

1 **Interview of retired Army Lieutenant Colonel Patricia Accountius on her long service in**
2 **the U.S. Army Medical Specialist Corps**

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5Ruth Stewart: Pat Accountius is being interviewed as a member of the Women's
6 Overseas Service League, San Antonio Texas Unit at San Antonio on
7 October 21, 2003. Ruth Stewart is interviewing, assisted by Carol
8 Habgood. [0:18] Pat, tell us about your joining the service and what led up
9 to that.

10

11Patricia Accountius: Well when I was [in] [Inaudible 0:26], I was a Girl Scout, and that was at
12 the age of – let's see – I think 12. It was 1942. And so we became candy
13 strippers and went to work at, uh, Lima Hospital in Lima, Ohio. And as
14 candy strippers, we passed water and we passed juices and we had put
15 [inaudible 0:58], and I worked for 2 years as a candy stripper as a volunteer.
16 And, uh, our Girl Scout leader left and we got a new Girl Scout leader
17 who happened to be a dietician at the hospital, and the dietician
18 encouraged me to get a work permit because my family was going to
19 move out to a farm, and I didn't want to move to the forearm. I wanted to
20 finish high school in Lima. And so I went, got a work permit. I was 14
21 years old, but during the war, [inaudible 1:36] [chuckle] you could get a
22 working permit because they were so short as far as the mobile force went.
23 And then after I got the working permit, I went to work in the kitchen at
24 the hospital, and I worked after school and on Saturdays and Sundays.
25 And first, I did such things as doing dishes, pots and pans, working on the
26 [inaudible 1:59] line. And, um, after a few years, um, I started to relieve
27 for the cook and relieve for the baker.

28

29 And then when I was a senior in high school, uh, I decided to – that, uh, I
30 wanted to go to college and I was interested in going to premed, so I
31 applied to Miami University for, for premed. But after I started, um, my
32 family really didn't have the funds, and I did stay and I paid my, my
33 grandparents to stay with them so that I could continue to go to school in,
34 in Lima, and I did graduate from Lima South High School.

35

36Ruth Stewart: [2:46] Is that Ohio?

37

38Patricia Accountius: Ohio. Right. And I, I applied from – in Miami, and I was accepted, and,
39 uh, like I said, starting [inaudible 2:57] science because I was really
40 interested in premed, but I knew that I probably wouldn't have the money
41 to, uh, be able to continue, so I picked up all the subjects that I needed as
42 electives for dietetic. So I went to the College for Arts and Sciences rather
43 than the College of, of Home Ec with my electives being nutrition and
44 institutional management and things like that. Then I was then going home

1 for the summers, I started rel-, the first 3 summers, I relieved for the
2 dietician while I was in college. Uh, and so [chuckle] I slowly worked up
3 the ladder and was relieving for the dietician then when I was in school.
4 And the [fourth 3:49] year, um, they [fired 3:53] both dieticians, and I was
5 there by myself, and my poor sister, whose [inaudible 3:59] much younger
6 than I was, was a student nurse at the time and assigned in the kitchen.
7 [laughter] It was a very difficult summer for her. [laughter] I think
8 [inaudible 4:10] student nurses, you know, at that point in time, which was
9 one of the reasons I decided I didn't want to be a nurse back when I was a
10 Girl Scout. I thought this is not for me [chuckle] because student nurses
11 were doing pretty much what, uh, nurse's aides do now along with some
12 nursing care.

13
14 So I applied and was selected and went to Oxford, Ohio, Miami
15 University, which was founded in 1809. It's a beautiful school. It's in, uh,
16 Williamsburg-style architecture and was kept [inaudible 4:50] conforming
17 that – to that style, so the campus is a beau-, uh, it's a beautiful campus.
18 And when I was a junior, we had a letter from an army dietician [and
19 that's 5:05] in Houston, who indicated that the army had an internship
20 available. And I had been working as a waitress for my meals, and I'd
21 been working in the library at night for my tuition, and I was cleaning
22 houses on the weekends for spending money, and so that sounded like a
23 pretty good deal. If, if you came in, you were commissioned as a second
24 lieutenant. So I applied and was accepted to the Army Internship Program.
25 My first big mistake was that basic was to be at Fort Sam Houston, and so
26 I bought a ticket for Houston, Texas on the train. [chuckle] When I got to
27 Louis to change trains, I was talking to some young man at the counter,
28 and he said, "You're going where?" and I said, "I'm going to Houston,
29 Texas," and he said, Fort Sam Houston is not in Houston, Texas. It's in
30 San Antonio." And so they very nicely changed my ticket and switched
31 my luggage, uh, to [chuckle] San Antonio. So I arrived in San Antonio for
32 basic. And I had applied for the dietetic internship at Walter Reed.

33
34 I knew that I could never afford to do the, the, the medical internship, and
35 they didn't have the programs then that they have now, uh, for physicians.

36
37Ruth Stewart: [6:34] So you entered the Army Specialists Corp...

38

39Linden Anderson: Right.

40

41Ruth Stewart: ...and what year was that?

