ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

HOPE LONG

An interview conducted on

July 19, 2018

Interviewer: Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

"War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present"

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Hope Long are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on July 19, 2018.

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The electronic file and complete transcript of this interview were processed in the Department of History at Angelo State University and are available at the Dr. Ralph R. Chase West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

WONGSRICHANALAI: This is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai. It is July 19, 2018. We are in San Angelo, Texas at Angelo State University for a *War Stories* interview. Can we start with your name, please?

LONG: Hope Marie Long.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And when and where were you born?

LONG: I was born in Topeka, Kansas in um 1974. May 8th.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's V-E Day.

LONG: Oh. You know, I forgot all about that. Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And Harry Truman's birthday.

LONG: Yes, I do know that. He's my favorite president.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Very good. Very good. Um and did you grow up in Topeka?

LONG: Yes, born and raised. And I never . . . well, besides vacation to, like, Florida, Missouri, and several other places . . . uh Colorado, I think. I can't remember if . . . yeah! I went there before. Um besides a few vacations outside of it, I never left, you know, to live until I joined the Marine Corps and went to boot camp.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you have any siblings?

LONG: Yes. I have a younger brother. He's two years younger. And a little sister, half-sister, who is eleven years and one day younger.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Very precise.

LONG: Yes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what was growing up in Topeka like?

LONG: Uh it was . . . it was nice. I love it. Um I love going back to visit. My dad . . . unfortunately, my dad's the only family left in Topeka, so there's not too many other people left up there besides a few high school friends. So . . . but I still love it. It's beautiful. It has trees and nice grass and doesn't have so many stickers.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And a lot of history.

LONG: Yes. It was where uh *Brown vs. the Board of Education* was. In fact, um we moved right before high school um onto Taylor Street, which was . . . we lived three blocks away from the school where that took place.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's pretty cool.

LONG: Yes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: You said that you were interested in history. Was that partially because of where you grew up?

LONG: Uh I mean, I . . . I like history, but I . . . I mean, I wouldn't say I'm a history buff or anything. I just . . . I like learning about history. I actually prefer to learn about histories of other cultures more than anything, because going through school, it always irritated me that it seemed like the focus was always on Western Europe. And like, you might learn a little tiny bit about, you know, China . . . early Chinese civilization, and African, and you know, very, very little about the Middle East, and then straight to the Renaissance and that was it. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Fair enough. Was your father in the military?

LONG: Uh yes. He was drafted during Vietnam into the Army. And kind of a funny story about that: so, he was born with a heart murmur, and he couldn't even do physical education in high school because of it. And so, when his number came up and they're like, "Yeah, we're going to take him," my grandma, she's like, "Uh he can't even do P.E." And they're like, "We don't care. We're still taking him." So, he went to Vietnam. He never really talked much about it. I know he had a Purple Heart um and he was exposed to Agent Orange. And just recently, uh the government finally . . . um he has Parkinson's now, and they believe that it's caused by his exposure to Agent Orange. So, they finally gave him like a payout for that, and he gets money each month now for . . . and he goes to the VA all the time for . . . so, um he never really . . . he has a bunch of um, you know, the little . . . uh I forget what they're called. The little slides. The individual slides that you put into the little . . . and then project it. Um he has a whole bunch of those. Actually, I should . . . I should try to get those from him next time I'm home. Um but the only thing he really talked to me about at one point was um he told me how he felt like the Army didn't do it right in Vietnam. Like, they would, you know, just roll into a village, harass the villagers, you know, ask them questions and everything, and then they would leave. So, as soon as they left, of course, the Viet Cong would come in and then they would torture the villagers because they helped the Army guys. But he said the Marines, they would actually . . . they would go into a village and they would stay there and actually, like, embed in the village and get to know the villagers and everything, and kind of protect them too. So . . . and I don't know. In my opinion, that was kind of how we treated Iraq, too. So, it was kind of an eye-opener when he . . . for me when he said that. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did he do uh when he returned from Vietnam?

LONG: Um before he even went to Vietnam, he was working at uh Welsh? Welch's manufacturing? He was a welder. And um so, he went right back to doing that. In fact, um . . . how long ago was that? Uh I think ten years now? Um they finally closed down Welch's Manufacturing in Topeka, and he . . . there was a write-up about him in the Topeka paper and everything because he was their longest um employee . . . longest serving employee. Like, he

had worked there his whole life, and so, you know, they had to lay him off and everybody else. And so . . . but that's what he did his whole life. And then after that, I think he worked as a . . . like in the warehouse for Payless Shoes, you know, driving the little cart things and the uh . . . the lift thing. So, uh . . . but now he's totally retired. He can barely get around now, so . . . the Parkinson's has gotten so bad. But . . . so I go up there as often as I can to check on him and see how he's doing.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's a long drive.

LONG: Nine and a half hours, and that's with just two stops for, like, five to ten minutes each as I run out of my car, start filling the gas up, go to the bathroom, come back, and then hit the road again.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what motivated you to join the armed forces?

LONG: Um actually, funny story. Um so, I was . . . I was teacher's pet throughout all of school and always did very well academically. And my junior year of high school, I overloaded myself. And so, I got two Cs in AP U.S. History and Trigonometry. And I thought my life was over and that I wouldn't be able to get a good scholarship. And as fate would have it, I happened to see a Navy recruitment poster for linguists. And so, I was already taking . . . see, by my junior year, I was in my second year of French and my first year of German. And so, I was . . . I really loved languages. And I wanted to go to college, but I didn't want to have to take all the extra classes, especially math, because I hated math and science. So, after I saw the poster, I was like, "Well, heck. I can . . . I can join the military, you know. I can go to school for free to become a linguist and only, you know, study languages." Oh, I had already been looking into Monterey, California. But as a civilian, the only way you could go there is if you already had a two-year associates liberal arts degree, and then you could go there, you know, to do the language study. So, I was like, "Well, heck. The military, they'll pay me to go to school, and then I can travel and see the world." Because . . . and then . . . so, I kept thinking about it and then I decided, "Well, if I'm going to join the military, I might as well join the best, right?"

WONGSRICHANALAI: Not the Army.

LONG: [Laughs] No. But . . . so, I walked into the Marine recruiting office, and I think my recruiter probably to this day, probably still remembers me. Because, you know, I was a very rare find for them because they didn't have to come looking for me. I walked in, I was female, and um . . . well, I was a woman, because I know Dr. Ashworth-King hates when people say female as a noun. But um . . . so, I was a woman and um I was QEP, Quality Enlistment Program, and I was going into the intelligence field. So, it was like the jackpot for them. But . . . so, I walked in, and now, since they didn't um usually deal with the intelligence MOSs—uh "MOS" is Military Occupational Specialty—since they didn't deal with them very often, they thought I was guaranteed Russian linguist, but I was just guaranteed SIGINT, signal intelligence, which is the 2600 field. Um so, when I got to boot camp, I found out halfway through that, no, I wasn't going to be a Russian linguist. I was going to be a Morse code operator instead. And I cried. So . . . that was the only time in boot camp that I cried.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What year was this that you joined?

LONG: Ninety-two. And um so, I . . . my boot camp date was April 27th, and I was still in high school, so I had to graduate at the semester. But I still kept going even after that, up until I . . . my ship-out date because all I had was orchestra, choir, French three, German two, and Russian one. So, it was fun, and I got to see all my friends.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what did they think of you joining the Marines?

