

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANN KELSEY

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Ann Kelsey on May 7, 2013, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much for coming in today.

Ann Kelsey: You're welcome.

SI: We appreciate it. To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

AK: I was born in Kokomo, Indiana, on June 20, 1946.

SI: What were your parents' names?

AK: My father's name is Harry Willard Kelsey. My mother, Jo Ann Lantz Kelsey.

SI: Were they both Indiana natives?

AK: Yes, they were both born in Kokomo.

SI: Starting with your father's side of the family, what do you know about the family history, how they got to Indiana, if there was any immigration history?

AK: Yes, my father's family came from somewhere in the UK [United Kingdom]. They came to New York first, New York State, moved west to Illinois, then settled in southern Illinois. My grandfather moved to Indiana. They were not initial settlers. I really don't know when they came, but it wasn't in the 1600s.

SI: Did your grandfather come to Kokomo first?

AK: No, no. He was a schoolteacher in southern Illinois, and then he went to dental school in Valparaiso, Indiana. From there, he moved to Kokomo and opened a dental practice in the early 1900s.

SI: What about your mother's side of the family? What do you know about them?

AK: They emigrated from Germany, probably in the 1800s, from Bavaria. My grandfather was born in the United States. I'm not sure that his parents were. As far as I know, they came directly to Indiana. They were Pennsylvania Dutch, United Brethren, and they were farmers. My grandfather grew up in this little tiny town, hardly a town, named Plevna, which is very near to Kokomo. He owned a shoe store in Kokomo, and that's why they moved from the farm into the town.

SI: Do you know how your parents met?

AK: Yes, in high school. My mother was a freshman, my father was a senior, in 1933.

SI: What do you know about your parent's lives before World War II? Do you know what they did for a living or anything about their educations?

AK: Well, they both graduated from high school, and neither of them went to college. My mother would've had the opportunity to go, but there was no money. It was the depression. My father, I don't think he was interested in going to college. I don't think he had a lot of luck getting a job either, after he got out of high school. He played the banjo, ukulele in dance bands, he did a lot of different things in the mid-'30s. Then, as things got better, he got a job selling fencing in the late '30s, and that's when he and my mother got married.

When my mother graduated from high school, she became a bookkeeper for Continental Steel. I believe she also worked for Chrysler. In Kokomo, there was a lot of manufacturing, so she was working. I remember her telling me about when they instituted Social Security, and she had to give all of these people that worked in this plant on the assembly line their first Social Security numbers. So, I get the sense that she had a steady job all the way through. She also worked in my grandfather's shoe store.

SI: Did you get a sense of how the Great Depression affected both of your grandfathers' small businesses?

AK: Oh, it affected them greatly. I know there was a lot of bartering going on. My grandfather who owned the shoe store would barter shoes for food from the farmers, and I know my grandfather who was a dentist did a lot of pro bono work for people. There was no destitution in those two families. They had houses, and they continued to live in them. There was enough money for survival but not a lot of money for anything else, including education.

SI: How did World War II affect your family?

AK: Well, my parents got married in 1939, and then they moved to Illinois. That's where my father was working as a salesman, so they moved somewhere in Illinois. After Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, my father enlisted in the Navy and he wouldn't want me to talk about what he did. It's sort of like the Official Secrets Act in the UK; he is still not comfortable discussing what he did during World War II. [Editors Note: (Ann Kelsey added the following note to her transcript.) My dad died in January 2014. At his 100th birthday party in August 2013, when he found out there was a documentary about it, he told us that he helped build the Bat, a radar-guided bomb, during World War II.]

SI: He dealt with electronics, which he had not done in his civilian career. Did he have a background in electronics?

AK: No, I think he was just interested, and he had an aptitude for it.

SI: Did he go overseas or was he stationed in the U.S.?

AK: No, he was only stationed in the U.S.

SI: What about your mother during the war? Did she work? Was she able to go with your father?

AK: Yes, she went with my father to every place he was stationed, which I can say. He went to basic training school at Great Lakes, so they were in Chicago for a while. Then, they went to Corpus Christi, Texas. Then, they went to Washington, D.C. and spent most of the war in Washington, D.C.

SI: Did your mother ever share any stories about what it was like moving from place to place or getting housing, the problems of being on the home front in World War II?

AK: No, she doesn't really talk about the problems. She talked about some of the people she knew and places they went, especially in Washington because I know Washington pretty well. So, you know the places they went drinking [laughter] and the zoo. They lived around the zoo. They lived off Connecticut Avenue. In fact, one of the apartments they lived in is actually still there and still apartments. [laughter] No, neither of them really talked too much about the hardships.

SI: Let us take a quick break.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: After World War II ended, what did your parents do with their lives? They went back to Indiana, but what did they decide to do after that?

AK: Well, they briefly went back to Indiana. When the war ended, after my father was discharged, they did return to Kokomo. By that time, I guess my mother must've been pregnant with me, so they were in Kokomo until I was born. Then, the agency that my father had worked for during the war offered him a job as a civilian, so they moved back to Washington, D.C. when I was six months old, at the end of 1946. He went back to work with the same group of people that he had worked with during the war.

SI: Can you say what part of the Navy he worked for?

AK: At the time, he was working for the Bureau of Standards. The projects that his group worked on were split off from the Bureau of Standards after the war in the late '40s and transferred to the Navy. That's when we moved to California, because the Navy had an operation in Southern California, and that's where everybody was moved to from Washington, D.C.

SI: How old were you when you moved to Southern California?

AK: I was five.

SI: Do you have any memories of growing up in the D.C. area?