42

43Linden Anderson: That was in 1948. And I graduated from high school in 1948. And, uh, that
44 summer I did not work in the hospital, the last summer. I counseled, camp

1 counseled in Wisconsin, Camp Agawak and, uh, taught [camp] [inaudible]
2 7:02].
3
4 Ruth Stewart: [7:07] So tell us about your early days then as an intern in the, uh, Dietetic
5 Program.
6
7 Linden Anderson: Well, here again, then they were, they were very short. Uh, they were
8 short of dieticians, including there were a number of involuntary recalls,
9 uh, from the Korean conflict that were being called back on, back on
10 active duty, and so I started my internship at Walter Reed. And I'm afraid
11 that I spent as much time in staff relief just about as I did in the intern
12 training program except for all the medical lectures, and I did get to do the
13 medical lectures. But I spent a lot of time in the office with the chief
14 working on job descriptions and things like that. However, it was a, a year
15 long, and it was a, a good learning experience. There were 12 of us. And
16 we still most of us correspond. There are 3 now living here in San Antonio
17 that were in my basic, but they were [inaudible 8:08] interns. And, uh, this
18 is our 50th year, as a matter of fact. The American Dietetic Association is
19 meeting here, uh, next week and the 50-year members of the American
20 Dietetic Association are being honored. And registration is \$250, and it's
21 free for us. So we're gonna have sort of a, a meeting of everybody who
22 was in both of our internship classes while we're here. [Inaudible 8:37] 50
23 years for all of us.
24
25 Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm. [8:40] And then what happened?
26
27 Linden Anderson: After I finished my dietetic internship, I went to Fort Leonard Wood
28 Missouri, which had just reopened, uh, because of the Korean conflict, and
29 they were short in our bases and posts and [inaudible 8:58] [internment
30 8:59]-type hospital. We had [inaudible 9:01] ranges in the dining hall. Uh,
31 they had to lay the fires, which if you got a downdraft. The soot came out
32 all over everything, including the [inaudible 9:12], which occasionally we
33 scraped off [laughter] [inaudible 9:18]. Uh, there were – the place was
34 staffed by Ozark, uh, people who with – basically like mountaineers. They
35 really hadn't had any experience because the place had closed after World
36 War II. And so that was a real learning experience. It was cold. We wore
37 our overcoats in the office, had snowdrifts on our desks. The pipes would
38 freeze. There were 2 of us there. We had 1,400 patients. And, uh, that was
39 my first assignment. And then from there, I was transferred to Okinawa,
40 and I was Chief of, of Ward Food Service in Okinawa. And while I was
41 there, we built the new hospital, which was an 8th story building. It was
42 supposed to be an 18-month tour, and so I shipped by car, my automobile
43 home.
44

1 However, I got extended [chuckle] until we moved into the new, into the
2 new hospital. But while we were there, they hadn't had a typhoon in years,
3 and we had a typhoon that hit every other weekend for – we had 6
4 typhoons in 1 year, and they would admit all of the pregnant women into
5 the hospital and I was the [inaudible 10:52] personnel, hospital personnel
6 [inaudible 10:55]. And so our hospitals in Quonset huts, and we moved the
7 first time into the new, uh, field house they h-, they had just finished with
8 hardwood floors, and they had the glass skylights in the top, but we went
9 into the place with field ranges because, of course, the power went out.
10 We had [inaudible 11:24] C-ration [inaudible 11:25]. The nurses forgot
11 the urinals. We used corned beef cans for urinals [inaudible 11:31]
12 [laughter] corned beef cans.

13
14Ruth Stewart: [11:35] So you [inaudible 11:36] improvised?

15
16Linden Anderson: And in that, in that particular time, we, we had taken C-rashes with, C-
17 rations with us because we were not totally prepared to do that and to
18 move. But what happened first was that the water got under the, under the
19 beautiful parquet floor, and it started to warp, and it actually warped waist
20 high. Then the skylights started coming down, and so we put the patients
21 under the bleachers and stretched tarps over them, and, uh, that was the
22 last time we moved into the field house, but every time we moved into
23 something, there were sorts of new and unusual situations. So, um, by the
24 time we moved the third time, we were pretty well [laughter] [inaudible
25 12:26], and we didn't [inaudible 12:28] problems we had before. At one
26 time, I was dating a marine, and luckily the marine barracks were right
27 behind – we moved into the dispensary the second time, which was at the
28 marine, uh, marine base, and we didn't have water. The water tanks
29 weren't delivered by the engineers, and I knew that they were ready to go
30 out in the field, and so the sergeant and I got down on the ground and
31 worked out way over to the marine barracks, and they found some water
32 [trailers] [inaudible 12:59], so we had water for the hospital. That was
33 [inaudible 13:04].

34
35Carol Habgood: Improvising again.

36
37Patricia Accountius: And then we moved into the new facilities right before we left, and they
38 were supposed to open that, they were supposed [inaudible 13:11] on the
39 island and the Okinawans used to fit, uh, food carts onto the elevator and
40 would run like crazy up, and they grab the food cart [chuckle] off on the
41 6th and 7th floors. And then after they got used to the elevators, they just
42 wanted to ride up and down all day in the elevators. And, uh, and then we
43 put in a centralized tray service system, so we [had found 13:41] some