LONG: A lot of them, they were like, "You can't join the Marines! They're going to make you into a killer!" So . . . and then some of them, of course, thought I couldn't hack it, you know, because I was very shy and meek and timid. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: But you were an athlete.

LONG: Yes . . . well, I ran track and cross country. So, I was a jock nerd, I guess. But, I . . . I could never hack it at, like, the team sports, you know. Like I tried playing volleyball and basketball. And I love . . . and I played softball when I was younger. And I loved playing sports, but I was never really good enough, so the other kids would make fun of me. So . . . running, you know, it's just an individual thing, so it was much better.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And what was the reaction at home to your enlistment?

LONG: Um I almost changed my mind about joining the Marines because my stepdad, who I absolutely despise . . . um he's no longer my stepdad. My mom finally divorced him. But anyway, um he had joined the Marines. He was one of those that back then, it was like you can either go to jail, or be drafted, or, you know, go into the service. So, he chose the Marines. And he would get drunk and tell war stories about all this crazy stuff. And then come to find out later . . . when my mom finally divorced him, um she found out he never made it to Vietnam. He never made it through boot camp. He got kicked out for psych reasons. And uh also, he was going to be a cook, so he wouldn't have been walking point through the . . . you know, the jungles of Vietnam anyway.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, that almost made you change your mind?

LONG: Yes, because . . . just because he had done it. I hated everything that he did or liked, so . . . but I still stuck it out. I mean, I had already gone to see the recruiters and everything, so I was like, "I'm . . . I'm doing it."

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was your dad's reaction?

LONG: Um I mean . . . actually, I don't . . . I don't even remember. Um I never really saw much of my dad growing up, and also, he's . . . he's very . . . like, I wouldn't say he's quiet, but he doesn't really talk much about things like that, you know. Like, he'll talk about cars, you know, like working on cars, or welding, or stuff like that, but not life stuff, you know. So, uh pretty

much, I . . . I think I only saw my dad really once a year because he would take me and my brother to Worlds of Fun in Kansas City.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Is that an amusement park?

LONG: Yes. And now it . . . it's Worlds of Fun and Oceans of Fun, so it's an amusement park and a water park right next to each other. And it's still my favorite amusement park. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: There was no apprehension of joining at this time, right after the Gulf War?

LONG: Oh, that was like . . . it was still pretty much in full swing, but no. I . . . you know, I don't even think I really thought about . . . I guess it was towards the end of it by the time I would have been going in, so I just . . . I don't know. I just didn't even think about that.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, tell me about the boot camp experience.

LONG: It's not as physically demanding as most people think. Um it is demanding, but not, like, to the extent that you would think it was. Like, for me, it . . . the physical part really wasn't that hard. Um I don't have very good upper body strength, so like, doing the flexed arm hang and doing so many push-ups and stuff like that was difficult, but the running . . . I mean, that was piece of cake for me. And . . . and we had to do sit-ups, and um there was also . . . the obstacle course was kind of hard because that required quite a bit of upper body strength. So, like the very first obstacle is um basically pull-up bars that you have to pull yourself up and go over. So, you can either do, like, the college roll, where you pull yourself up and then just kind of flip over, or you could chicken wing it and, you know, throw your leg over. That was what I did. And then you had these wooden logs that you had to . . . okay, so there was one wooden log that you had to jump up on or climb up on, and then there was another a little ways further and a little higher that you had to jump from that one on to that one, and then you had metal bars going up at an angle that you had to go across up to a higher . . . yet higher one. And then you had to jump down from there. And then there was a wooden wall that you had to climb over. So, that was a little difficult. And then, you know, I don't remember what was . . . I think it was stuff that you had to . . . you had to jump over logs and then go under bars, so it was like jump and then crawl under . . . a few of those. And then you had the rope that you had to climb, and that was in boots and utes, meaning our um cammie bottoms and boots and uh just the green t-shirt. So, it was actually kind of fun once you got the hang of it but getting the hang of it was kind of difficult. Oh, and it was a timed event, so you had to do it within a certain amount of time.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, this is Parris Island?

LONG: Yeah, for Marines, uh there's only two boot camps. There's Parris Island, which is where um . . . all the women go to Parris Island, and then the men, they're split between either Parris Island or um San Diego. So . . . and then of course, there's rival . . . rivalry between . . . in the Marine Corps between those who were, you know, East Coast or West Coast marines. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: How many other recruits were with you in that incoming class?

LONG: Mm that's a good question. I don't . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Roughly.

LONG: Uh probably forty? I think there's forty in a platoon, usually . . . between there. Between thirty and fifty. Somewhere in . . . in that range. So . . . and, sadly, I . . . I don't think I've kept in touch with any of . . . oh, actually, I take that back. One. Uh Diana Hailey. We actually went to Morse code school together, and she lives in Colorado now. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you all go through basic together, and then you branch off for your different training, different specialties.

LONG: Yes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay.

LONG: And two of the girls in our sister platoon um, they actually got to be Russian linguists. And I was so upset when I saw um . . . oh, I can't think of her name! One of the two girls, she was at 2nd Radio Battalion when I finally got there. I uh got stationed there in '97. Cullison, I think, was her last name. Um but when I saw her there, she told me that the other girl, Teague, had washed out of DLI and didn't graduate. I was like, "Man, I would've . . . I would have graduated! Darn it."

WONGSRICHANALAI: And DLI is?

LONG: Oh, Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Hm. And what other experiences did you have during boot camp?

LONG: Um we were starved to death. Our senior drill instructor, DI . . . um there was, like, no fat on this woman, I swear, but she thought we were all weight recruits. And so, I went there weighing a 130 pounds, which was way under my max. Uh so, in the Marines especially, they're very particular about the weight limits. So, you have a maximum weight for your height, and I was 5'6" at the time and I think my max was like 150. And so, I was well under that. I came out 120. And so, she was very extreme. Those who were actual weight recruits, like they were actually over their max, they were only allowed to have salad and fruit when they went through the chow hall line. So, when we went through the lines at the chow hall, she would have all the weight recruits be . . . go in line first so they could have all the salad and all the fruit. And then . . . so there would be a drill instructor outside waiting with us, and then there would be another one inside as we were going through the line, coming out to sit down and eat. They would be checking our trays as we went by, making sure that we didn't get something that we weren't supposed to. And so, that was all they could eat and . . . no um salad dressing or anything on top of it, so it was basically just lettuce. And that was all they could eat. And none of us were allowed to eat bread because bread retains water, which you would think would be a

good thing in the heat of the summer in South Carolina, but anyway. Um so the rest of us, by the time we would go through, none of that would be left because they would have cleared it all out. And so, if we got a meat and a starch, we could only eat half of each. So, they would have a drill instructor at the tray return when we went to go turn them in and dump, you know, whatever waste we had to make sure that we still had half of each left. And we couldn't eat anything greasy. So, for breakfast, no um bacon, eggs, none of that. If we had pancakes or waffles, no butter or syrup. Um you could only have milk once a day. So, basically, if you got cold cereal, you could have milk to pour in it in the mornings. And um, yeah, it was . . . it was horrible. No desserts of any kind. And like I said, no bread, which I really hated because I love bread.