AK: Yes, I can remember the apartment, which is still there. [laughter] The longevity of some of these places amazes me. We lived in Chevy Chase. My brother was born in Bethesda, and I can remember playing with other little friends in that apartment complex. I can remember

swinging on the bars, the rails for steps. There was a hilly terrain, so there were steps up and down between various parts of that complex. It was a big complex. I can remember swinging on those bars and going and visiting what they would call today playdates. [laughter] I can remember my brother's first birthday party. That would have been right before we moved to California. He was born in 1950.

SI: Did your mother work outside the home after having children?

AK: No, no. She did not work after I was born, she did not work outside the home, not until many years later when we were in high school, junior high. By that time, my grandparents had moved to California, and my grandfather managed another shoe store, where we were living in Riverside. She worked part time there.

SI: Do you know if your father stayed in the Reserves?

AK: No, he did not. He was not in the Navy Reserve.

SI: Do you know if the Korean War affected his work at all?

AK: Did the Korean War affect what he did? It's possible, although it was not so much a Navy war as Vietnam was, or the Cold War. So, I don't really have any recollection of that at all, and I was probably too young to really have a recollection. My uncle, my mother's brother, served in Korea.

SI: Did you have a lot of contact with your family back in Indiana?

AK: Oh, yes. We drove back to Indiana every summer until the late '50s, early '60s, until my grandparents moved to California.

SI: What was it like for you as a five-year-old relocating to Southern California? What do you remember about the first neighborhood you moved to?

AK: Oh, I remember that neighborhood very well. We lived on Nelson Street. It was a two-bedroom one-bath ranch with a big yard, which definitely made an impression on my mother. She thought she had died and gone to heaven. [laughter] No snow, no attached house. I don't remember being terribly impacted by it. The one thing I was impacted by was that I couldn't go to kindergarten because the schools were full. The Baby Boom was hitting education in a big way, and I was right at the beginning of it. By the time we got there, there simply was no classroom that they could put me into anywhere. I did not go to kindergarten because of that, and then I went to first grade. About midway through first grade, we were transferred into a brand new school that they had just built to accommodate all of these extra kids. About that same time, we moved from the house on Nelson Street to a larger house on Mono Drive, with three bedrooms and one bath. My brother and I then each had a bedroom.

SI: Were these older houses?

AK: No, they were brand new.

SI: Was this housing developed to accommodate the incoming GIs?

AK: Yes, the developments were called Sungold, Sungold One, Sungold Two. The style, of course, was different, but not that much different from Levittown, the same concept.

SI: Tell me about growing up in these new types of suburban neighborhoods that developed in the 1950s. Do you remember your neighborhood having any particular ethnic character or any economic class?

AK: Yes, it was one hundred percent white. There was one Jewish family; the parents had been in the concentration camps. The father worked with my father. There was, I would say, an Eastern European family or two that lived across the street. At least one of the families were refugees. I say that now because the parents had heavy accents. But no Mexicans, no Hispanics, no African Americans; one hundred percent white. That was true of the elementary school as well. In junior high and high school, that changed.

SI: At that time, did most of your father's colleagues live in the neighborhood?

AK: Yes, they all came out as a group. The laboratory where they worked was in Corona, maybe fifteen miles from Riverside. Riverside was a larger town. It had more services, and I guess there [was] probably more development going on in terms of housing tracts. A lot of the families that were transferred from Washington, D.C. moved to Riverside and moved into these Sungold developments. A number of the families in the neighborhood on Nelson Street and a number of the families in the neighborhood on Mono Drive worked with my father. They had a big carpool; my father carpooled to work with a car full of guys. There was probably more than one of these carpools going out of there, which allowed the wives to have the car for four of the five days. [laughter]

SI: What would you do for fun growing up in this neighborhood?

AK: Well, when we were little, there weren't the kinds of restrictions that there are now in terms of safety. We would just do the stereotypical thing--we would go outside and play, and we would be out there all day. At the end of the day, my mother and a lot of the mothers had whistles, and they would just whistle the kids in. We played hide and seek, went to each other's houses, and just pretty much roamed free in that neighborhood, knowing that was the boundary. There were so many kids; there were just so many kids. Practically every single house had a child in my age group and my brother's age group. The other demographic of that neighborhood was Air Force. Not only were there these people who were working for the Navy, but there were also people who were in the Air Force who lived in that neighborhood.

SI: In the material you sent, you said it was close to March Air Force Base.

AK: March Air Force Base.

SI: Given your father and his colleagues' backgrounds, and you had all these Air Force-related folks in the neighborhood, was there a lot of military culture you grew up with or at least were exposed to?

AK: I guess there was. I didn't think about it at the time, but there were people on my block who built air raid shelters. I knew all about being on alert because of my neighbors, their parents would be on alert. [laughter] They would not be home for a while, and then they would come back. I knew about TDY [temporary duty], because the schools were reimbursed by the government. They had to know when the parents were on TDY, so there were these forms that had to be filled out for the school. I knew about the PX [post exchange] and BX [base exchange]. There was the BX at the Air Force base, going shopping at the BX. The officer's club and the EM [enlisted men's] club I knew, and the NCO [non-commissioned officer] club. I knew all these terms because of interacting with these military families.

SI: Through your father's work, did your family go on base or any place he worked, places like the officer's club?

AK: No, he had no privileges. Civilians didn't then and don't now, as far as I know, have any privileges.

SI: Did they have any activities?

AK: No, the installation that my father worked on you did not go into. The closest you got was the driveway to the front door, where you could drop him off and pick him up. That was it. I was never inside where he worked.

SI: What about things like veterans groups? Did your father belong to a veterans group?