1 English [inaudible 13:42] in Japanese [chuckle] and, uh, to assemble the
2 carts in the, in the new hospital.
3
4Ruth Stewart: [13:50] Now this was a period between wars, right?
5
6Patricia Accountius: This was '56 to '58, 1956 to '58. I left Fort Leonard Wood in 1956.
7
8Ruth Stewart: [13:59] And what kind of patients did you take care of there at that
9 hospital?
10
11Patricia Accountius: Well we, um, army, navy, air force. It was, uh, basically it was an army
12 hospital, but we supported the [OD 14:11]. And we had like 16 to 18
13 broken jaws because the navy and the marines didn't get along too well,
14 and we had all kind of fights and [chuckle] we, um, the men that were
15 over there – the marines could not have dependents, and so they all had
16 motor scooters, so between the fights at the Navy [Club 14:33] and the
17 motor scooters, we – and at that point in time, they wired their jaws shut,
18 you know, when they were broken, and so we had them on liquid diets.
19 [Inaudible 14:46] liquids [inaudible 14:46], [inaudible 14:47] liquids and
20 [inaudible 14:48]. [laughter]
21
22Carol Habgood: [14:50] Those were the...
23
24Patricia Accountius: [Inaudible 14:51].
25
26Carol Habgood: ...the major patients that you had?
27
28Patricia Accountius: Right.
29
30Carol Habgood: Okay. Okay. [14:56] Um, what were some of your most memorable
31 experiences there?
32
33Patricia Accountius: On Okinawa?
34
35Carol Habgood: Mm-hm.
36
37Patricia Accountius: Well my car was sandblasted. I think I had it painted [inaudible 15:11]. I
38 had it painted after every typhoon except the – except one, and that one
39 came too fast. So I think my car was painted 5 times, you know, the
40 saltwater and the [bleach in the 15:22] sand would just literally take the
41 paint off. One, one typhoon, their wind instruments blew away with 250
42 miles an hour, and so they didn't know how strong those winds actually
43 were, but it went, went up toward Japan and then turned around and came
44 back and hit us [chuckle] [going the other way 15:42].

1
2Ruth Stewart: Yeah.
3
4Patricia Accountius: That was the one that we didn't have time – I didn't have time to get the
5 car painted between – it was the same typhoon.
6
7Ruth Stewart: [Well 15:54]. [15:56] Other experiences?
8
9Patricia Accountius: On Okinawa?
10
11Ruth Stewart: [Inaudible 15:59] get your [water paints 16:01].
12
13Patricia Accountius: Well [chuckle] we [inaudible 16:03]. The opening ceremony, um, the
14 hospital commander was showing his office, and one of the Okinawan
15 women decided to change her baby on his desk. That [left] [inaudible
16 16:21], especially on him.
17
18Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.
19
20Patricia Accountius: Um, it was a challenging experience. Uh, [Inaudible 16:31], our chef, was
21 a patient there twice, and she gave me a [inaudible 16:36]. I don't think it's
22 legal to bring them back, but she gave me a beautiful tortuous shell, um,
23 box that sits on a little tray, and it has a rosebud [inaudible 16:48] on top
24 [inaudible 16:49].
25
26Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.
27
28Patricia Accountius: And, uh, that was right after one of the ty-, typhoons, and she wanted, uh,
29 egg drop soup, and so at that point in time, our perishables, of course,
30 were all gone. We didn't have any chickens. [chuckle] We had B-rations
31 and, and, uh, canned foods, and so I took some chicken noodle soup, and I
32 strained it, and, uh, I used, uh, powdered egg, and I made egg drop soup,
33 and she thought it was very, very good and wanted to know how I made
34 egg drop soup, and I said chef's secret. [chuckle] And I never did admit as
35 to how I made egg drop soup.
36
37Ruth Stewart: Did you...
38
39Patricia Accountius: And, of course, we beach, you know, you know, the beach lots of times,
40 and I have a – I sent shells back to my father, um, seashells.
41
42Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.
43

1 Patricia Accountius: I sent the other kind of shells from World War II back as, um, [inaudible]
2 18:00] candelabra and things like that. [chuckle]
3
4 Carol Habgood: [18:03] So 2 types of shells?
5
6 Patricia Accountius: Yeah. Two types.
7
8 Ruth Stewart: [18:07] Was beachcombing your major recreation there or did you have
9 other [inaudible 18:10]?
10
11 Patricia Accountius: Well there were a lot of marines [chuckle] and everybody, you know, was
12 in the same situation, so. And we went to the clubs, and we had a really,
13 we had a really good time, but we also did spend a lot of time on the
14 beach.
15
16 Ruth Stewart: [18:28] Were you able to travel off the island?
17
18 Patricia Accountius: Yes. We could, we could, um, well we would go – we could take any of
19 the embassy, you know, trips, and, uh, I, I went to Japan to visit several
20 times and went to Taipei and went to the Philippines and to India. That's
21 about it.
22
23 Ruth Stewart: [18:56] Quite a lot of traffic?
24
25 Carol Habgood: [18:59] What about [inaudible 18:59]?
26
27 Patricia Accountius: [Inaudible 19:00] would toot us around the island [inaudible] [shift 19:02].
28
29 Ruth Stewart: Right.
30
31 Patricia Accountius: The, the water was so blue. There's, uh, like a, a trench that I don't know
32 how – I don't remember how many miles deep it is, but the water is so
33 blue that it was just like you should be able to pick up a cup of it and look
34 in it and it should still be blue. It's beautiful, beautiful place, tropical.
35 [Inaudible 19:24].
36
37 Carol Habgood: [19:27] Were there other experiences that you had that were difficult for
38 your living experience?
39
40 Patricia Accountius: Uh, no. [Inaudible 19:35] about bringing [inaudible 19:3] together because
41 the sand would blow and it was tropical construction, our houses, and, uh,
42 actually we were [inaudible 19:47] with the new hospital, which was an
43 engineer base. We were [inaudible 19:52] at the new hospital, uh, shortly
44 after I arrived. We were in Quonset huts at Camp [Inaudible 20:01]. But

