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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Kathy Campbell  
Conducted by Kelly Crager  
Date 8 September 2010  
Transcribed by Emilie Meadors**

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**NOTE:** Any text included in brackets [ ] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1           Kelly E. Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an Oral History interview with  
2 Kathy Campbell. Today is 8 September 2010. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of  
3 Texas Tech University and Kathy is joining me from her office by telephone from  
4 Kirksville, Missouri. Kathy, to begin this interview I'd like to get some biographical  
5 information if I could. Could you tell me when you were born and where?

6           Kathy Campbell: I was born July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962, at the naval hospital in San Diego,  
7 California.

8           KEC: In San Diego. Alright, we also need to mention of course that you are the  
9 second daughter of Jerry Staples, who served in the United States Navy with the  
10 Vietnamese Junk Forces as an advisor in '64,'65, as well as in the River Division 593  
11 later on. We've also interviewed your sister as well, Cindy Williams. Kathy, to get this  
12 rolling, tell me what life was like growing up as a child there. You were the daughter of  
13 someone who served in the Navy for many, many years. What was childhood like for you  
14 growing up?

15          KC: Well, I was the middle child, so growing up I had an older sister that's four  
16 years older than me, and I had a younger brother that's two years younger than me. I was  
17 just kind of the quiet one that would write a lot. (Chuckles) My early childhood I had  
18 wonderful memories. My older childhood, it was a different story. We lived in San Diego  
19 most of my childhood. I had an aunt that lived out there. That was the only family that we

1 had other than my brother, sister, and mom and dad. I don't really know what else. I  
2 don't know how far you want me to go back or how far you want me to come forward.

3 KEC: No, no. No, that's perfectly fine, perfectly fine. What sort of things did your  
4 family like to do? For instance, when you were growing up. Again, your father went to  
5 Vietnam in 1964 as I recall, so you may not remember much about the time before that,  
6 but is there anything that stands out?

7 KC: Well, I don't remember very much at all. Actually, the only thing I remember  
8 is photographs that sat on the television. I really think that I thought that was my dad  
9 because I don't remember anything before that and then it was always—the picture was  
10 my dad. Until he came home, I think my brother was the same way. I think we both  
11 thought that picture was our dad. As far as the Vietnam experience the first time, that's  
12 the only thing I remember of that.

13 KEC: Right, well what about the family dynamic? Is there anything that you can  
14 recall—and again, we're talking very, very early in your life here, but in terms of your  
15 mother's activities or your family interactions or anything like that stand out?

16 KC: Well, my mother was a stay-at-home mom. She was the rock, the glue that  
17 held us all together. Dad was gone. It seemed like Dad was gone a lot, but when he was  
18 home it was great. I loved having my dad home. He made special time for each one us  
19 kids and we would do special things with just dad. Those are really probably some of the  
20 best experiences I have with him. He would take us—whenever it was our special day  
21 with dad, I can remember on my day we went to the San Diego Zoo for one of our trips  
22 and he bought me cotton candy, which my mother hated cotton candy so she would have  
23 never bought me cotton candy—peanuts and a soda, and I had my own soda. Growing up,  
24 when we had three kids and mother would buy us soda, we'd all have to share it. So that  
25 was really cool that dad did that. Then it was just that special time with just him and I that  
26 he took the time to do those things and we—mother was always there. Actually, as a  
27 mother myself, I'm not quite sure how she did it cause I don't think she ever got away  
28 from being a mom. She was always there. (Laughs) We had—actually, there were  
29 landlords, but when I was really small, I think I was five, when we moved away from that  
30 house the landlord was like our grandparent because our grandparents lived in Missouri. I  
31 think our relationship with them was like most kids' relationship with their grandparents.

1 I have really special memories of spending time with them. I remember my grandparents  
2 coming to see us a few times, but not very often. It was more my aunt was more the  
3 family. And then, we would go camping. That was one thing we did a lot as a family. My  
4 dad was very much an outdoorsman, so we would go on a lot of camping trips.

5 KEC: Do you remember your father coming home from his first tour? You would  
6 have been three years old.

7 KC: No, I don't remember that at all.

8 KEC: Right, right. So it sounds like when your father was able to be home, that  
9 you obviously have some very fond memories of that. He was a strong figure, strong  
10 presence in your life by the sounds of it.

11 KC: He was. Actually, I thought my dad was ten foot tall and Superman.

12 KEC: (Laughs) That's not a bad thing.

13 KC: No, no. I mean, at that age there was any bigger, any stronger—like I said,  
14 mother was there a whole lot more, but dad was my hero. I idolized my dad.

15 KEC: Right. Well, what was the dynamic like once your father was back from his  
16 first tour in Vietnam? You were a little older and his life in the Navy was a little more  
17 settled by that time as an instructor and doing different things. What sort of things do you  
18 remember about that?

19 KC: Well, like I said, I think he was gone a lot. But when he was there, each child  
20 had their own special time. We would do things together, we lived by a park, and he  
21 would take us over to the park a lot. I mean, he spent a lot of time with us when he was  
22 home. It may not have—quantity may not have been a lot, but quality was very special.

23 KEC: What was school like for you growing up?

24 KC: School was pretty—well, it changes within my lifetime. When I first started  
25 school, I loved school. I loved going to school. In my memories, school was pretty easy  
26 for me. That changed when my dad left the second time. That's when all of that changed.  
27 Things became very different when he left for Vietnam the second time.

28 KEC: Right, right. Okay, tell me a little bit about that. I believe it was 1968 when  
29 he left for Vietnam the second time, as I recall. So you would have been older, six years  
30 older. What do you remember about this whole process of your father going back to the

1 war in Vietnam? How did you find out that he was going back? What sort of things does  
2 that make you think about?

3 KC: I don't remember how I found out he was going back. I don't really even  
4 remember that it had any certain impact on me because I don't think I understood what  
5 was going on. I remember the night before he left, and he read me a bedtime story and  
6 then I remember the next day he was gone. I don't remember—I know, cause I've heard  
7 as an adult, that we didn't take him to the airport. That was something my father did not  
8 want to do. I mean, I just remember the next day he was gone. I do remember my mom  
9 was sad. My mother is not very—she cannot hide her feelings well and you could just see  
10 it in her face that she was sad. I didn't really understand why. I knew that my sister was  
11 mad, and my sister continued to be mad for most of her childhood. She was very angry,  
12 and she did not think my dad should have gone. She remained angry about that.

13 KEC: In what sort of ways did this anger manifest itself, as you recall?

14 KC: She could push my mom's buttons. She made my mom cry a lot because of  
15 her anger. She made me cry a lot because I would cry when my mom cried. And then she  
16 would get mad at me because I cried. My sister I'm sure has already told you, I cried a  
17 lot. She constantly reminds me I cried a lot. She would run away from home. I can  
18 remember one instance where—I have no idea why she got mad, but she was mad at my  
19 mother. I think she wanted to do something, and mother wouldn't let her do it and she ran  
20 away from home. Mother and I were hysterical because my sister—I thought my sister  
21 was leaving my life like my dad had left my life. I wanted mom to go after her and  
22 mother said, "No, she'll come home." I was hysterical. I mean, it was just this heart  
23 wrenching, terrifying feeling and finally my mother went after her. Mother had told me to  
24 stay home, and we lived across the street from school, and Cindy I think went behind the  
25 school somewhere. She didn't get very far. I went after my mother, and I almost got hit  
26 by a car. So then my mother was hysterical because I almost got hit by a car and it only  
27 made it worse for Cindy because then my mom was really mad at Cindy. Because not  
28 only had she run away from home and caused all these problems, but then I had gone  
29 after her and almost got ran over. Cindy did a lot of things like that. She was very angry. I  
30 knew she was angry because she didn't think my dad should be there. And I didn't really  
31 even understand what being there was. I just knew that she was mad.

1           KEC: What sort of memories of your mother while your father's gone? You  
2 mother dealing with a house and taking care of all the things that needed to be done and  
3 perhaps, the toll that this would take.

4           KC: Well, I have always said that when I grow up, I want to be like my mother  
5 because she is the strongest woman I know. As a kid I know I didn't understand it. As an  
6 adult, I look back and I think, "I don't know how she did it." She had three children, her  
7 husband gone through hell, and not knowing whether or not he was going to come home.  
8 Dealing with my sister's emotions, me crying all the time, and then my brother had  
9 bronchitis and he was sick a lot. But my mother did such a marvelous job that I think that  
10 is why I didn't understand the magnitude of what was going on, because she did a  
11 wonderful job of sheltering us from all of that. We lived in civilian housing. We didn't  
12 live on the base. She didn't even have the resources available to help her. I don't know  
13 how she dealt with it emotionally. I don't remember seeing her cry. I'm sure she did, but  
14 I don't remember seeing any of that. I mean, I remember seeing her cry because she was  
15 angry at my sister. I know she spent a lot of time talking to my aunt on the telephone,  
16 which I'm sure that was an outlet for her. A lot of this stuff I had to realize when I  
17 became an adult, from my memories of my childhood. We didn't watch the news when  
18 my dad was gone. We were not allowed to have the TV on—well, we were allowed to  
19 have it on for one hour a night and, of course, the kids were not going to watch the news.  
20 The television was never on at our house. It was an unspoken thing that it wasn't on when  
21 the news was on. I didn't understand. I understood that my dad was in Vietnam, but I  
22 didn't understand the conflict of my dad being in Vietnam. Well, until a little boy at  
23 school told me that. I didn't understand any of that. That was because my mother did a  
24 wonderful job of sheltering us from all of that.

25           KEC: One of the things that I would suspect would be an issue, it may not have  
26 been in your case, but often time's children looked to their fathers to be the source of  
27 strength and security. With your father gone for this year, did you feel anymore—did you  
28 feel insecure in terms of your safety or anything like that?

29           KC: I have a story that will go along with that. My mother did not want us to tell  
30 people that my dad was gone, because we lived in San Diego, and she didn't want people  
31 to know that she was a woman alone in the home. So we didn't discuss that my dad was

1 in Vietnam. I was in first grade at the time and other children's dads were coming to  
2 school and giving talks about what their professions were. I remember I was very sad  
3 because I thought, "Nobody's dad can be as great as my dad and nothing they do can be  
4 as great as what my dad does." But my dad wasn't there to tell the story. Evidently the  
5 teacher recognized that because he told me that I could tell the story. Well, I was a very  
6 shy, quiet kid. I knew that I wanted the kids to know—I wanted them to know how great  
7 my dad was, so I talked to my mother, and she helped me put together—and we  
8 practiced, and practiced, and practiced what I was going to say. So when it came my day,  
9 mother was supposed to come and listen to me that day and it so happened that my  
10 brother was sick. So mother didn't get to come that day. I don't even remember what I  
11 said, but I do remember she was going to allow me to say that my dad was in Vietnam.  
12 So I know I did say that. Again, I'm sure I described my dad as being ten foot tall and  
13 Superman because that's what I thought. I knew that he was in the Navy, and I remember  
14 that I ended it by saying that my dad is a hero. And then the kids had the opportunity to  
15 ask questions as they would have when the dads were there. She gave me the same  
16 opportunities. So one little boy said, "You know, your dad could die." I looked at the  
17 teacher and I said, "No, he's not." I know I was looking at the teacher for her to  
18 reprimand that little boy for saying that and she didn't. Then, of course, I started crying  
19 and it was over with. No one else asked me any other questions and I was angry because I  
20 wanted them all to know how great my dad was, and it ended badly. When I went into it,  
21 I just knew it was going to be this great day. I went home from school that night and I  
22 asked my mother if my dad was going to die. I don't remember what she told me, but I'm  
23 sure she handled it beautifully—I mean, as she did everything when it came to my dad. I  
24 asked my sister then because my sister was very much my protector. I think she was  
25 thrust into that when she was four years old because when dad left, mother needed her  
26 help. So I asked my sister the same question, if my dad was going to die. She got really  
27 angry, and she said, "Don't ever say that again because if you say it, it will happen." And  
28 so, I never said it again and I never wanted to be put in a position where anyone else  
29 would say it to me again. So from that day on, as long as my mother wasn't around, if  
30 anyone asked me what my dad did, "My dad works in the meat market." I have  
31 absolutely no idea how I came up with meat market. I didn't know anybody that worked

1 at the meat market. (Chuckles) I have no idea. But I do remember that I was very  
2 ashamed because I was proud of what my dad did, but I couldn't tell anyone else how  
3 proud I was of what my dad did because I was afraid they would tell me he was going to  
4 die.

5 KEC: That's pretty heavy for a little girl of six or seven years old.

6 KC: You know, it was, and I think it was from that point on I—I don't even think  
7 up until that day I even understood what dying meant. I learned very quickly what dying  
8 meant. And I tried to educate myself on what was going on in Vietnam as much as a six-  
9 year-old could, but I remember whenever I was at friend's house and the news was on, I  
10 would watch the news. Walter Cronkite and—to this day, I can remember the very  
11 explicit showing of military men being carried on stretchers with bloody bandages. I  
12 looked at every face to see if that face was my dad. It took me until I was an adult to  
13 realize that was someone's dad or brother or son, and what an awful way to learn that  
14 your loved one was injured. No matter how severe or not it was, you still learned that  
15 from the media. To this day, I harbor ill feelings towards the media because that was not  
16 handled the way that it should have been.

17 KEC: Right. You mentioned that you were trying to learn as much as a six-year-  
18 old could about the war. What sort of things do you think you learned at that age?

19 KC: You know, I think a lot of death. And that really is my memory at that time.  
20 The men being carried on stretchers with bloody bandages. I think I equated the war to  
21 death. I believe I lived in constant fear that it was going to be my dad. My mother  
22 helped—I think she helped me deal with that. In school that year we made a calendar and  
23 when I brought that calendar home, from the day I brought it home, we started marking  
24 off every single day until my dad would come home. My mother has that calendar to this  
25 day.

26 KEC: Is that right?

27 KC: Before we did this interview, I asked her to find that calendar and the last day  
28 that I have marked is October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1969. So my dad must have come home on October  
29 12<sup>th</sup>, 1969.

30 KEC: Oh, wow.

1 KC: I do think that helped me deal with it, but school became much more difficult  
2 for me.

3 KEC: In what ways?

4 KC: All of a sudden, I can remember my papers were coming back bad. You  
5 know, I would have bad marks on them. My teacher had talked to my mother, and she  
6 thought that I had dyslexia. Mother took me to the doctor, and I remember the—I think it  
7 must have been a psychiatrist because I remember them showing me the cards and then  
8 asking me what I could see on those cards. Then the doctor talked to me, and he later told  
9 my mother that he felt that I was writing everything backwards. I mean, if the answer was  
10 265, I would write 562. He felt that it was stress from my dad being gone and worrying  
11 that my dad was not coming home. At that point, I felt like I wasn't very smart because  
12 all my papers kept coming back bad and I couldn't do it. I kind of felt like, "I can't do  
13 this. I'm not smart enough to do this." But it did get better after my dad got home. I  
14 didn't do that anymore after that, so I guess he was right.

15 KEC: Did you find it to be more difficult with the other children around? After  
16 what this one little boy said, obviously other kids in the class heard this. Did you find that  
17 they were treating you differently? Or was it more difficult to be around them, with them  
18 knowing what they know about your father?

19 KC: No. I mean, I think the teacher sheltered me after that. I think she was the one  
20 that recognized that I was having problems in school because of my dad being gone. I  
21 think she had communications with my mother. I know they were having  
22 communications back and forth to try to help me get through all of that. That one little  
23 boy is the only incident I remember, but I think that most kids—like I said, we were in  
24 civilian housing, so I don't think that most kids were even in tune to what was going on.  
25 In their live, their dads left every morning and came home every night. So I don't think  
26 they could even relate to what was going on. I know their lives were totally different.  
27 Now, in hindsight I do think that even as a child it might have been a little better  
28 experienced had we lived in military housing and been surrounded by other kids that  
29 were going through the same thing.



1           KEC: I was going to ask you about that. It seems like it would me a little more—  
2 to use a probably poor word here, but normal if you were in an environment where other  
3 children were going through something similar like this.

4           KC: I think that's the perfect word because don't think I felt like my life was  
5 normal. My dad had left and never came home. In my mind, he never came home. He  
6 eventually came home, but for that period of my life, it was one day I woke up and he  
7 was gone, and he had never come home. My life was very different from the other kids  
8 around me, and I don't think I understood why. Why was it that my dad left? He wasn't  
9 coming home at night. I knew we were getting letters from him. I knew that he was still a  
10 part of our life. It wasn't that I didn't have any contact with him, and I remember  
11 watching the mailbox and when we got envelopes that had the red and the blue around it  
12 that meant that was a letter from dad. Looking very much forward to the letters. My  
13 mother would always read us the letters from dad. I did recognize that my life wasn't  
14 normal, it was different than everyone else's.

15          KEC: What were those letters like? What did they do for you when it was time to  
16 read the letters?

17          KC: I watched the mailbox every single day. It was exciting to get a letter from  
18 dad. You know, I can't tell you anything that was in those letters, but it was kind of like I  
19 think when I got the opportunity to stand up there and say what my dad did. For me it  
20 was kind of like having my dad there, even if he wasn't there. I think when we got the  
21 letters it was the same thing. It was kind of like he's not really here, but he is here. And  
22 so, I very much looked forward to getting those letters from dad. I remember they came  
23 in envelopes that had the blue and the red envelopes all around the edge. You knew that  
24 that was the letter from dad.

25          KEC: Did you write him letters?

26          KC: I did, as much as I could. You know, I was six years old, so my penmanship  
27 was probably not very good (chuckles). Oh yeah, I remember making pictures. I think  
28 mother would include things in her letters from us and she very much encouraged us to  
29 do that. You know, it was like we had special time where we were supposed sit down and  
30 do something for dad. And that was very regular, but it was always whatever we wanted

1 to do. If we wanted to draw him a picture or we wanted to cut something out or put string  
2 together or whatever we wanted to do. It was our ideas for something special for dad.

3 KEC: Right. What was your basic routine like day in, day out, as a six-year-old  
4 girl while your father was away? What was life like?

5 KC: I mean, going to school and coming home. My mother took classes, I think to  
6 learn to type—business classes, I think is what she took. I remember being terrified when  
7 she would leave and cry. I cried I think the entire time she was gone. I don't even  
8 remember who stayed with us. I just remember being terrified when she would leave.  
9 Anytime she left. I can't imagine how that must have been for my mom. I mean, I'm sure  
10 that she needed that outlet. As an adult mother now, I'm certain that she needed to get  
11 away from us once in a while. Leaving and knowing that I was crying the entire time she  
12 was gone, or maybe she didn't even realize that I cried the entire time she was gone.  
13 Now, I think it was because I was so terrified that when my mother left, it was going to  
14 be like that morning when I woke up and my dad was gone. That she wasn't going to  
15 come home. I remember one time we had gone out on errands with another friend of my  
16 mother's and mother had to go to the bank. She just ran into the bank real quick and we  
17 were sitting in the car. I remember sitting there at that door window, watching my mother  
18 go in and it was sheer panic. I mean, hysterical, crying until I was sick because my mom  
19 had left. I mean, I really believed that I felt like she wasn't going to come back. The only  
20 thing I can attribute that to is that fear that my dad was never going to come back. I  
21 couldn't—as a six-year-old, I could not handle that it might happen with both parents.

22 KEC: So you're counting down the days?

23 KC: Yes.

24 KEC: Literally, on the calendar?

25 KC: Literally counting down the days.

26 KEC: The veterans in Vietnam had their short-timer calendar and you had a short-  
27 timer calendar back at home.

28 KC: I did. That was my lifeline to my dad.

29 KEC: All right. What was it like when you knew the days were getting close?  
30 We're talking, here it is, September 30<sup>th</sup>, October 1<sup>st</sup>, October 2<sup>nd</sup>. What was it like? Do  
31 you remember the anticipation?

1 KC: Yes. In fact, I think that excitement far exceeds any excitement in my  
2 lifetime, barring getting married and having my children. (Laughs) Let me preface that.

3 KEC: Yeah, put that in there for the family.

4 KC: I mean, this probably isn't the right word, but normal kids' lives would be  
5 Christmas or things like that would be the most exciting time in their life. That, hands  
6 down, was the most exciting time in my life. I can remember—and I was very much a  
7 girly-girl. For me, the most important thing was what I was going to wear the day my dad  
8 came home. I think I probably had that outfit laid out for weeks before he came home. I  
9 can remember the outfit. It was a little plaid dress. I remember that was the most  
10 important thing in my life at that point was, what I was going to wear when my dad came  
11 home. And then the night before, I remember it was a big deal because mother wanted  
12 everything perfect. We were trying to make everything perfect for dad to come home and  
13 that night it was butterflies in my stomach. It was a great feeling compared to the terrors  
14 and hysterical feelings that I had been feeling previous to that. This was a great feeling.  
15 This was a fun feeling. One that—I probably smiled non-stop. I don't think I probably  
16 slept a whole lot that night. That is very vivid for me as a seven-year-old, I guess at that  
17 point.

18 KEC: Describe for me the reunion with your father when he came home. Where  
19 were you? What was it like?

20 KC: That's funny because I remember the night before so vividly, but the actual  
21 him getting home—I think we met him at the airport, but I cannot even say that for  
22 certain. I'm pretty sure that we did meet him at the airport. And then the next thing is  
23 dinner. I remember the dinner that night and I don't remember the—I mean, I'm quite  
24 sure it was hugs and kisses and probably a lot of crying, but I don't remember any of that.  
25 The next thing I remember is supper that night. The reason that I remember supper that  
26 night is, you know, mother wanted to make everything perfect for dad and I'm assuming  
27 she probably made what was his favorite meal, but we had peas for supper that night. My  
28 dad's hands were shaking so bad he couldn't eat peas with a fork. And that stands out  
29 very, very clearly. I don't even know if my dad knows that. I guess I knew at that point  
30 that things were different. My dad was different. That's not the dad that I remember  
31 leaving. He was very different.

1           KEC: In what ways?

2           KC: Well, the man that I remembered leaving was more soft-spoken, didn't yell,  
3 looks at you and you knew you better quit doing whatever you were doing. And that was  
4 the discipline. He just had to look at you and you knew it. After he got back it was anger,  
5 a lot of yelling. It didn't take much to set him off. In fact, it was very confusing for me as  
6 a child because I didn't know it would set him off. There was no rhyme or reason to what  
7 would set him off. It was very sad. Like I said, he was Superman to me and the man that  
8 came back was not the same man. Before he came back, I looked forward to us having  
9 our special time again and doing things together with the sweet man that left. When he  
10 came back, I went to every extreme to avoid being around him. And I was the quiet one  
11 that I could go in my room for hours and play and I did that. I actually think my brother  
12 and my sister were the brunt of that much more than I was. I retreated where they were  
13 more—well, they were, actually I think we've done role reversal since we've become  
14 adults. But they were much more headstrong than I was as a child. So I would just retreat  
15 and go away, and they didn't. (Chuckles)

16          KEC: What do you remember about the overall family dynamic here? You've  
17 talked about how you've seen this change in your father and the effects that it had on you  
18 and to a lesser degree, your brother and sister. The overall direction and dynamic of the  
19 family, how did that change?

20          KC: Well, I mean, I can only say this as a child's perspective, but I think that the  
21 family time were attempted, and I think that my dad really wanted to get back to the way  
22 things were before. We would still do the camping thing and I can remember us going to  
23 the mountains to see snow. I think that mother and dad were both trying to make an  
24 attempt to get the family unit back to the way it was before. Honestly, I didn't want that. I  
25 mean, I wanted to be away from him because he would get angry. Even the trip that we  
26 went to the snow, that's what I remember, is him getting angry. I remember going to the  
27 snow, but it was him getting angry about me losing my gloves. The family dynamic very  
28 much changed, and mother and dad tried to make it normal, but it wasn't. It was different  
29 until we moved to Alaska and then I think we healed a lot.

30          KEC: Did you realize at the time that this change in your father was a result of his  
31 being in the war, in combat?

1           KC: No. No, not at all. I just knew—I mean, I knew the man that left and the man  
2 that came back was not the same man, but I don't think—I mean, I didn't understand at  
3 all what my dad went through in Vietnam. I wish, now as an adult I could have  
4 understood a little more because I'm sure it hurt him when he came back for me to retreat  
5 and be afraid of my dad. I spent probably several years being afraid of my dad. That had  
6 to have hurt him. I think I was daddy's little girl and when he came back, I didn't want  
7 anything to do with him because I was afraid of him. I thought he was mean.

8           KEC: Well, it also would have been disappointing I think for you to have such a  
9 view of your father and then he comes back, and he's changed. That would have been  
10 very disappointing, I would think.

11          KC: You know, it probably was. But my way of dealing with it was, like I said, I  
12 just kind of retreated and went away and tried to stay out of his way. Always though, he  
13 was my hero. No matter what, he was my hero, and I could always go back to those—and  
14 I did, a lot. I went back to those special memories of before he left. So I don't ever  
15 remember being angry with him for being angry all the time. I think I was more sad and  
16 disappointed that I'd built myself up to the same person coming home and then he didn't.  
17 I still held onto those special memories, and I really believe that if you had even asked  
18 me then, I still would have described my dad the same way. He was still that Superman to  
19 me.

20          KEC: What about later on, moving on through the years, through your teenage  
21 years up through high school? Did any of this change for you?

22          KC: You know, I think it did. We moved to Alaska when I was ten. My dad was  
23 stationed on Adak, which is a change and we spent four years up there. For me, it very  
24 much helped the family dynamic because when we moved up there, there was nothing  
25 else to do besides family. We were on the little bitty island, but we were also surrounded  
26 by other military people. So for me, I was around other children who had been through  
27 what I went through because there were also other children whose dad's had been in  
28 Vietnam, who had experienced the same kinds of things. Although, we didn't talk about  
29 it, I guess it was nice to know that I was around people more like me. As a family, we  
30 spent a lot of time together because it was much more the life of the kids that I grew up  
31 with in San Diego because I had that life when my dad left in the morning, and he came

1 home every night. He had much more ordinary hours and weekends. He had a few  
2 weekends where he might have to be on duty, but most weekends we did family stuff. We  
3 would go on the island, and we did outdoor stuff, and we went sled riding. For me, that  
4 was a lot of healing. The old dad, he never came back, he was forever changed, but I was  
5 able to see a different side of him the.

6 KEC: And part of that may have been just a passage of time. Those sort of things  
7 tend to help a little decompression and things like that. Did you ever approach your father  
8 about this? Not as an adult, but as a youngster about the change that you saw or his  
9 behavior? Did you ever ask him about that?

10 KC: No. I was terrified of my dad. I did ask him though—my sister, the reason  
11 that she was so angry when my dad went to Vietnam is for some reason, she felt that he  
12 didn't have to go because he was an only child. And I knew that as a child, but I never  
13 felt that way. So I asked him if he had to go and he told me that he did. And his  
14 explanation was when he volunteered to go in the Navy, he knew that that was part of it.  
15 That was part of the contract that he signed, part of the paycheck he got every month. I  
16 understood that. For me, I needed to hear that because I always had that in the back of my  
17 mind and because I had heard my sister say that. I did talk to him about that. The anger  
18 issues, I didn't because I was afraid of him. I think I was afraid of his reaction. In  
19 hindsight, I wish I had. I mean, I can talk to my dad now and I've talk to my dad about a  
20 lot of things since I have become an adult. But no, I didn't talk to him about it when I was  
21 a child. I wish I had. I hope that my children would.

22 KEC: Well, let's fast forward to modern times here, modern day. When did you  
23 become aware of the larger issues of your father being away and the effect that they had  
24 on you as a young child? You know, obviously children aren't terribly introspective  
25 about these kinds of things because they lack the perspective to do so. But as you got  
26 older, when did you begin to understand, "Okay, this is why this happened with my  
27 father, this is how it's affected us." When did you start to put all of this together?

28 KC: Actually, I can tell you the day.

29 KEC: Is that right?

30 KC: I can. Yes, one of those things like—well, when the World Trade Center was  
31 hit. One of those things, monumental things in life where you say you remember the

1 exact time and the exact thing that you were doing. For me, it was October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1983. It  
2 was the day that the barracks were bombed in Beirut. And that is when that emotional  
3 wall I had put up, came down. I can't tell you why. I believe that it is because when I  
4 heard on the news that the barracks had been bombed and that there were hundreds of our  
5 military personnel killed, it brought it all back. I think that was probably the first kind of  
6 thing like that, that had happened since the end of the Vietnam War. Then again, I was an  
7 adult and I think my brain was better able to handle that. Although, I did not handle it  
8 very well. My husband could not understand at all why I was reacting to this the way I  
9 was reacting. You would have thought by my reactions that I had a loved one in that  
10 building. Then, after that there was the flood of memories. The fear of my dad dying, the  
11 fear of my mom leaving, all of that. I think I had blocked all of that out until that day.  
12 And since then, my reaction to any military tragedy it's—I know that it is a direct  
13 response to my childhood experience.

14 KEC: At what point were you able to discuss this with your father?

15 KC: Actually, after the bombing of the barracks in Beirut I started writing a book  
16 called, "War Through the Eyes of a Child", which I still have not completed. I talked to  
17 my dad about it then because I wanted to get accurate information. So that's when the  
18 conversation started. And we've talked about it ever since. He has very much encouraged  
19 me to finish the book. It's hard. It's very hard to talk about and think about all of those  
20 emotions and make them raw again.

21 KEC: What has it been like for you and your father to be able to discuss this?

22 KC: For me, it's very rewarding. I hope it is as rewarding for him. When he talks  
23 about it though, he doesn't talk about it in his experiences. He always talks about it as the  
24 other people. I mean, I know, I've seen the commendations and he has allowed me to see  
25 those. I've read those, I know the harrowing things that he did by reading those things,  
26 but he would never, ever tell you those things. Everyone else is the hero, he's not the  
27 hero. To be quite truthful Kelly, I don't know that I've ever even said to him that he is  
28 my hero. Sitting here now, I feel really guilty about that. He is and always has been a  
29 hero and I wish that he could see that in himself, but I don't think he does. I think to him  
30 it was his job and he needed to do it, so he did it. I don't think he understands the impact  
31 that he has even today. What he and all of the Vietnam Veterans did, I think have a

1 positive impact on the way that we, as society, have handled our soldiers that have gone  
2 to Iraq and when they have come home. They had a definite impact on all of that, but I  
3 don't think he sees that.

4 KEC: Well, I've got just one last question for you. It's pretty broad one. I'd like  
5 for you to be able to relate to me. Tell me what you think the greatest impact of your  
6 father's Vietnam service has been on you, personally.

7 KC: The greatest impact? Well, I'll start with the negatives. Military scares the  
8 hell out of me. If you ask me if I would recommend raising a family in the military, my  
9 answer would be no. When my husband had to register for the selective service, it  
10 terrified me. When we went to war and my son was old enough that he might have to or  
11 choose to, it terrified me. I think that would be the negative impact it's had on me. The  
12 positive impact is my dad has always instilled in me that I can do anything I wanted to. I  
13 think he has that mentality too. I don't think there's anything that he feels like he couldn't  
14 do. I mean, my dad is 5'6, not a very big man, but he always performed in life like he was  
15 6'5. He's always done way beyond what anyone ever thought he could probably do, and  
16 he has instilled that in me. So that would be a very positive impact. I think that his  
17 experience in Vietnam helped that. I hate war, I wish we never have to go to war. I know  
18 that being in Vietnam changed my dad but hoping that God had a plan and that we will  
19 all figure that plan out in the end. One of the other things that I think was a great  
20 experience is my dad missed out on so much of us as a child. When I became pregnant  
21 with our last child, which was a surprise, and I told my father that we were expecting, and  
22 my due date was November 7<sup>th</sup>. And the day that I told my dad that I was expecting, he  
23 said, "She is going to be born on my birthday." Which is October 24<sup>th</sup>. He didn't say she,  
24 he said, "The baby will be born on October 24<sup>th</sup>." While I was pregnant, he called me and  
25 asked me if he could come with me for my ultrasound and it totally blew me away. I  
26 would have never expected that from my dad. And he did. He came with me when I had  
27 my ultrasound and the day that my daughter was born, he was there. He was standing  
28 right outside the door and that grandchild is the only grandchild he experienced that with.  
29 And honestly, I would have never thought he wanted to, but I think that as he gets older,  
30 he is able to mellow a lot. He's mellowed a lot. He is a wonderful grandfather and I think  
31 that his life experiences enable him to be that way. I am who I am today because of—my



1 father's life experiences changed my life experiences. I'm a better person for it. There  
2 were a lot of negatives, but I think I've done okay with my life, and I can attribute that to  
3 my parents.

4 KEC: Very good. Mrs. Campbell, is there anything else you'd like to add to the  
5 interview before we put an end to it?

6 KC: I don't think so. We've pretty much covered everything.

7 KEC: Alright, we'll go ahead and put a close to it then.

8 KC: Okay.

9 (Interview audio ends)