But anyway, there was one day and we were going through. There was spaghetti, and then they had a pudding, except it didn't . . . it looked weird. I thought it was, like, some type of sauce, so I got that, and the drill instructor obviously didn't know what it was either when I went by her to sit down. So, as soon as I sat down and I tried it and it was pudding, I was like, "Oh, yummy!" So, I like ate it really quick, and then I took my spaghetti and smeared it over the spot where the pudding had been so you couldn't even tell it had been there. And sure enough, one of them realized what it was afterwards, and when we got back to the . . . the squad bay, our senior came forth and she was like, "Okay. So, who had the pudding at lunch? I know that one of you had it because I saw it on your plate." And I . . . I refused to say it was me. And then . . . so, she kept asking, and then finally, she started um ITing us. You know, I don't even . . . I don't remember what IT stands for. But basically, it's where if you do something wrong, they'll make you do exercises, you know, as remediation for . . . or if you screw up. So, usually, it's a lot of, you know . . . it's like, "Get down in the push-up position now." And she's like . . . you have to do push-ups until she gets tired. Or um you would never think side straddle hops—jumping jacks, we call them "side straddle hops,"— you would never think how much those can hurt after you do like fifty of them. [Laughs] So . . . so, she was sitting there, ITing us, and she's like, "Who had the pudding?!" She kept asking, over and over again. I was like, "I'm not telling you." [Laughs] And then, finally, some other girls in the platoon were starting to, you know, come forward and be like, "This recruit had the pudding!" Oh, you couldn't talk in the first person. So, you had to say, "This recruit requests" or, "This recruit did this" or whatever. So . . . and you couldn't say "you." You had to say, "Would the drill instructor. . ." like, you know, you had to talk in the third person all the time.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What's the point of that?

LONG: I don't know. It's just um . . . I think it's just to um . . . quite honestly, I think it's just to um take away your . . . any form of personal identity, you know, and to make you start working as a team. I think that's what it was supposed to do. Um I think I've been told what it was for before, but I don't remember exactly. But I mean . . . just, like, the reason that we do so much drill, close-order drill, is so that we learn to do immediate obedience to orders and you work as one unit, as a team, all together. So . . . but, yeah, I think it's a little dehumanizing, too, you know. It . . . it's to break you down and then they slowly build you back up as a team instead of as an individual. We're not an army of one. We're . . . but . . . which a little joke about that, um so, my little sister, Amber, um when she was in high school and I um . . . my mom moved her out to North Carolina where I was stationed at um . . . to get her away from Topeka. She was running with bad kids and getting into trouble, so she moved out there to be closer to me because I could help them out. And um so one day, when I went over there, she was telling me that she

was thinking about joining the Army. And I was like, "Why would you join the Army, Amber?" She's like, "Well, I'm not . . . I'm not smart enough," or, "I'm not . . ." oh, what was it? I can't remember why she said the Army. But anyway, that was around that time that they had, you know, adapted that stupid slogan. And she's really short, so I was like, "Oh, okay. So, you can be an army of one half, Amber." She didn't like that.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did she end up joining?

LONG: No, thank God.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Any . . . any branch?

LONG: No, but she married two Marines. So . . . and she's dating a Marine now. So . . . but, yeah, I don't . . . I don't think my little sister would have . . . she does not do well under authority like that. She would have rebelled and probably would've been kicked out. But, I mean, who knows? Maybe it would have done her some good. But . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: There was another story about dumpster diving?

LONG: Oh, yes. That was . . . it was so funny. So, I . . . actually, I was leading up to that because they starved us so much. I was . . . I was hungry, and um so when we went to do combat town . . . there's a week during boot camp where you go and do, like, tactical maneuvers type thing, and you land nav., land navigation, with a compass. And um so, we were in combat town, and of course, we were eating MREs, Meals Ready to Eat. I don't know if you've ever seen an MRE, but . . . you know, I should . . . I actually have two at home in the cupboard. They're like emergency . . . you know like in case of a hurricane or something. But . . . which, actually, I guess we don't really need that here, but anyway. I'm used to living on the coast and having to worry about that. But um . . . so in the MREs, they always have a dessert in it, and so, of course, our psychotic senior drill instructor wouldn't allow us to have the desserts. So, as they handed out the MREs, she also had a big box going around, and we had to throw in our desserts. And if we had the . . . actually, I think she allowed us to eat the crackers, which is a form of . . . you know, it's like bread. I don't know why, but um we had to throw out any of the condiments and the desserts into the box and then they threw it in the dumpster. And so, when we were doing our land nav. a few days later, it was the group land nav., so we were in groups of four. My group, we ended up going through combat town, and there was nobody else around. So, I was like, "Let's go see if it's in the dumpster still," and we opened it up. It was right on top, the whole box, so like it wasn't like anything had been thrown in with it. And they're sealed in plastic wrap and everything, so, yeah, we . . . so I had a cherry nut cake, and it was so delicious. And . . . but it was perfect timing, too, because like I swear, no longer than a minute after we finished and threw all the trash back in the dumpster . . . that the drill instructors came driving by in a pickup truck, checking on the teams. And of course, we probably all had these, like, guilty looks on our face, like, "We're not doing anything."

Oh, and one of my friends, Keen, Recruit Keen . . . um I don't remember her first name. But uh we had to cross a little stream . . . and this is in the swamps of South Carolina, you know. So, we had to cross this nasty stream. It smelled so bad and there was this log going across it, so the rest of us made it across no problem, but she fell off the log into the water and smelled really

bad. But, that was fun. Oh, and then, during . . . we also had individual land nav. that we had to do at night, in the dark. And um the day before, when we got our MREs, I got a . . . uh a chocolate nut bar. It was kind of like um the Little Debbie Nutty Bars, um but it didn't have peanut butter with it. It was just chocolate and the little wafer things. So, I took that and I stuck it up in the boot blouse of my pants, and then I put it in my backpack later. And then later, I also got a peanut butter packet and . . . same thing. So, when we went to do the night land nav., I put both of them back up into my . . . my leg . . . the trouser pant legs. And so, when I was out in the middle of the forest all by myself in the dark, I took them out and I, like, ate it. It was so good. That was like the best nutty bar I've ever had in my life. Though, of course . . . then when I finally made it back, I was like drinking all the water in my canteen, trying to make sure my breath didn't smell like peanut butter when I got back. But . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: How many generations of female marines had there been by that point?

LONG: Oh . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Was it still relatively novel?

LONG: Um . . . I . . . I don't . . . I don't know. Um I wouldn't say it was still novel, but, um like, I mentioned the other day, uh so when I joined, it was right after the Tailhook incident. And that's where it was a bunch of naval aviators, they had met for a convention, and all the women pilots were basically harassed and sexually assaulted by their male counterparts um in the hotel rooms. I don't remember if anybody was actually raped or if they were . . . from what it sounds like, they were basically . . . they got drunk and a bunch of them were chasing the women up and down the hallways of the hotel. And because of that, when it came to light, um the uh . . . the chief of naval operations resigned because of that. And so, when I went to boot camp he had just resigned, and part of our knowledge that we had to study and memorize throughout boot camp was the chain of command. And since we're a department of the Navy . . . you know, fall under the . . . that was one of the key positions that we had to memorize. So, there was nobody in that position at the time. And because of that, they also started instituting, you know, sexual harassment, sexual assault classes, um and stuff like that. And I just remember once I got out of boot camp and I got to um my first A school to learn Morse code, a lot of the guys, they had been warned by their drill instructors to not even talk to female marines. You know, like we're the devil and we're just going to charge them with sexual harassment if they do. And so, a lot of them were actually scared of us. Like, that didn't last very long, though. But . . . and quite honestly, Fort Devens—that was where my A school was, Fort Devens, Massachusetts—was just real close to Worcester, Massachusetts.

WONGSRICHANALAI: [Correcting pronunciation] Worcester.

LONG: Wus . . . Wust . . . however you say it. I can never say it right. But um yeah, there was a lot of shenanigans that went on within the A school because the staff at Fort Devens didn't really supervise us very well I don't think. But, yeah. And then Pensacola, Florida was where I went next, and they were almost too strict there. Like, most A schools, regardless of the service, like they all are very strict, almost to the point of stupidity. Like, they treat you like little kids. And uh it was just . . . so, there were rules like um guys weren't allowed to go into the girls' rooms

and vice versa in the barracks. Um they would have common areas that you could hang out in together, but you weren't supposed to be in each other's rooms. Of course, that still happened all the time. Um and then we would have field day every . . . once um every week. I think it was Friday mornings was when they usually did the field day inspections. So, you had to thoroughly clean your room, like white glove inspection ready, and then they would walk through the next day. And if you failed, they could secure your liberty for the weekend. Um so at Fort Devens, they were kind of strict in your liberty.

Um when you first got there, you were in uh . . . I think it was in learning phase or phase one. You weren't allowed to wear civilian clothes at all. So, you always had to wear your cammies or PT gear around, and you weren't allowed to go off the post. Um and then once you hit phase two, then you were . . . I think you were allowed to go off post, but you had to go in your chucks, the charlie . . . dress uniform . . . service uniform. And then um once you hit phase three, then you were allowed to do everything. You know, you could wear civilian clothes, you could go off post, and all of that. So . . . but of course, with the Marines, we were always messing with each other. And it's like we're always particular about how we look, and uh so, you'd always have to iron your uniform every single night, shine your boots. And with the old camouflage uniforms, the pockets would kind of fluff out a little bit, you know. They wouldn't stay flat unless you . . . we took . . . you had to have Elmer's glue and basically glue down the flaps, and then iron it flat so that it would stay down perfectly flat. And of course, you couldn't actually use your pockets to put anything in it because that would make it bulge out again. Yeah, it was stupid.

But, yeah, we were always being messed with and it seems like especially like the senior students, the ones who had been there longer, they would haze. I don't know if you've heard of hazing. Well, yeah, like they talk about it here, too. Um so hazing was really bad at that point. So, usually, the senior students would haze the new students that came in. And um at Fort Devens, they had what was called "the sand man." And so, a lot . . . what a lot of them would do, the senior students, they would put on their gas masks and go into a junior marine's room and either beat the crap out of them or like have them do stupid stuff. You know, stuff like . . . um my ex-husband, he was also . . . um we were students together. We met in the Marine Corps. He was actually locked in his wall locker one time by them. So, it was like the whole bullying thing in high school, you know, where you lock somebody in their wall locker or their . . . yeah, it's called a wall locker . . . or just a locker, right? It's been so long. Um but, yeah, he uh . . . he had that done to him. Another marine talked about how they came into his room and took all his uniforms and threw them out the window into the snow. And this was right before we were supposed to have a wall locker inspection. So, basically, they messed up all his uniforms. But just stupid stuff like that. And like I said, at Devens, it was really bad because the staff didn't really supervise very well, and they let that go on. One of them was actually kind of like in charge of it, from what I understand.

So . . . and of course, hazing became a big thing in '96 . . . I think was when the tape came out with the um . . . the group, they had gotten their wings from uh jumping. And uh so before all that came out, what they would usually do is they would line up all the guys against a wall who were getting their wings, and they would um put . . . put them on their chest with the pins and . . . and they'd pound them. They would take turns, all the ones who had already gotten their wings, they would go through and pound them into their chest. So, a lot of them, it would be like all bloody and stuff from that. Um there was other things that were done that was hazing. Um like whenever someone would get promoted . . . um do the same thing with the rank. You

know, put it on the collar and then pound it in without putting the caps on the back. And when you became an NCO . . . in the Marine Corps, when you become an NCO on your dress blue uniforms, you get the red blood stripe. And so, what a lot of marines would do is once you got promoted, they would tag on your blood stripes. Basically, they would form a column that the new NCO would walk through, and then they would kick them in the legs as they went by. Actually had marines, you know, get their legs broken and stuff like that because of stuff like that.

And to show how brainwashed I was, and naïve, and stupid, when um . . . so, as a woman in the Marines, you know, a lot of us were always trying to prove that we're just as good as the guys. So, you know, like whenever I got promoted, I would get upset if the guy would refuse to do the same thing to me that they would do to the guys. I was like, "No, no. Hit me." They're like, "No, I can't hit you." But, yeah. So, I uh contributed to hazing when I was younger, unfortunately. And you know, as I got older and everything, like towards the end of my time in the Marine Corps, especially, um . . . so when . . . when I first stationed at 2nd Radio Battalion at Camp Lejeune, um women weren't allowed to deploy yet, and we weren't even allowed to go on ships on the MEUs. A MEU is a Marine Expeditionary Unit. And uh we weren't allowed to do that. But they were just starting to outfit the ships to have women on them, and uh so while I was there, they started . . . you know, women started being able to be on the MEU teams and go on that. And then, eventually, they were also able to do CAX, which was Combined Arms Exercise, and that's in California. Um so, they were able to finally be on teams and everything.

And that was all great, but then you have the women who, in my opinion, it seemed like they wanted to actually be a guy. And they were, like, pushing to actually um change the PFT to where we would have to do pull-ups instead of the flexed arm hang and stuff like that. And I was just like, "You guys are crazy because I am not a man. I cannot do pull-ups, and neither do I desire to try to do three pull-ups." But anyway, I just . . . um I guess my opinion on it now, like the whole, you know . . . yes, women should be allowed to do anything that the guys can do, but they have to be able to meet the same standards that the guys have to do. You know, they can't lower the standards just to allow a woman to do it, in my opinion. So, if . . . if you can do all that, good on you. But otherwise, don't be trying to make me be a man because . . . yeah. So . . . because right now, the . . . the way the PFT is, you know, it's um . . . what's the word? It's uh . . . oh, I hate when I can't think of the word in English. [Laughs] Um but basically, the women have a different standard than the guys.