1 when we built the new [inaudible 20:04] hospital, we had actual houses, so
2 we had, uh, um, each person had their own room, and we shared a bath,
3 and we had a kitchen and a living room and a utility room, and of course,
4 maids. We didn't have to do washing or ironing. It came in your
5 [inaudible 20:27].
6
7Ruth Stewart: [20:30] But in your actually dietetics work, you had to do a lot of
8 improvising still?
9
10Patricia Accountius: Yes. Yes. Uh, the [inaudible 20:38] were sporadic, but especially after the
11 typhoons because we would just lose refrigeration, and they wouldn't have
12 the generator support they needed. They, they [chuckle] after the first 2 or
13 3, you know, they started to get generators in, in, uh, in country, but
14 [inaudible 20:57].
15
16Ruth Stewart: [20:59] Did you feel satisfied with the – that you were able to maintain the
17 adequate nutrition for your patients under the circumstances?
18
19Patricia Accountius: Actually, it was, it was adequate. It wasn't the most palatable [laughter]
20 [at first 21:14]. If they were to eat it, [chuckle] it would have been
21 adequate. It was difficult with the [inaudible 21:22] because we ended up
22 just about using, uh, baby food, whereas in the hospital, we would puree
23 regular foods, which are much more tasty and have some flavor, but we
24 did have, you know, as I said before, a number of dental patients, so
25 they're the ones that probably is was, uh, the most unpalatable, but
26 everybody else [inaudible 21:47] after, after our initial experience of C-
27 rations, we cooked B-rations, and we kept provisions on hand like to make
28 chicken salad and tuna salad out of, you know, canned meats and things
29 like that.
30
31Ruth Stewart: [22:04] Did you receive medals or citations dur-, during your service?
32
33Patricia Accountius: My [inaudible 22:10] service?
34
35Ruth Stewart: Mm-hm.
36
37Patricia Accountius: I have 3 army commendation medals with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters. I have a
38 Military Service Medal. I have the Bronze Star, and I have the Legion of
39 Merit with 2 or 3 clusters. [Inaudible 22:51] 2 or 3, you know, Campaign
40 Ribbons.
41
42Ruth Stewart: [22:49] How did you get these?
43
44Patricia Accountius: Worked.

1
2Ruth Stewart: [I guess 22:55], yeah.
3
4Patricia Accountius: [laughter] Basically hard work. I got the Army Commendation Medal in
5 Okinawa.
6
7Ruth Stewart: [23:06] When you were in Okinawa, how did you stay in touch with your
8 family and friends at home?
9
10Patricia Accountius: Uh, a lot of [inaudible 23:12]. We wrote letters. Basically I don't
11 remember anybody that ever made a telephone call [inaudible 23:21]
12 except in an emergency.
13
14Carol Habgood: [23:30] Do you remember – well you've, you've described some, but are
15 there other humorous events or unusual events that occurred while you
16 were in Okinawa?
17
18Patricia Accountius: Oh, many but Okinawa was just 1 tour. [chuckle] Uh, I was invited to
19 attend an Okinawan, um, birthday. [Inaudible 23:54] was my interpreter
20 and his grandfather's birthday, he invited me to, to come to his
21 grandfather's birthday party, and they seated me at the right hand of the
22 grandfather, and he was served first, and then I was always offered to be
23 served next. And that was the first time I was ever served [dog 24:18],
24 which I ate, and I also had never had goat before [inaudible 24:30] goat.
25 And whenever the – all of the virgins always had to have the same time
26 off because [inaudible 24:42] tombs on Okinawa, and there's – when their
27 ancestors die, they tie their, their hands to [the wrists 24:52], and they sit
28 cross-legged inside of these tombs, and then they have these big burial
29 vases, and at a certain time of the moon, the virgins in the family have to
30 scrape their ancestors bones into these vases. And so at least they all
31 claimed to be virgins [chuckle] when this time of the moon came and we
32 had a very difficult time in, in foodservice. [stuttering] At that point in
33 time, they had ward kitchens, which meant that we prepared the eggs and
34 things like that actually on the wards. It was more difficult then actually
35 than when we had tray service in the, in the new hospital...
36
37Interviewer: Hm.
38
39Patricia Accountius: ...but, uh, that was the only place I've ever been where you had to let all
40 the virgins off at a certain time of the moon. [chuckle]
41
42Carol Habgood: Oh, well.
43
44Patricia Accountius: [Inaudible 25:46] we flew from, from Okinawa I went to Walter Reed.

1

2Ruth Stewart: [25:51] To where?

3

4Patricia Accountius: Walter Reed. Back to Walter Reed, not at my request, but I was sent back
5 to Walter Reed as Project Officer. They were putting in centralized service
6 of tray – a centralized tray service system there, which we had put into the
7 new hospital, uh, on Okinawa, which meant that [inaudible 26:14] the
8 ward kitchens where they had done all of the preparation. You were able
9 to cook the patient’s eggs to order, but everyone knew that, you know,
10 how the patients wanted their eggs and [inaudible 26:27]. So, uh, we went
11 to the centralized service, tray service-type carts where everything is done
12 on a conveyor belt in the kitchen and then sent out to the wards, and
13 there's a refrigerated side and a heated side. So I was lucky enough to be
14 assigned to do the floor plans for changing and renovating the kitchen and
15 for establishing the training and what have you to get centralized tray
16 service into Walter Reed, so I got to work like I had on Okinawa 7 days a
17 week from 6:00 in the morning to 10:00 at night. [chuckle]

18

19Ruth Stewart: [27:12] What year was that or years?

20

21Patricia Accountius: That was, um, 1950-, '58, uh, to 1960, and in 1960, I was sent – I have –
22 no, it was from 19-, 1959, and I was sent then to – after we had
23 implemented centralized tray service, I was sent to the Health Care
24 Administration Course here in San Antonio at Medical Field Service
25 School, and it, it affiliates with Baylor University, and I received my
26 Master’s in Health Care Administration. I had to have a waiver because I
27 think I had 8 years at service. Uh, and I was a captain when I went. Then
28 from – after completing that course, I was sent to Letterman for, uh, the
29 residency in health care administration, so I spent, uh, 1 year at Letterman.
30 And I was sent – from Letterman, I went to Governors Island, which was a
31 beautiful assignment, and, um, our quarters looked out over the lower tip
32 of Manhattan. The dining room looked out at the Statue of Liberty, and we
33 got to see all of the [power 28:50] boats going out every time a new ship
34 came in and, uh, the only thing is is that the sergeant and I were the only 2
35 military, and we lived on the island, and when the island was fogged in,
36 the sergeant and I fixed breakfast for the hospital and our troops [inaudible
37 29:09] hospital. And...

38

39Carol Habgood: Quite an experience.

40

41Patricia Accountius: ...it was so cold that the icicles came out at right angles from the [sea up
42 29:17] in the winter. It, it was colder than Alaska because you weren't
43 dressed or prepared or equipped for it.

44

1 Interviewer: Mm-hm.

2

3 Patricia Accountius: And sometimes the ice would come over the [inaudible 29:30] and freeze,
4 and we couldn't deliver to the back at all because it was frozen [inaudible
5 29:35], and deliveries would have to come in the front door of the
6 hospital. But I wasn't there very long because my mother came to visit
7 and, uh, the chief of our, our, um, dietician section happened to be there at
8 the same time my mom was, and Mother didn't know that [inaudible]
9 [Chief 29:56] Dietician Section and so she asked my mother, you know,
10 they just asked my mother how I was [during 30:08] my assignment, and
11 she said, uh, she's bored with her assignment, but she loves New York.
12 [laughter] And I was so – I only [inaudible] [mess 30:16], and, uh, then I
13 was moved to Brooke Army Medical Center in Fort Sam Houston Texas
14 because they were gonna renovate the kitchen, and so I got to do the floor
15 plan. And we had – at that time, we had 5 different dining halls at Brooke,
16 and, uh, there were – we fixed food at the main kitchen and then hauled
17 the food to Beach, which was the largest building. And then we cooked,
18 we cooked the [diet 30:52] food at the main kitchen, and we fixed the
19 regular food in the Psychiatric kitchen and then hauled it all to Beach,
20 which was the biggest part of the hospital was at Beach, uh, during the
21 renovation. And we had an improvised assembly line.

22

23 And I just finished that assignment, and we had everything functioning,
24 and so I was on leave celebrating the fact it was over with, and I got a
25 telephone call saying you have to be ready in 30 days to go to Vietnam,
26 which was rather difficult for me because I had my mother with me. I had
27 my brother. My mother and brother had gone with me ever since my father
28 had passed away in 1959. They had traveled with me. So I had 30 days to
29 sell a house in San Antoni, buy a house in Ohio, which is where my sister
30 lived, uh, get my things packed and get, [chuckle] get myself to Vietnam.

31

32 Ruth Stewart: [32:07] And what stage of the Vietnam war was this? Was this [inaudible
33 32:11]?

34

35 Patricia Accountius: This was 1966/1967. I was the first dietician assigned in Vietnam. When I
36 went there, I [inaudible 32:19] hospitals. When I left there [inaudible
37 32:21]. But I spent a great deal of time working with the first logistical
38 man because until they can get organized and get the food coming in
39 country, I couldn't do menus like for the hospital. It was worthless because
40 our food delivery was so erratic and sporadic. And some places were on
41 A-rations. Some places were on B-rations. Some places were on C-rations.
42 And, uh, so a great deal of my time was spent working with Logistics, and
43 I, I wrote the menu for the command from Vietnam, which was the first
44 time that that's ever been done [inaudible 33:12] my quartermaster, but

1 General Eifer was, uh, commander, the First Logistical Command, and at
2 that point in time, the Medical Brigade came under the Logistical
3 Command, not under the [inaudible 33:28] surgeon, and, uh, so with his
4 support and backing – I told him that until we came up with a cyclic menu
5 so that they could get some stockage factors, uh, I couldn't, I couldn't do
6 what I needed to do in the hospital [inaudible 33:46]. After he...

7
8 Carol Habgood: [And you're usually 33:46]...

9
10 Patricia Accountius: After he understood that this meant the menu would repeat every 4 weeks,
11 this would be then an experience factor and what items to order and how
12 much they needed to order, and so I [sold 33:58] him on cycle menus. and
13 so he told the quartermaster, uh, [saying that 34:06] basically that we
14 would have a cycle menu in Vietnam, and so whether we ended up with
15 the – I wrote the menu for A-rations and then I, uh, wrote the – a B-ration
16 menu supplementing with A-rations and then I wrote a B-ration menu and
17 then the C-rations, and then they sent a team from Chicago over to work
18 on the menu there in Vietnam. But he was most supportive.

19
20 And also I could get any equipment. The equipment was just stacked and
21 stacked in the warehouses, and none of the troop messes, for example, had
22 electricity. They didn't have generators. Well we had generators in the
23 hospital because we had X-ray, and we had to have generators, so when
24 we first started the [Seminole 35:08] Hospital, the [Seminole 35:10]
25 hospitals had electricity, uh, when I went there, but when they would
26 come in country, they would not have electricity, so we had this nice little
27 thing where in X-ray they'd take a tin can and they'd [skip stones from
28 35:23] tin cans, and in the kitchen we'll have a tin can with stones it and
29 had the [inaudible 35:28] rope in between, and if they wanted to, uh, if
30 they were using the french fry – I could get french fries – if they were
31 using the french fry machine and X-ray needed an x-ray, they'd just pull
32 on the can. We'd cut off the french fry machine, [chuckle] then, and then
33 take x-ray. So we could, we could do things like that, you know, at that
34 point in time.

35
36 Interviewer: Mm-hm.

37
38 Patricia Accountius: And [inaudible 33:55] were in, in May, and the army had taken over
39 Logistics from the navy in April, and we had – since I got 'em, we had
40 lobster and frozen raspberries and all sorts of great things, but they didn't
41 have any [inaudible 36:13]. [chuckle] And we had all kind of silver for the
42 navy messes, but we didn't have any [inaudible 36:22] knives and forks
43 and spoons, you know, and things like that.

44

1 Carol Habgood: [36:26] What was your life like there?

2

3 Patricia Accountius: Well when I, when I, when I was first assigned there, I was assigned there
4 to establish a system for hospital food service in country, and they
5 assigned me to the 3rd Field, and I was assigned under the chief nurse,
6 which didn't bother me, but, um, I was [inaudible 36:52] promotion
7 lieutenant colonel, and she wasn't, so it bothered her. [laughter] So
8 anyway, they – and I was also the only dietician, so I was getting calls
9 from all of the hospitals from the hospital commanders, and they were all
10 having problems, and so, um, the hospital commander at the 3rd Field
11 Hospital felt that I belonged with the 68th Medical Group and so he called
12 then Colonel Pixley, and so, you know, I think that, that Pat should be
13 transferred and that she belongs with [you 37:26], not at the 3rd Hospital.
14 So I was transferred to the 68th Medical Group, and then the 36th and 55th
15 Medical Groups were calling Colonel Pixley and saying, you know, we
16 want her to come and, and work with the, uh, support centers, and so
17 Colonel Pixley went up to the 31st Medical Brigade commander and said I
18 think Pat should be assigned to the 44th Medical Brigade, not the 68th
19 Medical Group because she spends a lot of time with the other 2 medical
20 groups.

21

22 So then I was assigned with the 44th Medical Brigade. Well the 44th
23 Medical Brigade, the men lived in the headquarters building. That was
24 their barracks as well as their building. So they [inaudible 38:13] pretty
25 casual. They weren't always [inaudible 38:16], [chuckle] and so they
26 decided that – they had a little place at [inaudible 38:22] headquarters,
27 and, um, it was on top of the swimming pool but the [inaudible 38:33] was
28 under 1st Log Command, you know, at that point in time, and so this was
29 sort of, uh, the [MIRS 38:40] Center for the 44th Medical Brigade, and the
30 communication liaison between the commanding general of the 44th Med-,
31 I mean the commanding officer of the 44th Medical Brigade and the
32 commanding general at 1st Log Command. The only problem was it – and
33 it was located on top of the swimming pool. The office was on top of the
34 swimming pool. It had been carried over. It was a big 'ol Chinese mansion
35 and estate, and the general was in the mansion and his staff, and then there
36 were temporary buildings all the way around. And I was the only female
37 and the general had the only private john, so I got to know the general.
38 [chuckle] But he, he was an outstanding man. They couldn't have had a
39 better man there I don't think at that point in time.

40

41 And [inaudible 39:32] Colonel [Ober 39:33] was subsistence officer, and
42 so whenever any of the hospitals weren't getting anything, they would let
43 me know and then General – and then Colonel [Ober 39:45] would know
44 where the inventories, you know, weren't being kept up and some of the

1 problems with subsistence out in the, in the different, uh, support
2 commands. And it, it really did work very well. You know, we were
3 responsible for, um, feeding not only our American soldiers but we also
4 provided the subsistence for the Australians and the Koreans and then, um,
5 what happened was that the Vietnamese were only getting, uh, the
6 Vietnamese soldiers were only getting 2 meals a day, and so we wanted to
7 give – supplement the Vietnamese rations with B-rations. But part of it
8 was [inaudible 48:38]. We, we had cost of living, uh, COLA [inaudible
9 40:44] and so really buying all of this – the produce locally available and
10 the shrimp and fruit and things like that and suddenly the price was up to
11 where the Vietnamese couldn't afford, you know, to buy their own food,
12 and, um, so I spent a week [inaudible 41:04] quartermaster of the
13 Vietnamese Army, and I took all of the food that came in, kept them, kept
14 track of the number of people that they fed and tried to figure out what
15 some of it was, like long beans, [compare 41:22] nutritionally [inaudible
16 41:24]. I think that they were about the same as green beans.

17
18 But I kept a record of all of that, and then I sent it back to the metabolic,
19 the – all the information for a week, back to the metabolic lab, and they
20 calculated, uh, basically the in-, intake. And the Vietnamese soldier, the
21 average was about 5'2" on, on the Vietnamese soldier, and the Vietnamese
22 [inaudible 41:51] was 4'8". So their caloric requirements, you know,
23 weren't the same as, the same as ours, but their intake was, was totally
24 inadequate. They, they had the 2 meals a day and breakfast was soup, and
25 then the evening meal was soup and rice and any meat [inaudible 42:14]
26 vegetables went into the soup, and, uh, they had – they were given [some
27 – and anything] [inaudible 42:20] to buy the [seafood 42:23] and, and, and
28 the meat. Then they were issued flour, sugar, uh, to, um, and rice. Those
29 were issue items. Roughly they were on their own to get what they could,
30 but like I said, [inaudible 42:38] the price of produce was [inaudible
31 42:40].

32
33 Interviewer:

Mm-hm.

34
35 Patricia Accountius:

And so we did get then [inaudible 42:46], uh, to supplement the
36 Vietnamese rations with our B-rations. And, um, all of the baby food that
37 was on hand was becoming outdated. That's when the [inaudible 43:01] in
38 Vietnam [inaudible 43:03], I had to issue it out to the hospitals, and we in
39 turn sort of sub-issued it out to the, uh, [inaudible 43:11], so the...

40
41 Interviewer:

Mm-hm.

42
43 Patricia Accountius:

...because it was still, it was still good. It had reached its expiration date,
44 and, and, uh, we couldn't, we couldn't use it, but the, but [inaudible 43:24]

1 could, so we just issued it all out to the hospitals and the hospitals [peeled
2 43:30] the dust off and what have you and mana-...
3
4 Interviewer: [Inaudible 43:32].
5
6 Patricia Accountius: ...managed to get it out to all the medical groups and managed to get it out
7 to the [inaudible 43:36], so that was [inaudible 43:38].
8
9 Carol Habgood: You were very busy in, in your professional life. [43:41] What did you do
10 in your personal life?
11
12 Patricia Accountius: Well we were – at first we were pretty much restricted to the, the, the, the
13 [inaudible 43:49], uh, because we were at Tan Son Nhut, which is
14 [inaudible 43:57] right outside of – adjacent to Saigon. We, eh, Tan Son
15 Nhut [inaudible 44:04] district sort of run right into each other, and, uh,
16 we basically socialized with, with the people [laughter] that were [not
17 44:17] in that area. Um, we had a kitchen. We had a, a small – the, the
18 chief nurse and I shared a very small apartment, and then, um, one of the
19 general officers got a villa for us, and, uh, so we were, we were in a villa,
20 and we had a very nice French villa with 3 bedrooms, kitchen, bath. Of
21 course, the bath, we had Saigon water, and the maids would run the
22 buckets of water the day before so [inaudible 44:57] fell into the bottom,
23 you know. And we had to use [inaudible 45:00]. [Inaudible 45:01] we'd
24 see these little tadpoles swimming [laughter] and you sort of strained them
25 out and brushed your teeth. [laughter]
26
27 Ruth Stewart: [45:12] So how l-, how long did you serve in the military overall?
28
29 Patricia Accountius: Twenty-nine years and six months.
30
31 Ruth Stewart: Hm. [45:22] And where were where you when you left the military?
32
33 Patricia Accountius: Well let's see. [chuckle] [Inaudible 45:32] from Vietnam, I was Chief at
34 Fitzsimons in Denver, and then I went from Denver to [inaudible 45:43] –
35 no, to Fort Dix New Jersey, and then I was assigned as Chief at Walter
36 Reed Army Medical Center, and then while I was Chief at Walter Reed
37 Army Medical Center, I [inaudible 45:55] time, and the Chief Dietician
38 Section had a heart attack, and I was supposed to be Project Officer for a
39 building that [inaudible 46:04] at the new Walter Reed, but when she had
40 a heart attack, then the Chief Dietician Section was a statutory position as
41 established by Congress, and it's a 4-year tour, and they were having a lot
42 of racial problems, and I was assigned to Walter Reed. They interviewed
43 you, and I said [inaudible 46:32] Walter Reed. I've already had, you know,
44 my 3 tours there, [laughter] but anyhow I, I was assigned to Walter Reed,

1 and then General Bernstein refused to give me up, and you can't really
2 [refuse 46:47] the Surgeon General for very long, so for about 6 months, I
3 was [double] [inaudible 46:51] and Chief of Walter Reed because of, of its
4 racial problems and they [inaudible 46:58] that, plus being Chief of
5 Dietician Section, and, uh, uh, [inaudible 47:04] 7 days, you know, jobs,
6 and so finally, I got out of the staffing at Walter Reed at the time with the
7 situation there.

8
9 And then, uh, unfortunately, I had bought in Maryland because I was
10 assigned to Walter Reed and ended up in the Pentagon, so I [went to
11 47:28] meeting every day. And like I said, uh, the Chief Dietician Section,
12 we made all the dietician assignments, plus you approved all the floor
13 plans and layouts, plus you're responsible for all the [inaudible 47:42], and
14 the Army Surgeon General is the, is the executive agent for nutrition for
15 Department of Defense and [inaudible 47:51] representative on the [many
16 wards 47:54] and on the Department of Defense [inaudible 47:57]. His
17 work was [inaudible 48:00], and that was more than a full-time job.

18
19Ruth Stewart: [48:06] So when, when did you actually leave the, the Army?

20
21Patricia Accountius: I left, I left – well that, that was a 4-year statutory tour, so at the end of the
22 4 years, I wanted to get out, but I got talked into taking the job as Chief
23 [inaudible 48:21] Division at [inaudible 48:23] command, but the job in
24 the Surgeon General's office is basically policy, procedural assignments,
25 personnel, layout, equipment. The, um, Chief [inaudible 48:37] Division at
26 Health Services Command at that point in time, the Chief Dietician
27 Section was responsible for the operation of all of the facilities in the
28 continental United States, uh, and, uh, Hawaii and, and Alaska, so we took
29 over [inaudible 48:59] while I was Chief at, um, Health Services
30 Command. Health Services Command is located right adjacent to the
31 Academy at Fort Sam Houston, so that's where I spent my last 4 years.
32 And [inaudible 49:15] physically covered, and when I was in the Surgeon
33 General's office, I covered all the overseas hospitals. When I was at
34 Health Services Command, I covered all the hospitals in the continental
35 United States, Alaska, Panama, and Hawaii.

36
37Carol Habgood: [49:32] So you sort of reached across the wall?

38
39Patricia Accountius: [chuckle] I, I got there one way or another. [laughter]

40
41Carol Habgood: [49:41] So then, your retirement then was from, uh...

42
43Patricia Accountius: Health Services [inaudible 49:46].

44

1 Carol Habgood: ...Health Services Command to stay in San Antonio...
2
3 Patricia Accountius: Right.
4
5 Carol Habgood: ...following that?
6
7 Patricia Accountius: Right.
8
9 Carol Habgood: [49:51] And that leads you to now living here at the Army Residence
10 Center?
11
12 Patricia Accountius: Yes.
13
14 Carol Habgood: [49:56] But there were several years in between that you lived in your own
15 home?
16
17 Patricia Accountius: Right. But I, I lived in [inaudible 50:04], and then I couldn't keep up with
18 the grounds and what have you, and so I moved into, uh, a house in
19 [Walnut 50:13] Ridge, which was just as much house but not quite as
20 much grounds...
21
22 Carol Habgood: Mm-hm.
23
24 Patricia Accountius: ...[inaudible 50:22]. But then when – after I retired from the, from the
25 army, uh, one of the dieticians [inaudible 50:30] who's also a resident
26 [inaudible 50:33], uh, was working for the state, and she had a friend that
27 needed a dietician, and she talked me into going to work for him. It was a
28 man at [inaudible 50:46] nursing home. So I worked there for a short
29 period of time, and then, um, [inaudible 50:53] employment [inaudible
30 50:55] had been our consultant for our dietetic internship. Uh, when I was
31 on active duty, I had hired her as, as consultant. So when they built the,
32 um, new complex [inaudible 51:11], the assisted living nursing home, uh,
33 and retirement center, she asked me if I'd be willing to set up food service
34 there [inaudible 51:22] before, you know, the nuns had been at – St.
35 Joseph's had been like a convent. That was a challenge. [laughter]
36
37 Ruth Stewart: [51:35] Eh, did you join any, uh, veterans' organizations after you left the
38 service?
39
40 Patricia Accountius: I, eh, well first I joined profes-, uh, [inaudible 51:46]. Yes, I joined the
41 American Legion, but then I was the state, um, Texas State Nutrition
42 Counsel when the Texas [inaudible 52:00], um, [inaudible 52:02] group
43 and, uh, uh, worked with health care facilities [inaudible 52:07], and I had
44 offices in all of those, and then was adjutant for the Legion. And then

1 after, um, well after I finished in [inaudible 52:23], that's when they
2 [worked] [inaudible 52:25], and so Colonel [Stubblefield 52:30], who was
3 the executive director, knew that, that, um, I'd been working with nursing
4 homes, and so he asked me if I would set up, uh, to help care for state
5 licensure here, but then they had some problems in food service, and I
6 ended up taking the kitchen and the [Sky 52:56] Lounge and the [inaudible
7 52:57] as well as health care. And I agreed to do it only until they found
8 someone that could work fulltime, so [and one 53:06] dietician retired,
9 then I quit. [Inaudible 53:10] the state serving the nursing homes.

10

11 Ruth Stewart: [53:15] Did you experience in the military [your 53:17] many years, uh,
12 [influential view 53:20] of war or the military?

13

14 Patricia Accountius: Well you have to remember that I came back from Vietnam and had blood
15 thrown at me [inaudible 53:37] second lieutenant [inaudible 53:39]
16 Colorado State, and we had to go in uniform when we went to meetings,
17 and, uh, [inaudible 53:49] had big signs [inaudible 53:51] we came
18 outside, um, [inaudible] [bombs 53:57], um, peace, all kind of peace
19 things and what have you. When I was stationed at the Pentagon, I got hit
20 with a bag of pig's blood once. [chuckle]

21

22 Uh, that gave you a very strange feeling because when I was, when I was
23 stationed in Vietnam, I [spent 54:22], uh, our sickest patients went to the
24 3rd Field to be stabilized to Medevac out, and some of them were, were
25 not, uh, combat-type injuries, but they had [falciparum 54:36] malaria, and
26 they were renal, renal patients, and, uh, they had a very strange diet that
27 we came up with that they could tolerate, and, um, but I worked there and
28 more than, more than once helped them triage. And after you'd cut these
29 young kids – after you'd cut the uniforms off of them [or whatever 55:02]
30 you see blood, uh, after you'd gone out – gone into [inaudible 55:07] some
31 the surgeons and [inaudible 55:09] body bag, not [inaudible 55:11] it was
32 right inside the back door, uh, and then you'd come back and, and you're
33 treated like you started the war, [laughter] you are responsible. Um, that,
34 that's, uh, gives you a little different feeling, and I think it's just
35 tremendous the difference with the Americans and their perception now
36 than there was during the Vietnam conflict.

37

38 Ruth Stewart: Thank you very much for the interview, Pat.

39

40

41/lo