AK: He belonged to the American Legion.

SI: Were they prominent in the community?

AK: I have no idea.

SI: What about organized activities for kids? That was something that grew up in the 1950s, sports leagues, clubs, Girls Scouts, Boy Scouts.

AK: My mother was a Girl Scout troop leader, or Brownies. I'm not sure if it was Brownies or Girl Scouts, but she was a troop leader before I was old enough to be one. She has pictures--this is when we were on Nelson Street--of these Girl Scouts that she was troop leader for, with me as the mascot. When I was old enough to be in Girl Scouts, then she was a troop leader for my troop, and there are pictures of that troop in our back yard doing some sort of crafty thing. Was my brother in the Scouts? I don't know. There's four years between my brother and I, so I don't always really remember what he was doing and not doing.

SI: Did you ever go camping with the Girl Scouts, or was it mostly arts and crafts?

AK: We did not go camping. They may have gone camping, but I didn't go camping. I definitely do not remember going camping. I think there were more like day-trip things, but I don't ever remember spending an overnight in a tent or any other outdoor facility. I don't know if it was the Y [Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)], it probably was the Y, had the same kind of summer day camps as they do now. I can remember going to those and going to the swimming pool. By that time of course, we had the polio vaccine. Before the polio vaccine, my mother would not let us anywhere near a swimming pool or even a large crowd. I can remember Indiana in the summer and wanting to go to the pool; I was not allowed, absolutely not allowed, until after the Salk and Sabin [vaccine]. [Editor's Note: In 1953, Dr. Jonas Salk announced that he had developed a vaccine against polio. In 1954, clinical trials took place, and in 1955, a nationwide inoculation campaign commenced. The Sabin vaccine refers to the live-virus, oral polio vaccine that was developed by Dr. Albert Sabin.]

SI: Do you know if that was out of general fear, or had there been a polio case in your family?

AK: There was no polio case in my family, but there were many, many polio cases. I guess one of the reasons why there was no polio case in my family is because they were scrupulous about avoiding any place where they thought there might be a possibility of contracting it.

SI: Tell me about your early education in Riverside. What was your elementary school like? What you were interested in the most?

AK: I remember what I wasn't interested in the most. I was not interested in arithmetic, and that has carried on through my entire career in education. I love to read. I always loved to read. My father would take me to the little branch library, which was at that time in a little house, and I would I just read and read and read and read. That was probably my favorite recreational activity, reading. I was not then, nor am I now, remotely interested in sports of any kind, except for car racing, not to participate, but to watch. So, I read all the time.

SI: What was your favorite type of literature?

AK: I read everything. I read fiction and mysteries and nonfiction, just everything, travel literature, novels, just anything I could. I loved mysteries; I still do. History, I read history.

SI: Would you say the schools were of good quality? Do you think you got a good education there, the early schools?

SI: Yes, with the exception of third grade, I can remember it was really bad. My mother has made some references. I think the situation was a very young teacher who had no idea how to control the kids. I just remember it being bedlam. Other than that year, I don't have any negative memories of any of my elementary school classes.

SI: Were the schools pretty close to where you lived? Would you walk there?

AK: Yes, I walked, but they were progressively longer and longer walks. The neighborhood

school was two blocks. The junior high and the high school were across the street from each other, and they were "downtown." That was probably a good mile-and-a-half. Most of the time, we walked. Now, there was a bus that you could take and sometimes we did, but mostly we walked.

SI: Were there a lot of activities centered around the school, outside of the classroom? Did you belong to clubs, extracurricular activities?

AK: In the elementary school?

SI: In elementary or maybe junior high school?

AK: No, there was nothing in elementary school that I remember. If there was, I did not participate in anything. Junior high, were there clubs? Yes, I am sure there were clubs, but I was not a joiner. So, no, I didn't participate in anything. High school, yes, of course there were. Again, by high school, I was working. I started volunteering at that little library in the house for a Girl Scout badge. Then, when they built an actual branch library, I volunteered there until I was old enough to get a work permit. When I got a work permit, I started working, and I worked the maximum hours I could and continued to do that until 2009. [laughter] In high school, I can't remember how many hours we were allowed to work, fifteen maybe, and I did. I worked as many hours as I was allowed to work and I studied, and that's really what I did. I was not a joiner. I had high grades, so I was in the California Scholarship Federation. You didn't do anything with that, it was just an honor. If you got it, you had a good GPA [grade point average].

SI: Did your parents encourage you to think about college?

AK: Yes.

SI: Did they encourage your education?

AK: Yes, they did. They did. Neither of them had gone to college, and my grandfather, my father's father, had gone to college. No one in my mother's--well, that's not true, my uncle went to college. Yes, they very much wanted my brother and I to go to college, and they saved for years to ensure that there would be money for us to go.

SI: Did they ever express ideas of what they thought you should do, a career or study?

AK: Well, girls were channeled into fairly specific career paths in that timeframe, but I wanted to be a librarian. It was just the natural progression from reading all the time, spending so much time in libraries, working in libraries. From the time I was probably thirteen or fourteen, that was my career goal, to be a librarian, but they didn't influence that. I came to that myself.

SI: Was there anything else that attracted you to the library?

AK: I just enjoyed working in the library.

SI: What would you do when you were a teenager?

AK: Well, I started out shelving books then what they call reading shelves, that is, putting the books in order. By the time I was sixteen, I was working at the circulation desk. Then, I split my time, and I worked part time in the branch and working in circulation and then I worked at the main library in a processing unit. This was a city-county library that was united together, so there were all these little libraries scattered all over Riverside County, which is a big county, many of them in these tiny desert communities. The library in Riverside would buy their books, catalog them, physically process them, and they would ship them out. You had to keep track of where these books were going, and at that time of course, there were no computers. This was all done manually on index cards. I worked in the unit that did that, that sent the books out, brought them back, and kept track of where they were.

SI: It was all done on index cards. Did you see the beginnings of automation, like the punch cards system?

AK: Not there, not there. Everything was the Gaylord Charging Machine pre-automation technology for charging out books. No, not in Riverside. That started after I came back from Vietnam. So, it was very manual. You had to be very precise. So, I was split between the backroom side and the public service side. [Editor's Note: The Gaylord Brothers Company provided services for libraries, including equipment.]

SI: How far away was the main library from where you lived?

AK: About three miles.

SI: Okay. So, pretty close.

AK: Riverside wasn't that big of a town at that time.

SI: Tell me more about your time in high school. Was it called Poly High?

AK: Polytechnic High, Poly High.

SI: What was that high school like?

AK: It was a lot of old buildings, really old buildings, probably unsafe buildings, most of which were torn down about two years after I graduated. They built a whole new Poly three or four miles away. The classrooms were old; they were pretty rickety. I don't know if we really thought about that. It had a big quad. It had a snack bar. There was a dress code. By that time, it was more diverse. There were a lot of Hispanics, mostly Mexicans, in that demographic and African Americans. There were gangs, so you couldn't wear certain colors and you couldn't wear certain designs.

SI: Really?

AK: Oh, yes. Gang colors go way back. [laughter]

SI: Do you remember the names of the gangs?

AK: No, no. We just knew that's why we could not [wear certain colors or designs].

SI: What was the dress code like?

AK: No pants--not for girls--we had to wear skirts, shoulders covered, no short skirts. It is a lot like the dress codes they are now implementing again, because of gang activity and trying to get kids to be more responsible. Definitely no pants. Girls could not wear pants.

SI: Do you remember any violence related to these gangs at the school?

AK: No, no, I don't remember any violence at the school.

SI: Would you say there was any self-segregation? Did all the Hispanic kids keep to themselves and the white kids kept to themselves?

AK: Oh, yes, absolutely.

SI: You were there in the early 1960s, a time of great change, from the 1950s and the Eisenhower era to the Kennedy era.

AK: Historically maybe; I don't remember that. [laughter]

SI: What was happening in your world?

AK: I was not seeing any change at all. Kennedy's assassination was a major event. Everybody who was alive then remembers, just like everyone who was alive on 9/11 remembers. It was after Kennedy was assassinated that I think there started to be some changes. When I was a senior in a world history class, I know there were a few students in that class who were going to NAACP meetings and were clearly starting to become active in civil rights and talking about the Freedom Rides. For me, it was very much on the periphery. There was nothing happening in that high school. I mean, it was mellow. [Editor's Note: The NAACP is the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights group. Organized initially by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Freedom Rides of 1961 involved busloads of civil rights activists traveling to southern cities to protest segregation through nonviolent direct action. The Freedom Riders gained national notoriety, as they were attacked by violent white mobs in several cities, where local police protection was conspicuously absent.]

SI: Would you describe the community as more conservative? Was it Republican or Democrat?

AK: Oh, I have no idea, no idea. In high school, I was nothing. I didn't know what my parents were, and part of that was of course my father's work where you can't [discuss politics]. Under the Hatch Act, you can't support any political candidate, so we just didn't talk politics. My

parents probably did when we weren't around, but we never had any political discussions at the dinner table. [Editor's Note: The Hatch Act of 1939 prohibited federal employees in the executive branch from engaging in some forms of political activity, including involvement in political campaigns.]

SI: Did religion play any role in your life or in your family's life?

AK: No. As I said, my mother was United Brethren, or her family was. My father, they were something, I am not sure what, Christian. When we came to California, we went to the Methodist Church, and I was baptized when I was twelve. I wasn't baptized as a baby. So, I guess I probably did go to church pretty regularly until I was a teenager and then not so much.

SI: Up until you were in high school, did you get a chance to travel much outside of Riverside? You mentioned that you were in Indiana in the summers.

AK: Yes, we went to Indiana in the summers by many different routes. So, I got to see a lot of the United States between California and Indiana, the southern route, the mid-country route. I did see a lot of the country on those trips. One summer, we went further. We went to the East Coast, so we went to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and we went to New York.

SI: Did anything stand out in these different areas?

AK: I do remember they were constructing the Interstate Highway System, because driving could be really horrible while they were building all those roads. I remember just being stopped for a long, long time, and, of course, cars did not have air conditioning and it was the summer and it was hot [laughter] and dusty because of all the construction. I remember going to Mesa Verde--that was really interesting to me, the ruins--Grand Canyon, the Painted Desert, all those places in Arizona and New Mexico. I remember driving through New York, but I don't remember much about New York. I remember seeing the Liberty Bell [in Philadelphia]. [Editor's Note: Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado has Ancestral Puebloan archeological sites.]

SI: You mentioned that the Cold War was a presence in your life growing up. Can you share how that had an impact on your life? Were you afraid of a nuclear war? Were there precautions being taken?

AK: I think there were precautions being taken. I personally wasn't afraid because I was too young and stupid to be afraid. [laughter] I remember the civil defense signs, the air raid shelters. I remember the duck-and-cover drills in the school, which they did on a very regular basis. I remember people in my neighborhood, some of them building air raid shelters and my going down and looking at them. Of course, the B-52s. That is an overriding presence, if you live that close to a base where B-52s are coming on and off the line all the time. They would take off in the morning, and everything stopped. I mean, your class stopped, everything stopped until the noise went away. It was just so pervasive. I remember when Castro took over in Cuba and the Cuban Missile Crisis. I remember everybody being very frightened. I don't think I understood why, but I do remember there was a lot of tension. I didn't know any different, so it was just the

lifestyle. [Editor's Note: The Cuban Revolution lasted from 1953 until the end of 1958, when Fidel Castro toppled the regime of Fulgencio Batista. In October 1962, photographs taken by an American U2 spy plane revealed Soviet nuclear missile installations in Cuba. President John F. Kennedy responded by ordering a quarantine, or naval blockade, around Cuba to prevent more Soviet weapons from getting there. For thirteen days, the public feared imminent nuclear war between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba, in exchange for the U.S. not invading Cuba. Secretly, the U.S also agreed to remove its missiles from Turkey.]

SI: When you got into your senior year and you were looking at colleges, was the University of California, Riverside the natural choice?

AK: Oh, yes. Then, in California, if you had a B average, you got into a university of a California campus. The application was pro forma. If you had a B average, you absolutely would be admitted to a UC campus. If you had a C average, you absolutely would be admitted to a state college campus. With anything lower, there was a community college system in California long before there was in the rest of the country. If you were anything lower you went to the community college. So, I only applied to UCR. There wasn't any question that there was not going to be any room and board paid. There was a college campus right in my town; my parents weren't going to pay room and board for me to live someplace else. So, yes, I applied to one school and got into one school. [laughter]

SI: You lived at home and went to the campus.

AK: For two-and-a-half years, I lived at home, yes. I got a scholarship; I got a full-freight scholarship. I got a four-year scholarship when I graduated from high school from the Panhellenic Association. So, it turned out that my parents didn't pay a penny towards my education, actually, any of my education, because I also got a full-freight fellowship for library school. So, my entire tuition, books and incidentals were paid.

SI: You entered UC Riverside in 1964.

AK: Yes, the fall of 1964.

SI: What was it like to be on campus at that time? Those first few weeks or months, how did you adjust to college?

AK: Yes, well, of course, it was very different from high school. You didn't have anybody babysitting you or asking if you did your homework. A lot of kids didn't make it because they were in the dorms and they were having fun. They weren't studying and they weren't writing their papers, and they didn't make it past the first semester. Of course, I was working, and I was living at home. It was clear to me that my job was to work at the library and study, and that's what I did. So, I didn't really interact on the campus at all, I'd say, that first semester.

SI: Did you have an idea of what you wanted to study when you went in?

AK: Oh, yes. I went in with a major in English. Then, I took a survey course in anthropology. You had to pick different electives from social sciences or whatever, so I just picked this anthropology course, probably because it was the right time to interface with my work schedule. I picked a lot of electives that way. [laughter] It did not matter what it was; it was the right time. That was really a mind-blowing experience for me. That anthropology class just changed my whole worldview. I learned about different cultures and early man. There was some cultural anthropology thrown in. Winans, Edgar Winans, he was the teacher. Interestingly enough, a woman I met many years later but who had also been in Vietnam with the Red Cross, she was from California and she had also taken that same class. So, that really just changed my whole perspective on everything. I changed my major, and my parents were not happy. What am I going to do with an anthropology major? Well, if you go to library school, it doesn't matter what you major in as long as it is liberal arts, but to pacify them I continued the English major along with the anthropology. So, I actually have a double BA.

SI: Do any other professors or classes stand out in your memory?

AK: Yes, Gene Anderson, he was another anthropology professor who got me interested in Asia. He had done his fieldwork with the boat people in Hong Kong, in the harbor. It was taking his classes that got me interested in Asia and got me interested in Asian cultures and Southeast Asia.

SI: What did you know about Vietnam before you ever thought about going there with the Army?

AK: Oh, I knew quite a bit about Vietnam because of those anthropology classes. I knew Vietnamese history. I knew about the French, Chinese and various incursions. I knew about the Khmer. I knew about how Indochina had been partitioned. I knew something about Vietnamese culture, food. I actually knew probably a lot more about Vietnam the country than a lot of people did who went over there during the war.

SI: Were you focused on other countries in that area or just Vietnam?

AK: Well, China, yes. I took a couple of courses specifically on China, not so much the other former Indochinese colonies, Laos and Cambodia, not so much those. I don't know why--well, maybe because of the timeframe. By that time, we are talking mid-'60s. So, it could be that's why that focus on Vietnam happened.

SI: Over your four years of college, did you get a sense that there was more awareness about what was happening in Southeast Asia?

AK: Oh, sure, but in a somewhat different way than if perhaps I had been at UCB [University of California, Berkeley] or UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] at that time. There were some protest movements going on at UCR, mostly actually against Dow [Dow Chemical Company]; Dow recruiters coming to campus, less so against the actual military. I'm sure that's because--UCR had dorms, but it was a big commuter campus. I am sure that's because so many of the students there had military connections, not that they were in the military themselves, but their parents were. The group I hung out with, two or three had parents in the military or had

parents like my father who were civilians who worked for the military. So, I think that even right up until 1968, when other campuses were blowing up, it was there, but it was constrained, which made going to UCLA an even bigger shock.

SI: Did you get involved in activities at college, or did you mainly work at the library?

AK: I bought a car when I was a sophomore, and when I was a junior, I moved out. [laughter] So, I was living in an apartment. I was supporting myself. By the time I was a junior, I was working full time. I was working forty hours a week and going to school full time, so, no.

SI: Were you still working at the county library?

AK: Yes, still at the same place. I worked there until I went to library school. So, no, I socialized but formal activities, no.

SI: Going back to your classroom work, as things were developing in Southeast Asia, was that being discussed in the class or did the focus remain on the history of Southeast Asia?

AK: History and ethnography. They were not talking about the war.

SI: There were no opinions expressed by your professors that you remember.

AK: Not that I remember.

SI: How was the mood among the student body? For the men particularly, was this a time when they could get drafted out of college, or were they exempt?

AK: They were [exempt]. The 2-S was active then. The 2-S (student) exemption was active then, and, of course, everybody who was enrolled had a 2-S exemption. Some of the guys left and enlisted, and one was killed that I know of. One guy that was part of the group I hung with was killed. Some of them left school and got drafted. There was no effort to avoid the draft. If they were in school, they understood that if they stayed in school, they would have a draft exemption, but they stayed in school because that's what they would have done anyway. We graduated in '68, and most of them after they graduated, unlike a lot of places where people rushed into grad school to keep that 2-S, most of the guys that I knew were either drafted or enlisted when they got out. That particular demographic and that particular campus was very, very different from other places and other campuses. It had to have been because that connection to the military was just ingrained, and quite a few of them probably planned on having careers in the military anyway, so it just followed. [Editor's Note: Between 1948 and 1976, the Selective Service System used classifications to determine those who were eligible for military service and those who received exemptions or deferments. Class 2 referred to deferments. 2-C was an agricultural deferment. 2-S was a student deferment.]

SI: Keeping with that theme, the period you were in college is very interesting because of the changes in the culture, the music people listened to, the way people dressed. Social norms changed quite a bit. Did you see that impact on that campus?

AK: Not as much.

SI: Not as much.

AK: Not as much, no. Well, the music, yes, the music was everywhere. The rock music and the R&B and soul music, yes, that certainly was there. Clothing, well, again some. I never wore pants in college. I wore dresses and high heels [laughter] all the way through college, and at UCR, that was pretty much the norm, as I remember it. The hippie movement, the hippie dress, I didn't see that at UCR. The yearbooks were kind of *outré*, [laughter] after about 1966, but I think they did manage to somehow pull together a yearbook in 1968. When I leaf through that yearbook, I see the hair is getting a little longer, but the dress is very middle-class, late-50s, early-60s America. The girls are all in skirts and dresses, and the guys are in pants and shirts.

SI: You said in your senior year of high school is where you first heard about Freedom Rides.

AK: Yes.

SI: You said you knew people who were getting involved.

AK: Yes.

SI: Was there a lot of civil rights-related activism at UCR?

AK: Not that I was ever exposed to, none.

SI: While you were working at the library, looking at what people were demanding at this time, could you notice if there was a change in what people were reading?

AK: I don't remember. [laughter]

SI: Were there any books that were kind of signs of the times that people were interested in? Did they ever ban books?

AK: Not in that library. No, libraries have always been very in the forefront of not allowing censorship.

SI: Were there any moves by the community to get books banned?

AK: Not in the public library that I can recall. I am sure that could have happened in the school libraries, but really in that town, there were no school libraries in the elementary schools. That's why I spent so much time at the public library. I can remember my elementary school classes walking down to the public library, because that was the substitute for not having a library in the school. The junior high and the high school had libraries, but by the time you get to that point, the censorship issues tend to fade away. I'm sure there were issues, but I wasn't aware of it and certainly not in the public library.

SI: When it came to graduate school, did you look at other schools, or was UCLA always the one to go to?

AK: That was the one to go to. That was the UC campus. By that time, I had a real high GPA, which is good because I had a real low GRE. [laughter] I don't shine at standardized test taking. I blew the PSAT. I blew the SAT badly. If my admission to college rested on those scores, I would have never gone to college, but I had a high GPA, so I qualified. The same was true with grad school--I absolutely blew the GRE. You probably couldn't get a much worse score, partially because of the math. Another reason for going to UC Riverside was it was the one UC campus that did not require a math course to graduate. Having failed geometry and managing to get through it the second time, simply because they used the same textbook and I memorized it, not that I understood anything, so that was really important, no more math. [laughter] I guess that must go back to the third grade. So, yes, UCLA was the one. I had a high enough GPA to be Phi Beta Kappa. Despite the GRE score, there was no question that I was going to get into the UCLA Library School. Plus, I had this HEA Fellowship [Higher Education Act] that paid all of my expenses, it paid off my tuition and everything, and gave me a monthly stipend. The only other option would have been USC [University of Southern California]. USC was a private school. Tuition was through the roof, and so UCLA was the only choice.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: How long was your library school? Was it two years or a year-and-a-half?

AK: It was a year plus a summer.

SI: Tell me about what library school was like then.

AK: Like curriculum?

SI: Yes. I also went to library school.

AK: Okay. Did you go to Rutgers?

SI: There were a lot of opportunities for specialization and different areas of study.

AK: Okay.

SI: I have heard back in the 1960s that it was more like you had to take one course designed to train you to be a public librarian.

AK: Yes, pretty much. It was public libraries or school libraries, public and academic. The courses you took were designed to fit you into one of those two molds. For example, cataloging, everybody had to take a cataloging class. Everybody had to take two semesters of cataloging, but then the second semester, if you were moving toward public libraries, you took Dewey cataloging. If you were moving toward an academic library, you took LC [Library of Congress].

So, they split you out. It was descriptive cataloging and then ...

SI: Subject heading?

AK: Yes, it was divided between the subject heading and the call numbers, right. The second semester, you were split based on which kind of library you planned to work in, but you had to take those two semesters of cataloging. That was absolutely required. Everybody had to take the general reference class. You had to take a general bibliography class. Then, there were classes that were specialized as to type of library. For example, again, probably because of how it fit into my schedule, [laughter] I happened to take the health sciences medical library class, which stood me in good stead several years later when I started working part time for a pharmaceutical company. There were different bibliography classes. You learned medical bibliography in that class, Index Medicus [bibliographic database], which was then all books, and then there were humanities, science and technology. So, they were split up, the bibliography classes, by subject areas. There was a general management class that you could take. There was just a general overview of libraries-type class, but [not] the kind of specialization that you see now. Of course, now, there are so many classes that are related to computers, web, communications.

We did have one computer-related class, and it was required. The school required it, and the students, most of the students, were absolutely incensed that they were forced to take this computer class. Now, it was taught by [Joseph] Becker and Bob Hayes, who then became the dean of the library school. They wrote the first computers and libraries textbook, and we were using the galley of that book in '68 for that class. We had to write code, we had to write a program using RPG [Report Program Generator] on punch cards. [laughter] One of my memories at the end of the school year was climbing over the bodies of these anti-war protesters, who were stacked like cord wood in front of the building where I had to go run this program, climbing over them to get inside that building to run that program, which I had to run in order to graduate. [Editor's Note: Robert Hayes and Joseph Becker co-wrote *Handbook of Data Processing for Libraries*, which was published in 1970.]

SI: So, you had to walk over these people.

AK: Yes, yes.

SI: Why did they choose to protest in that area?

AK: It could have been the main administration building, because that's where the computer probably would have been in that time. They wouldn't have had computers around--there was not even a mini-computer at that point. That's probably why, because that's where the computer was.

SI: At that point, working full time, you were still doing the index card system.

AK: Yes.

SI: Did they bring in any kinds of new technology?

AK: Oh, no. No computers. There were no computers in Vietnam. There were no computers when I came back from Vietnam and worked in libraries in New York. I was at Queensborough Public Library, there were no computers there. It was all index cards. Computers did not come in until--well, with OCLC [Online Computer Library Center] in the late '70s. That was really the first entry of computers into the libraries in this area, and probably mostly everywhere was if you got one of those big honeybee [Beehive] terminals to use OCLC. That was a good solid ten years after. [Editor's Note: Founded as the Ohio College Library Center, the OCLC, which now stands for Online Computer Library Center, maintains the online public access catalog WorldCat. In 1978, the Beehive Model 105 terminals began to be used as OCLC workstations.]

SI: Your studies were focused on being a public librarian.

AK: Yes.

SI: Before you graduated, did you just see yourself going back to the public library in Riverside?

AK: Actually, no, because now I was sort of focused on salary. [laughter] Even though I was sort of in the public library track, I knew I didn't want to work at a college, certainly not in that time period. I wanted to get away from colleges as fast as I could. So, there really was no special library track then. You could only specialize in things that would be [considered] special libraries by these bibliography courses. I was looking at salaries, and public library salaries were not very good. Because my father worked for the military, I knew the GS [General Schedule] scale. I knew that civilians who worked for the government who were civil servants, I knew that a librarian with a master's degree would go in at a GS-9 and that was ten thousand dollars a year. If you went in and started at entry level in the public library, you were probably going to make five or six. No, I was not looking at going into a public library at all. I was looking at going to work for the government.

SI: As part of the course there, did they offer career counseling or provide you with job opportunities?

AK: Yes, they did, and that's how I got to Vietnam, because the school, amazingly enough--now in retrospect, I'm truly amazed--but they brought in these Army Special Services recruiters to talk to the library class about working for Special Services. There must have been more than that because before I started focusing on Special Services, I was looking at Naval Undersea Warfare. They had openings in San Diego, and I had taken the max amount of cataloging classes and they had positions open cataloging reports, not books so much, but original reports and documents and that kind of thing. I knew I could get the security clearance because I'd been cleared for years. It wasn't just my father who the FBI checked on a regular basis, it was all of us. I must have found out about that from the library school, because I wouldn't have had any way to do it otherwise. That all changed when the Army folks came. [laughter]

SI: What about other forms of protest that you saw at UCLA. How common were protests?

AK: Oh, it was twenty-four/seven. It was mostly Students for a Democratic Society, and they

were mostly hostile, nasty and sometimes violent. Any time that they could identify somebody who might be in the military or be a veteran, they went after them like banshees. Plus, just the yelling, howling rhetoric, against the soldiers, against the war, against everything, against the military. Their favorite spot was right next to the library school. The Powell Library was in a quad, and then right out the back of the Powell Library was this walkway and the student center. SDS, it was like "protesters row" going down that walkway between the library and the student center, or the Student Union. They were just lined up along that walkway with SDS at the very top. They [had] microphones and speakers. It was extremely upsetting. [Editor's Note: The walkway is called Bruin Walk.]

SI: Among your fellow library school students, did they express any opinions for or against the war?

AK: I don't remember. I actually really didn't interact with anyone I went to school with in library school. I don't even remember their names, I don't remember what they look like, I don't remember anything about any of them.

SI: I am curious if you noticed, were there mostly women in your class?

AK: Yes, mostly women. I think there were a few guys, maybe two or three, but mostly women.

SI: Was it mostly women your age, or was it a range of ages?

AK: It was a range of ages. There were several women who were clearly mid-career changers. They were older. Then, there were people like me in their twenties.

SI: What month was it when recruiters came from Army Special Services?

AK: Probably it was April of '69.

SI: What was your sense of the War in Vietnam and your feelings about it at that point?

AK: Oh, at that point, I just was lockstep in with whatever the administration was saying. I believed everything they said about the Domino Theory and protecting the south from the north. The whole thing, I bought lock, stock and barrel.

I had friends, mostly Air Force friends, so they were mostly in Thailand. They were at those bases, air bases, in Thailand, Udorn and a Nakhon Phanom and those. I was getting more perspective of the air war than I was of the ground war. I knew one guy who was on a swift boat, and I met him in San Diego. Then, I knew a Marine, who I did meet in Hawaii, both of whom I was writing to. They were giving slightly different perspectives, but I wasn't quite getting it. I guess partially I refused to believe anything the anti-war people were saying because of how they were treating the soldiers and the veterans, which it just made me physically ill, enough so that I tried to get night classes so I that didn't have to be there during the day.

I moved to LA in the summer of '68; that was quite a summer. I moved back to Riverside in the

fall of '68, because I just couldn't stand being there. So, I moved back to where I lived when I was at UCR, back with my same roommate that I had had when I was a senior at UCR, who was at grad school at UCR. I tried to schedule classes, so that I didn't have to be at UCLA during the day and that I could do as much of my homework as possible away from UCLA, so that I could spend as little time as possible on campus.

SI: This was very disturbing to you.

AK: It was very disturbing, to me.

SI: You said that they would pick on veterans and ROTC people.

AK: That was the other category, ROTC people.

SI: How did they identify people who they thought were veterans, by hair cut?

AK: Of course, they wore civilian clothes, but they would have the field jackets. They would wear their field jackets. There were active duty military, too. UCLA was a big, big campus. There's a lot of things going on there. Since the Army sent Special Service recruiters, they were probably still sending military recruiters to campus.

SI: Tell me about the recruiting process and what attracted you to it.

AK: Well, they came to the library school to talk about Special Services libraries, which were worldwide, and they needed librarians just for everywhere, the States, Europe and they said Asia. I kind of perked up when they said Asia. Then, I went to talk to them, and I said, "Well, where in Asia? They said, "Well, there's Japan, but that's a three-year commitment. You could also go to Korea or Vietnam. Those are one-year commitments." I just thought, "Ah, Vietnam." [laughter] I started pursuing talking about Vietnam, and by the time the visit ended, I had all the paperwork to fill out. I said, "I really want to go to Vietnam. I just want to go to Vietnam."

SI: Was anyone else in the session eager to go to Vietnam?

AK: Nobody in the session was eager to work for the Army. [laughter] It was just me. Like I said, I really wasn't interacting with my fellow students at all; I just wasn't interacting. Nobody tried to talk me out of it, because nobody really even knew me. I just wasn't there.

SI: You said this was in April. How long was it before you left?

AK: Well, I had to fill out the form, SF 171, which is the application for employment. I had to fill that out, and I mailed that in. Then, they had to do a background check, but in my case, that was very quick because I had a whole history of background checks. It didn't take the FBI any time at all to give me [security clearance], I mean, we had a very minimum security clearance, but it didn't take any time at all for me to be cleared. That could've taken a long time for somebody who had never been background checked. It was very fast. Before I graduated in June, I had the beginnings of a commitment. By the time I graduated, they said, "You're hired."

That was mid-June, and then I stopped working completely, well, sort of.

I had a temporary job on the night shift packing powdered eggs. [laughter] I had to have some spending money. Nobody was going to hire me because I knew I was going to be leaving quickly. I went to a temp agency, and the only thing they could give me, with the fact that I just wasn't going to be around very long, was this job packing eggs on the night shift. I did it, and my claim to fame on that one was that I was packing eggs with Bobby Bonds' mother in law. [laughter] Bobby Bonds was in my class, my high school class, and his sister Rosie was a year ahead of me. [Editor's Note: Bobby Bonds was a professional baseball player with the San Francisco Giants. Rosie Bonds was an Olympic runner.]

In that time frame, between mid-late June to the first part of August, they mailed me uniforms, which I got altered. They sent me a list of inoculations I had to get, and I could go to the Air Force base and get those from the military. I had lots and lots of friends who were in the Air Force, so it was pretty easy. I even had my uniforms altered at March Air Force Base in Riverside because I could get on and off the base with them pretty easily. Other paperwork, they sent me a couple of little booklets for orientation, and then I got my travel orders in early August. I left at the end of August.

SI: What did these books address?

AK: Well, one was the one that I am sure a lot of the other vets have [and] you've seen. It was the little red one. It's about half-size, and it has a little Vietnamese woman in an *áo dài* [silk tunic] on the cover. It's your basic orientation to Vietnam. It was an Army pamphlet that they gave to all the soldiers. The other one was more specific to Special Services, the various places that Special Services was, and the different things they did, more of a Special Services Vietnam [pamphlet]. It was mimeographed; it was defiantly homemade. I never saw another person in the flesh again until I got to Saigon. There was no orientation, like the Red Cross took the Donut Dollies to Washington for a week. There was none of that with Special Services. There was no personal interaction. I had my travel orders. My travel orders said I was going to Phu Bai. Well, the Army wasn't even in Phu Bai then. I did look up where Phu Bai was, and I thought, "Oh, that's pretty far north." I had no orientation whatsoever as to what to expect in a combat zone. The only thing they told me once over the phone was, "Well, there have only been two Special Services women killed in Vietnam. One was a car accident and one was a plane crash and you know that can happen anywhere." [laughter] [Editor's Note: Donut Dollies refers to Red Cross volunteers who went to Vietnam as a part of the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas program. GIs nicknamed them Donut Dollies because part of their duties had included serving coffee and donuts during World War II, as a part of their efforts focused on boosting the morale of troops. