the military and before Vietnam got real hot—?

26 DC: When he joined the military, it never dawned on me that this sort of thing
27 would happen. I mean, it never dawned on me that we'd have to do anything like that.
28 Of course, I didn't think he would have to go. I was hoping the war would be over and
29 he wouldn't have to go. I was just in denial, basically, he's not going to have to go. Of
30 course, he was really worried about something happening to me or the family while we
31 were there. Of course, I mean, there was nothing like getting bombed or if somebody

1 messing with the car, stuff like that, we're over—I'm bouncing back and forth because
2 when we were stationed in Germany, that was bad over there in the '70s and the '80s, it
3 was bad.

4 RV: What do you mean? What happened?

5 DC: Well, we had to take a couple of terrorist-type classes to learn how to deal
6 with the terrorism because it was starting to come into the housing areas.

7 RV: So this was in the mid 1970s, I believe, after Aberdeen and then he went to
8 Illinois.

9 DC: Yes.

10 RV: Illinois National Guard?

11 DC: Yeah. Well, yeah, he worked with the National Guard, yes.

12 RV: Right. Then you all went over to Germany?

13 DC: Yes.

14 RV: Okay.

15 DC: In '77.

16 RV: 1977, okay. So you all were warned and trained on how to deal with this?

17 DC: Yes.

18 RV: Is this a backlash toward America in Vietnam do you think, or America in
19 the world?

20 DC: Well, Germany, I don't know what happened in Germany, but they started
21 having these factions that didn't like the military. They had—I'm not sure. I know some
22 of the names, but I'm not going to say them because I'm not really sure. Even at Ft.
23 Sheridan, we had planned—the post had an Armed Forces Day celebration planned. We
24 were picketed outside the gate and so it was cancelled just so nobody would get hurt.
25 Ramstein was the—and I'm going to all these different incidents where we were picketed
26 several times just because we were military. I don't know—I really don't know why, you
27 know, if they didn't want us there. When we were at Ft. Sheridan, the war was still going
28 on. So we were still the bad guys. I don't know why. I don't know. I really don't
29 understand it.

30 RV: How does that make you feel?

1 DC: It's hurtful. It's hurtful. Of course, you try to explain it to the kids, too.
2 They don't understand it.

3 RV: Right.

4 DC: There were several—after we left Germany, there was a bombing in one of
5 the housing areas, it blew out a bunch of windows in the government housing. No one
6 was hurt, but it was a car bomb that went off. So it was very real and there were several
7 incidents in the PX where they would have something happen, someone would find
8 something like a briefcase or something. It would be left alone. So they'd have to—we
9 were stuck inside our outside of the PX. Nobody could leave. So those things were very,
10 very real.

11 RV: You mentioned in the early '70s, the war's still going on in Vietnam and you
12 all had to really keep a low profile. Was that because of the anti-war movement? Was
13 that because the war was unpopular in general or the United States was quote unquote,
14 "losing the war"? Why was that? How did you do that? How do you keep a low profile?

15 DC: Well, at Ft. Sheridan, we really couldn't keep a low profile. In California
16 when I was living with my family I could because there was no military installation, I
17 mean close to us or, you know, anything like that. We lived on Ft. Sheridan. I worked at
18 a bank, but most of the people in that area, in the Highwood area were almost all military.

19 RV: And this is in Illinois?

20 DC: Yes, yes, this was at Ft. Sheridan. At Aberdeen, we lived on base. Well, we
21 lived on base for both of them. So keeping a low profile was impossible, but you just
22 didn't go downtown like to Chicago or take the train downtown and say, "Oh, yeah, my
23 husband's in the military," because you don't know who you're talking to.

24 RV: He would not wear his uniform off base when he didn't have to?

25 DC: No, he didn't have to. No, didn't have to. As a matter of fact, if they did,
26 they had to wear it correctly and that was one of the big problems that they had was that
27 they weren't wearing—the guys weren't wearing their uniforms. Oh, it'd make Pat so
28 mad.

29 RV: What's that?

30 DC: It'd make Pat so mad.

31 RV: Oh, that they weren't dressed exactly how they were—?

1 DC: Yeah, they wouldn't have their things—back then, they had to have it tucked
2 in with a belt and all that. They would come out, they were all un-tucked and half their
3 boot undone and anyway. It made me feel bad that they felt that way. I don't know how
4 to explain it. I don't know why, just something that I dealt with.

5 RV: Did you think that the United States should leave Vietnam after Pat had
6 come home and you know, we're going to 1970, '71?

7 DC: I think we should've stayed.

8 RV: Okay.

9 DC: I think we should've stayed and finished it.

10 RV: Did you think that then or is that now?

11 DC: I still, I did then and I still do because it was a waste of life, a lot of lives. I
12 don't feel like—this is my own personal opinion. I don't feel like we accomplished much
13 over there. I think we got out too soon. The people, the Vietnamese, the South
14 Vietnamese were still suffering when we left. We didn't do anything to help that I could
15 see.

16 RV: We're out in early 1973, do you remember where you were and how you felt
17 April 1975 when Saigon fell and the country falls and it's done?

18 DC: I felt sick. We were at—I think we were up at Ft. Sheridan already. I felt
19 sick. All those people trying to get out, they didn't want to stay in their own country. I
20 couldn't even imagine. It's like we let them down. That's why I am so glad that
21 President Bush is making them stay to get it done. People just don't understand it. Like
22 that woman sitting in front of the—there's a woman sitting in front of the White House—
23 well, no, she was—

24 RV: In Crawford.

25 DC: Yes, Crawford wanting President Bush to explain some things to her, answer
26 her questions. What questions do you have? Your son died for his country. I'm sorry.
27 A lot of people did, but if we get out now, what's going to happen?

28 RV: What kind of lessons do you think the United States learned from Vietnam?

29 DC: Just what we're doing now, stick it out, get it done. What'd we go in there
30 for? Why did we go in there? I know a lot of it was financial. A lot of it was for money.

1 There were American businesses and financial businesses were all there and we wanted
2 to keep a hold of that. I know that's—

3 RV: In Vietnam?

4 DC: Yes. Iraq is the same, I think. But the bottom line is the people, most of
5 them want us there. That was proven during, I'm going back and forth, but the South
6 Vietnamese needed us there because they were going to be overrun by the communists.
7 The Iraqis when they voted, they voted in that they want democracy. I totally agree with
8 what's going on, but that's me.

9 RV: Do you think the United States learned lessons about how to treat veterans?

10 DC: No. We were promised. Well, we were promised full medical. That has
11 been taken. I think they're good to the active-duty soldiers. I'm hearing things, but I
12 don't understand it. I saw something on the news about housing for troops when they
13 come back. They're living in slums and things like that. I don't understand where that's
14 coming from. I didn't see the whole story so I'm not really sure.

15 RV: You're talking about today?

16 DC: Yes. If that's because the service person got out of the military and is trying
17 to find a job. So now he doesn't have a place to live or if—because the government
18 housing, I mean, it's not all that great but it's not slummy, either. So I don't know where
19 that's coming from, just something else for the news media to mess with. As far as the—
20 a lot of the retirees are upset about that. We have to pay for insurance. The insurance we
21 have given to us is very limited and very structured. That's not what we were told. Pat
22 is, I shouldn't say fortunate, but he makes a good retirement because he was in for the
23 full twenty-five years. He also gets a disability, which helps some. Which is not good,
24 he's got a disability, but you know—

25 RV: Sure.

26 DC: So that's part of the—I know that's why I see so many old Vietnam guys in
27 wheelchairs and you see them in D.C. You just want to go “Why are you like that? Are
28 you just that—were you that screwed up over there?” I know some of them were because
29 they were over there two or three times, you know, and that cast a plague on them. But I
30 know that there's help there. The veteran hospitals are always there for these vets.

31 Whether it's the help they really think they should get or whatever, but I know they're

1 there because I worked for the Red Cross. I know that we worked with the veteran's
2 hospitals and I worked with some crazy vets. So I know that the help was there.

3 RV: Right. Tell me about your experience at the Vietnam Wall in Washington,
4 the memorial.

5 DC: Well, we were there when it was going up, when it was built. I don't
6 remember how long it took us to go see it, quite a bit. Maybe it was already built when
7 we got there. It's hard because we were in Virginia and then we were still in Virginia,
8 but we were at Ft. Lee. So we were still pretty close to D.C. at that time. It was kind of
9 neat. My mom was living with us at the time. We all went and Pat, they had a book that
10 you could look at to find the name. That's basically what we did was we looked. It
11 wasn't emotional enough for me, but watching Pat, I knew he was going back and
12 remembering some of the things that happened.

13 RV: What did you witness with him?

14 DC: He started crying when he found the name. So I asked him, I said, "Do you
15 want to leave some flowers or something like that?" He said, "No." I think he would like
16 to try to find his wife and his son and talk to them. That's my own personal opinion.
17 I've never really talked to him about it, but I think he would like to do that. It's very
18 impressive. Of course, we've seen the one when they bring it here a couple of times and
19 walk by there.

20 RV: Do you like the memorial?

21 DC: Oh, yeah. We saw the one to the, what was it, the nurses for the—?

22 RV: Mm-hmm. Yes.

23 DC: We saw that one here when it was, before it got shipped out. It was very
24 impressive.

25 RV: Do you and Pat talk about Vietnam today?

26 DC: No.

27 RV: Why not?

28 DC: I don't know. I don't know. I know he had some hard stuff that he had to
29 deal with. Like I said, unless he wants to talk about it, I don't bring a lot up. He said, as
30 a matter of fact, before I came, he said, "I didn't tell you much about Vietnam, did I?" I
31 said, "No, but you did tell me some things." So I told him, he says, "Did I tell you that?"

1 I said, “Yeah, you told me that.” So he doesn’t even remember some of the things he told
2 me. When he brought back pictures, he brought back pictures of little kids and little
3 puppy dogs and some of the people that were there. “This is the lady that washed the
4 clothes,” only this and that, but you know, none of the—he says a lot of the guys took
5 pictures of the dead bodies and all that kind of stuff. He said, “But I just couldn’t do
6 that.” I said, “Well, I’m really glad you didn’t do that.” I don’t understand it, but I guess
7 it’s their trophy or whatever. I don’t know. But I don’t think he really even brought
8 anything back as far as a helmet or a sword or anything like that.

9 RV: How do you think Vietnam has most affected your life?

10 DC: Today, I don’t think it—it made me a little bit more independent, sooner
11 than I thought I’d have to be.

12 RV: It’s a good thing or bad thing?

13 DC: I think it’s good. It helped me get through being more independent and help
14 me get through when he was—he would have to go to like when we were stationed
15 somewhere, he had to go before me.

16 RV: Right.

17 DC: So I had to deal with all the other stuff by myself.

18 RV: Right.

19 DC: So it made me more capable of handling things and knowing where to go for
20 things and doing stuff. When we were at Ft. Sheridan, he was gone a lot. He was gone a
21 lot and I worked full time and had the kids going to school. I did all that like a single
22 mother. So he was gone quite a bit. So I think in that respect it did help. I think he kind
23 of resented it at first, but now I think he’s glad of it, especially now that we’re getting
24 ready to retire. I drive the motor home. I drive you know—we go offroad now and do all
25 kinds of stuff that a lot of the guys, they go, “How do you get your wife to come out here
26 to do this?” He says, “It was her idea.” So—

27 RV: It’s not me, it’s her.

28 DC: Yeah. It gave me the drive to finish my education and get my teacher’s
29 certificate. So I think that’s that. As far as Pat’s side, it’s more of a quiet side for him. I
30 don’t really—that’s a part that I’m afraid to open the door because there might be stuff in
31 there I don’t want to know. That’s just my personal opinion.

1 RV: So you let it go?

2 DC: Yeah.

3 RV: Do you think you guys will ever talk about it?

4 DC: I don't know.

5 RV: Do you want to?

6 DC: I would like to know, yes, yeah. I would like to know, but I don't want to
7 force him. I don't know if I want to hear the bad stuff because I don't want to make him
8 feel bad. If he did anything over there that as far as, I don't know, I don't want to say
9 killing people or whatever, if he feels guilty about any of that, I don't want to dredge all
10 that up. But if he's got to get it out, then he's got to get it out if he's hanging onto it. If
11 he's hanging onto it, I have no clue. I mean, I don't notice anything different. He's
12 always had a bad temper. So I never really, I mean, I would not tie anything into that.
13 He's gotten a lot better as far as his temper goes, but I don't tie anything in his
14 personality because of Vietnam. It was a rough time in our life. It probably would've
15 been scarier had I been older and known more what's going on. I think because I was so
16 young and a little bit ignorant about things and life was so new and fresh, I got through it,
17 you know, just kind of like a dumb blonde, you know, just get through it. Other than
18 that—

19 RV: What would you say to military wives today whose husbands are off,
20 partners are off at war?

21 DC: Hang tough, be positive that they're going to come back. Don't think of the
22 negative. Take care of business at home because they're going to come back and he's
23 going to want his home or she's going to want her home. Make sure you show them the
24 kids' pictures. Now you can talk to them on the phone, talk to them on the computer, do
25 it all, except we didn't have that advantage. Have the kids get on the computer and type
26 and send them pictures. I think that's great, that's just great. Send them lots of pictures,
27 lots of pictures.

28 RV: Okay. Is there anything else personally from your story, your experiences
29 that you want to talk about or bring up?

30 DC: I can't think of anything else right now.

1 RV: Okay. How has, last question, how has this interview experience been for
2 you, talking about your experience during the Vietnam War and what you went through
3 before, during, and after and even up to today, your viewpoints today, how has this been?

4 DC: Through the interview, I don't think I really thought about what I did or
5 what I didn't do, it was just something—I just got through it. I never really thought about
6 how I felt until I—I mean, how I really felt about things because it all kind of jumbles
7 together what's happening today. I probably would've felt the same back then as I do
8 now if I hadn't been so ignorant about things.

9 RV: Right.

10 DC: I've seen a lot. So I have opinions now that I didn't have before. I did
11 travel when I was a kid. I did see—so I probably would've had the same feelings about
12 war and the military in general as I do now just because of my background when I was
13 young. I know what the military does. I do know another life now, but I don't think I
14 would be the person I am without all the traveling that I did and all the being without my
15 husband, without my husband being around and having to take care of things. I think
16 about my sisters. Their husbands are not in the military, but they still have that—they
17 have to travel. They still have to move around. They don't travel, but they're doing
18 something a lot always on the weekends or whatever. They have to be busy. They love
19 to travel, though, they really do. My one sister is married to a Swiss guy and they go to
20 Switzerland every now and then, yeah. So it's still, I think, in our blood. I was fortunate
21 to be able to travel more than I did. I lived in Europe for twelve years of my life.

22 RV: Right.

23 DC: So it's a big part of my life.

24 RV: Right. Okay. Well, this will end the oral history interview with Diana
25 Curry. Thank you very much.

26 DC: You're welcome.