Oh, and actually, when I first came in, it was totally different. Like, every single event. So, the guys have always done three-mile run, and they have to do it within twenty-eight minutes. Anything higher than twenty-eight minutes is failing. Um they had to do eighty sit-ups in two minutes, and then they had to do at least three pull-ups. Twenty is max. For the . . . for the women, it was only a mile and a half run when I first came in, and we had to do fifty sit-ups in a minute, which was actually harder, I think, than eighty in two minutes. And then we had to do the flexed arm hang for at least . . . I don't remember what the minimum was. I think it was fifteen seconds. But, you had to do pretty much thirty-five seconds to get a decent score. Seventy seconds was max. So, it was all totally different, and then they changed to everybody doing the three-mile run. Um when was that? I think that was after I went to sergeant's course. Or no . . . or was it? Yeah, because I . . . I was still doing the mile and a half when I went to sergeant's course, so it was some time after '95. So, they made it to where everybody had to do the three-mile run, but of course, we were given three . . . everything . . . as far as the points went, uh we had three extra minutes added on. So, in order to max the run, get the best score, they had to do it in

eighteen minutes. We had to do it in twenty-one. And then . . . which makes perfect sense. I mean, they actually did studies and found out that, statistically, women ran three minutes slower than their counterpart male. Um so, they changed that, and then they eventually changed sit-ups to crunches. So, you had to do . . . I don't even remember. I hated crunches, though. I could never get them down.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, did the male marines treat female recruits as—or female marines—as different because of these . . . ?

LONG: I think sometimes they did, but I also experienced where they seemed to be very protective of us. Like, they treated us as little sisters a lot of the time, um which I didn't mind. Um but I can see how that would . . . could be bad if you go into combat, you know, and you're trying to protect one member instead of just working as a team. Um so, you know, there's that. But whenever I went to any of the academies, you know . . . so we had corporal's course, sergeant's course, staff academy, the advanced course—which is for gunnery sergeants—and then you had first sergeant . . . master sergeant . . . I don't remember what they called it. But I went to all of them except corporal's course. Um but every single one that I went to, usually there was only . . . like in sergeant's course, I think we had five different platoons . . . or four. But we only had one woman for each platoon. So . . . and I don't . . . I don't know how the women were treated by their platoons, but every single course that I went through, the guys always treated me like, you know . . . like I said, like a little sister. Like, they would encourage me. Because by that point, I was starting to suck at running. Um basically, when I was down in Pensacola, Florida, the humidity, it really just took it out of me. I . . . I could not run in the humidity. And then I went to Guam. I definitely . . . I . . . it was always at least eighty degrees all the time, and hot and humid. And yeah, so, I just got steadily worse and worse. And then North Carolina, on the coast . . . still humid. Um so, I got to the point where I just . . . I couldn't run. But when I went to Okinawa for sergeant's course, it was a totally different climate and everything, and all of a sudden, I could run again, though I still had to build up to it. Because when I first got there, I was . . . I felt like a slug. But, you know, when we did our formation runs, they would put me at the front of the formation, and they would, you know, keep me in the formation, and encourage me and be like, "Okay, come on! Come on, Bryce. You can do it." That was my last name, then, was Bryce. But uh yeah, it was . . . it was always a good experience. I . . . myself, personally, I never had a male marine treat me like . . . like I was inferior to them because of, you know, my gender. So . . . but I know other women have had problems.

[Indistinct whispering]

LONG: Oh, no, no. I was just making sure.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Why are you interest . . . why are you interested in languages?

LONG: Um I don't know. I . . . I just loved taking them. I started . . . I took French in eighth grade, and I still remember the first phrase . . . one of the phrases that he taught us um was "*Ta mère porte des bottes des soldats*," "your mother wears combat boots." [Laughs] I just thought it was so funny. But, I just . . . I took to it really easily. Um I mean, it seemed to come real easy for

me. Now, when I got to high school, I didn't take it ninth grade because I only had two free electives, and since I played violin, orchestra took one. And I was also interested in art, so I took art and then . . . with the intention of taking French the next uh year. So, that's what I did. So, I took French one my sophomore year, and I still loved it. And uh since my high school was really awesome, we had French and Spanish, you know, like pretty much every high school does, but we also had German, uh Russian, Chinese, Latin. I think there was . . . maybe that was it. But um I just . . . I thought German sounded kind of cool, so I took that my junior year. And then I had a crush on the son of the Russian teacher, Jeffrey Launerd, and uh so my senior year, I decided to throw Russian into the mix. So, I don't know. It was just . . . they came easy to me, and I just really enjoyed learning them. And I used to joke with uh my friends in high school—before I thought about joining the military—I used to joke that uh I would move to Russia, pretend I was from France, and teach German. But . . . so, yeah. And uh all through boot camp, um I didn't . . . I didn't think anything about the languages at first when I was there because, you know, all the stress and everything just . . . but then one day . . . I think it was during mess and maintenance week because we were at the chow hall. During mess and maintenance week, um you basically go to work for either . . . you either do outside work like mowing lawns and stuff or you work in the chow hall and you actually, like, bring the trays to the main line where the recruits are lining up to eat and clean up . . . you know, mop. "Swab," as we call it. Um you do all that. So, it was while I was working in the chow hall, I heard one of my drill instructors, Drill Instructor Sergeant Stork . . . she spoke French. She said something in French and I was just like . . . my ears perked up and I was like, "[gasps]!" I was like, "I know that!" But then I got kind of depressed because I hadn't even thought about French the whole time, and I was, like, sitting there, trying to remember different things. I was like, "Man, I miss French." But, yeah, I mean, all through my time in the Marines, I tried to, you know, keep up with as much as I could, which wasn't very easy. Fortunately, the French I was able to keep up with the easiest just because I had memorized a lot of songs in French. So, as long as I could remember the songs, you know, I could keep up with it. Like I can sing "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" in French for you.

Um . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: That may be a challenge for our transcriber.

LONG: Yeah. But uh . . . so, it was easier for me to remember French, but I still, you know, I try to remember. And I remember like a few little phrases in Russian and stuff. Like, um my Russian teacher, he had taught us uh . . .

Эники, беники, Ели варенники. Эники, беники – клёц!

That's basically their "Eeny, meeny, miny, moe." So, I would do that whenever. And then he also taught us this uh little thing. It's like

Бегал заяц по болоту,
Он искал себе работу,
Да работы не нашел,
Сам заплакал и пошел.

It says, "The little bunny hopped through the woods[1], looking for work, but he couldn't find any, so he burst into tears and hopped away." Yeah. It's . . . it's weird. Oh, and then he also taught us how to sing um to the tune of "She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain." It's uh, [singing in Russian]. Oh, wait, no. That's not . . . [singing in Russian]. Oh, it's to uh "Frère Jacques." I don't know why I was thinking "Coming Around the . . ." So . . .

я не знаю
я не знаю
ничего
ничего
ничего не знаю
ничего не знаю
хорошо
хорошо

It means, "I know nothing. I know nothing. Nothing at all, nothing at all. Nothing at all, I know." Very good. So . . . because in Russian, they do double negatives, so you would say, "I don't know nothing." [Laughs]

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, Marines did not use your linguistic skills?

LONG: No, they didn't. And I kept thinking that since I worked with linguists . . . so in the signals intelligence field, you know, we have the manual Morse, non-Morse operators, which, I mean, we were basically radio ops. We like . . . we listened to different types of communications and, you know, um . . . but then you have the linguists and you have uh communicators, fifty-ones, they're the . . . today, they're more like network people. They deal with the computer networks and stuff. Back in the day, they were the ones that were in charge of the crypto, to encrypt our communications and stuff. And . . . and you also have ELINTers, electronic . . . I don't know what it stands for. Oh, I guess it's just "electronic intelligence." Um so, they would look at um like the electrical signals coming off of, you know, like uh, not just radios, but um machines and stuff like that to be able to tell what it is. At least that's what I understand they do. I don't even know for sure. But um yeah, I figured that I would be able to like just hang out with the linguists and practice Russian with them, but I never really got to do that too much. I did a little bit, but not . . . not enough. But I was pretty happy when I did start going to school here, like especially in my German class, in German one. Um you know, there was two kids who had just come from high school and had taken German in high school. I remembered more from my high school like twenty-two years previously than they did just the previous year. It's like, that's . . . that's just wrong. But, yeah, I guess they just didn't have as good of a teacher. But . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, where were the locations you were sent to . . . deployed?

LONG: Well, deployed . . . I was only deployed to Iraq . . . twice.

[1] Correction: "bunny hopped through the swamp, looking for work . . ."

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, let's talk about that first then. What were . . . what were those experiences like?

LONG: Um the first time was to uh Camp Fallujah, which I'm sure you know about. Fallujah was probably the worst fighting during the actual . . . right after the initial push. Um I didn't get there until 2008, so it was already pretty much calmed down and everything. Um Camp Fallujah was interesting. Um it was a really small, little base. I never got to go off the base. Um . . . it was fairly safe, I would say. We had one uh . . . like, mortar attack or whatever. Um basically, I think it was in the early morning, somebody uh shot a mortar into the camp, and it hit a . . . it was basically an empty Quadcon that they had. It was used by the post office to, like, store extra stuff. But some of the shrapnel that shot off from it, it went through one of our lieutenant's cans. A can . . . uh basically, they had trailers out there that we lived in, and if you were an officer or a staff NCO, you basically had a half of a trailer to yourself. So . . . and what was weird is . . . well, according to him, supposedly he had been . . . before that, he had been laying with his head on this end of his rack, and he decided that morning to switch. And the piece of shrapnel went through his can and went right below his feet. So, if he hadn't done that, we might've had a casualty. So, that was suppose . . . that's according to him. But that was . . . that was like the closest any of us . . . well, any of us who were on the camp, came to anything happening. Now, we did have teams. The team marines, they would go out on patrols in their vehicles, in the humvees, and sometimes, they would do foot patrols too, I think. Um but one of ours, they were actually in a convoy that got hit by an IED. They didn't get hit, though. It ended up being kind of a . . . okay, so every vehicle, they have flares—emergency flares—that they keep. And they keep them ready, so like, basically, all they have to do is open the thing and the flare will shoot out. Well, in the mass confusion of the convoy being halted and, you know, getting hit by an IED, one of the guys in the vehicle . . . I can't remember if they accidentally opened it or if they intentionally opened it without thinking that it was already primed to go. But anyway, they opened it in the humvee, [laughs] and so it . . . oh, that was . . . yeah.

But, yeah, I was in the OCE, the Operational Control Element, so we were in a little building on the camp. And, you know, we had all the radio equipment and everything, and computers, and so we had radio communications with the teams when they would go out . . . "outside the wire," is what we called it. And actually, it was really horrible. For that . . . this was the other thing that was messed up about that incident. So, it was the only incident we had, thank God, but we had so many screw-ups during this one incident because . . . I was the watch chief in charge of the marines on the floor, and the coms guy who we had on the radio in communication with that team, he had gone to lunch. And I was . . . I didn't realize that he had left, and nobody was manning the radio. So, they were trying to contact us after this happened for I don't even remember how long, but it was at least ten minutes. It might've been thirty minutes. So, then he got back, and he was like, "Oh my God, guys!" Like, nobody was . . . but, yeah. So, that was a big snafu. Thankfully, you know, nothing actually happened to the team, because if something had actually happened to them, like if they had been . . . their vehicle had been the ones hit, that would . . . ugh.

But, yeah, I felt so incompetent out there because um . . . so, I was an awesome Morse code operator. I can copy code like nobody's business. It was like another language to me, and that's what I did for three of the four years when I was stationed on Guam. And even in school, I . . . I got good at cop . . . I was one of the best code copiers out of our class. And so, when I first got to Guam, they like to mess with the new people, and they . . . they had a sked . . . uh we

called um . . . basically, if there were communications that happened every day at the same time between the same units that we copied, it was called a "sked," or a schedule. Um so, they had one that was really, really fast. It would get up to thirty groups per minute. In school, we had to copy up to twenty groups per minute to graduate, and this one would get up to thirties, and they liked to uh sit the new people down at the position and be like, "Okay, you got to copy this sked." Because almost everybody else knew they're . . . um they would listen to it for like three seconds and be like, "I can't copy this," and give up. So, they . . . you know, like I sat down, you know. I put the headphones on. I'm sitting there and waiting for it to start. It starts, and I'm just like, "Okay," and I just start copying. And they're like, "What the hell's wrong with you?!" because most of them couldn't even copy it, you know, even after being there for so long and having practiced on it. And so, they all thought I was crazy.

But anyway, so I was really good as a code copier, but once I got to Camp Lejeune, it was a tactical unit and we didn't actually copy code anymore, or at least not there. And so, they focused on different aspects of our mission, like what we do as twenty-six-twenty-ones. Um but since I was a woman and I couldn't deploy on any of the teams anyway, they basically . . . they stuck me in a desk job in the SSO shop, which is the Special Security Office. So, we were in charge of everybody's clearances, you know. Um and since we worked in a SCIF, which is a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility—if anyone ever tells you it's a Secret Compart . . . they're wrong. It's Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility. That would drive me nuts all the time. Um so, those are the buildings with no windows that you can't bring cell phones into or out of or any other type of personal communication devices. And you know, you keep top secret SCI information in there and everything. Um so, we were in charge of all the clearances and all the classified material in the battalion. And so, that's what I did for the first three years I was there . . . or two. Two years until I got promoted to staff sergeant.

That was in '99 when I got promoted, and then they moved me over to Alpha Company to be in charge of an OCE. Which, I had no idea what I was doing. I didn't know any of the gear. I mean, I didn't know anything, and I didn't really learn anything during my time there because none of the kids I was in charge of really knew what they were doing either because they were all young. I was supposed to be the one training them, but, yeah, It was a clusterfuck to use a nice military term. Um so, I . . . I never really learned any of that stuff. I was only in there for like a year, and then they sent me to be the EKMS uh manager. EKMS is Electronic Key Management System. So, basically, I was in charge of all the crypto within the battalion. So, I went back over to the SCIF to work with that. So, I never really learned my actual job as far as doing any of the other signals and analysis type stuff that we would do, especially when it changed over to cell phone communications. But, yeah. So, when I . . . after we left uh Camp Lejeune—we left there in 2003—from there, I went to Fort Huachuca to teach Morse code. So, that's what I did for three years from 2003 to . . . well, actually, it was 2004. It was January 2004 to July of 2007. And then we went to Camp Pendleton to 1st Radio Battalion, and that's where I deployed from. And yeah, so, it was like the blind leading the blind, in my opinion, half . . . half the times out there.

So, yeah, I felt like a failure and so incompetent during that deployment, and I was . . . I got very suicidal out there. Like, it was really bad. And um quite honestly, I think quite a few others in our OCE also got very depressed and suicidal because it was just . . . I don't know. I know for me, it was the combination of my first time ever deploying and having responsibility like that, you know, where I'm in charge of keeping them safe and alive and, you know, trying to go after bad guys and not knowing what I was doing. It was just . . . yeah. It was a bad time. But

I made it. Um actually, several of my junior marines, they saw that both I and Gunny Reed—the other watch chief—um they saw that we were having a hard time and that a lot of the other marines were having a hard time, and they actually did kind of like an intervention with us. Um basically, they called me into the CSS[2] shack. Uh . . . oh my goodness. I can't believe I've forgotten all of these acronyms. Uh I don't remember, but the . . . I'm pretty sure it was CSS. Um basically, those were all the . . . the motor T and the supply guys. Um they supported us and . . . and the uh Electronic Maintenance, EM guys. So, basically, they called me into the CSS shack one evening during my watch, and basically sat me down and was like, "Okay, we noticed you're not doing . . ." [laughs]. Like, "How are you feeling?" And, you know, they were . . . they made me feel better about everything. So, yeah.

I had . . . actually, at one point right before that, I had gotten mad at something. I don't even . . . I don't remember what it was, but it was just me and another female marine. She was a corporal, I think. It was just me and her. It was during the lunch break, I think. Like, all the other marines had gone to the chow hall, and we were holding down the fort, so to speak. And I was . . . I was doing something on the computer and she asked me something. I don't even remember what it was, but I . . . I just got . . . I got so frustrated, I started . . . I actually started crying. And I just, like, started slamming on . . . I was like, "I don't fucking know!" and I just left. And I went outside into the little area there, and I went into one of the closets and they had spray paint in there. And I remember I spray painted on the door. Um I think I spray painted, "I want to die" or something like that. I was . . . I was just so angry, and mad, and just . . . and then I just threw the spray paint down, and I went back in and I was like, "Okay, I'm better now." And . . . and it was soon after that that she had told them about what happened, and they had the intervention. So . . . I think that was the only time in my Marine Corps career that I actually, like, broke down in front of somebody and just, like, got so frustrated and . . . crying and everything. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: And then how long were you in the Corps for?

LONG: Twenty years. Twenty years and three months.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you got out in . . . ?

LONG: Two-thousand twelve. June 8th was my retirement ceremony. So, I would've loved to have done it May 8th on my birthday, but um . . . it was kind of a sore spot with me still today because um . . . so, the month before I was getting ready to retire, I should've been able to start my terminal leave already, but the battalion was going through a . . . an IG inspection, Inspector General. And since I was in the . . . oh, so when I got stationed back at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina the second time in uh 2010, they put me back in the SSO shop. I was in charge of it this time. I wasn't just a sergeant working in it. Um so, I was the actual SSO . . . or the "ASSO," the Assistant SSO. Um but, I uh . . . since I was the SSO and the security manager . . . which, by the way, you're not supposed to do both, but since they didn't have anybody else at the time . . . so, as a master sergeant, I was doing both of those billets, one of which was actually an officer billet, um meaning, like, a lieutenant or a captain was supposed to do it. Um I was in charge of that, and I was an alternate EKMS custodian. So, I had like three of the most important security positions in the battalion all at the same time. Um since I was doing all that and I was the EO rep, Equal

[2] Combat Service Support

Opportunity rep, for the battalion as a collateral duty, um I had to participate in the IG inspection. I couldn't just pawn it off to my successors because they didn't really know what they were doing yet. So, I spent my birthday going through an IG inspection. I was kind of upset about that.

And then, even after doing . . . like, I didn't have to do that; I did it out of the goodness of my heart, you know, to help the battalion out. So, when I retired . . . almost everybody who retires as a master sergeant, or a master gunny, or, you know, the equivalent—first sergeant or um sergeant major—almost every single one of them retires with an MSM, a Meritorious Service Medal. Guess what I got? A Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal. I was furious, but because I've never been one to, like, hunt after medals, you know . . . but this . . . I felt like I deserved that, and especially since I had already been cheated out of one. When I was in Fort Huachuca as a Morse code instructor, um I got instructor of the year for the entire fort. So, I beat out all the Army guys and all the Air Force and all. Like, I beat out everybody, and I was only the third marine in the history of Fort Huachuca to do so. And I got . . . because of that, they also nominated me for the DIA, Defense Intelligence Agency, um instructor of the year award, and I won that and got to go to D.C. and get the award and everything. And after all of that, when I went to leave Fort Huachuca, my CO, Captain Ramsey, he put me in for an MSM. And I should've gotten it, [laughs] but whoever at the higher level who approves the awards, they're like, "Gunnery sergeants don't rate MSMs." So, [laughing] I got a Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal then too. So, I was . . . mm . . . I was a little furious over that, but eh. "*C'est la vie, n'est-ce pas*?"

WONGSRICHANALAI: When was the second time you were deployed to Iraq? You said . . .

LONG: Oh, oh. Oh, I'm sorry. Um so, I deployed two times in a row. So, 2008, uh we . . . I deployed from February to September. October? I think we got back in September. Yeah, it was February to September. And then the second time was the next year, January 2009. We were on a rotation, um both the radio battalions, 1st Radio Battalion at Camp Pendleton and 2nd Radio Battalion at Camp Lejeune. Um basically, Camp Lejeune would go out from uh September to January and then 1st Radio Battalion would go out in January, relieve them, and then stay through September until they came back out. So, it was a constant cycle, you know. You deploy for seven months and then you come back and do . . . take leave as soon as you got back, and then train up to deploy again. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you were in 1st Radio Battalion?

LONG: First Radio Battalion when I deployed, though I spent almost half my career at 2nd Radio Battalion. But . . . but yeah. So, I went back out in January of 2009, but I was only there until . . . I came back on July 4th because um we were tearing down uh . . . retrograding everything to get out of Iraq at that point because they had had their elections and, you know, they didn't want us there anymore, too. So . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: Has your concept of the United States changed at all during the twenty years you were in the Marine Corps, having been deployed and all that?

LONG: Um while I was in um . . . okay. So, before I joined, I wasn't like extremely patriotic or anything. I mean, I loved my country, but I wasn't like, "Oorah! Go Marine," or, you know, "Go USA." But, uh I didn't join out of patriotism. Like I said, I just joined because GI bill [laughs] and to become a linguist. But while I was in, I . . . I pretty much considered myself to be a conservative Republican even though I was an atheist. But I uh . . . I was . . . I think I was . . . had become very patriotic while I was in. Like, it would infuriate me if I saw people, like, wanting to burn the flag or, you know, not standing for the National Anthem because they were too busy playing a game or . . . or whatever. Um and quite honestly, I hate to say it, but if the whole kneeling in the NFL had happened like just five years previous, I probably would've been one of the ones being like, "You're disrespecting the troops. Blah blah blah blah," you know. And . . . which is stupid. But, anyway, I . . . and I actually remember thinking that the people uh protesting the Iraq War, you know, I . . . I hated that they were, you know, protesting in the streets and keeping people from getting to their jobs, you know, or getting to where they needed to be.

But then, after going to Iraq . . . and I mean, my . . . my ex, he went with the original OIF[3], and so I fully supported all of that then. But even soon after we went through, I kind of . . . I didn't agree with how we did it. It was like we just bulldozed our way in there, didn't protect any of the rich history or anything in that area. I mean, we . . . we left the museums and everything just open to looting and, I mean, you're talking about Mesopotamia. I mean, it's just like . . . it just blows my mind that we did that. And, also, we destroyed so much of their infrastructure without needing to. Um did you ever see *Generation Kill*? I mean, I love that . . . that series. It's so awesome. But it also pissed me off watching it, especially uh Godfather. I . . . I just want to throat punch that guy [laughs]. But anyway, um I think there was one part where they were told to put all of the explosives they found in a school building and blow it up. It's like, "What the . . . ?" Mm! I just . . . it just irritates me because like my dad said, you know, during Vietnam, we . . . we turned the people against us by not protecting them from the Viet Cong, and we did the exact same thing, in my opinion, in the first initial push going through Iraq.

And then, also, we allowed them . . . we didn't understand the . . . you know, the uh dynamics between the Sunni and the Shia. And the fact that after we went in and liberated them, you had, a lot of times, where neighbors who were either Shia or Sunni would accuse their opposite neighbor of doing something just because they didn't like them. And, you know . . . so, we were rounding up bad guys who weren't really bad people. And I don't know, I just . . . it was really frustrating. I don't think it . . . I really started to hate what we did until after the fact, you know, because even while I was there, I thought we were doing good and that we were helping them and trying to, you know, give them a better representative government for them. But, I mean, all we did was we just took one strong man out of power and created a vacuum, and didn't really do enough, I think, to help stabilize the area. Or at least, it was too little too late, I think. Um but, yeah.

And then since I've retired, I got divorced and I think just my personal journey that I've been on, you know . . . like I was very well off with my ex-husband because he was . . . he's really good with money. He invested a lot. Um we saved a lot of money. Um we were very well off and we were DINKs, Dual Income, No Kids. So, um you know . . . and you can't beat a military paycheck. Whenever I hear people complaining about how military . . . you know, service members don't get paid enough, I'm just like, "Bullshit." We . . . we . . . when you don't

[3] Operation Iraqi Freedom

include the benefits that we get, like health care—free health care—um free dental, I mean, free housing if you just stay in base housing or live in the barracks, you can't beat that. We get paid COMRATS. If you get married and don't live in the barracks, you get paid extra food . . . extra money a month for food. That's what COMRATS are. I mean, it's . . . it's ridiculous in my opinion, but I mean, we were smart. We, you know . . . we spent our money wisely and saved a lot, and I let him keep all of it when we got divorced. All . . . the only thing I took . . . uh he let me keep the house that we owned outright in North Carolina, and now my mom lives there. And I took my TSP, Thrift Savings Plan, which . . . I had over $100,000 saved up in it. So, you know, I did not want for anything. And I think that was part of the reason I . . . I was kind of blinded to the plight of those who weren't military and had to pay, like, you know, $500 to $1,000 a month on health care for their family and stuff like that.

And I just . . . so, after I retired and moved here and . . . I just . . . I started to see more of just how messed up our economy is and how everything doesn't work [laughs] properly. And especially infrastructure within the whole country. I think it's pathetic that everywhere you go, like even when I go back home to Topeka . . . you think the roads here are bad? They got nothing on Topeka. It's depressing. Like, I'll go up there, and I thought I was going to blow out a tire or something driving around up there because there are potholes all over the place. And of course, they have constant construction going on, but nothing seems to get done. And one of my friends who still lives up there from high school, David Morgan, he and his dad have been fighting against Topeka for, oh man, I think twenty years now. He owns . . . his dad owns a bike shop, Jerry's Bike Shop, and they tried to take it over through imminent domain to put in a whole row of apartment complexes because it's right by Washburn University. So, it was a . . . it was a money grab. You know, it was for their rich contractor friends to be able to put up these cheap apartment buildings to make money off of the college students. And so, they still have their bike shop. They built the apartments all around their shop, but . . . yeah. And he said that the City of Topeka, it's so corrupt. Like, they keep tagging money for . . . to work on the roads, but then they'll use it for other things. So, it's like . . . hm. And then Governor Shitback, as I call him . . . you know who I'm talking about, right? But he's . . . he was trying to make Kansas be like Texas and Florida and have a, you know, no um state income tax, but he just . . . he kept cutting into education and other things. And, I mean, it . . . just the way our government doesn't work anymore . . . and it's like between the two parties. They just . . . it's like all the citizens, they're either on team Republican or team Democrat, and that's how they vote. They don't care about . . . and there . . . there only seems to be two issues that anyone ever cares about: abortion and gun control or gun rights. And it's just . . . it's just irritating that nothing can ever get done because nobody wants to compromise and nobody wants to actually take care of important stuff, like infrastructure and education. So . . . because I have no problems paying taxes as long as they go to those things and not to the military industrial complex. That's just my opinion.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, why and when did you move to Texas?

LONG: Um June uh . . . well, actually, I didn't really move officially until around August 2012. So, soon after um . . . soon after I retired, I first came to . . . went to Topeka. My grandma was still alive and was still living in Topeka then, so I went there to be with her and my dad and kind of help them out a little bit. And then I had reconnected with my now husband on Facebook. We went through Fort Devens and Pensacola together, too. And um he had moved here and was

teaching on uh Goodfellow as a contractor. So . . . so, I came down to visit a few times and then, eventually, I just kind of ended up moving here.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What do you think of West Texas?

LONG: It's hot. There's not enough trees. I miss trees, actual trees with shade. And I love the um . . . I love the little river walk here. I mean, I like it. I . . . I love the people that I've met here. Actually, I love ASU. So, I think we'll stay here.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you think West Texans are different from Texans in other parts of the state?

LONG: Oh, I have no idea on that. I . . . I mean, I haven't really seen much else of Texas to tell you that or been there long enough to judge.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you have any advice for young men and women who are joining the armed forces today?

LONG: Uh . . . I don't know. [Laughs] Don't join the Army. [Laughs] No, I'm just kidding. Um I would tell them to research um each branch um and go into whichever branch has the best of what they want to do for a job. And like, don't . . . don't go into the Army because your mom or your dad or your, you know . . . did it. Don't go into the Air Force because somebody you love and admire went in the Air Force. I mean, decide what you want to do. So, like, if you want to be a medic, obviously you're not going to join the Marine Corps because we don't have a medical field. Um but also look into, like, do you want to be on a ship for most of the time? So, if you don't want to be on a ship, don't go Navy. You know, um just . . . I would say research and go with what you want to do.

WONGSRICHANALAI: But you didn't get to do what you wanted to do.

LONG: I know. But, I actually . . . you know, I kind of did because, like I said, Morse code is like another language. It . . . I . . . I'm honest . . . I'm honestly glad that I got Morse code instead of Russian linguist because, I mean, I might've taken a totally different path. I would've never met my first . . . well, I would've never met either of my husbands because I would've been in Monterey instead of Fort Devens. Um I might've never gotten married or I would've married somebody else. I might not have decided to stay in past my first enlistment. I just . . . there's a lot of . . . and I would have never learned Morse code, whereas this way, I learned Morse code and I'm still learning Russian and French and German and everything else. So, win-win.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

LONG: Um make sure that when they go to see the recruiter that they get everything in writing. So, if they supposedly are guaranteed something, they need to have it in writing because that would have been the one mistake.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Okay. Well, thank you very much for your time.

LONG: Thank you for having me.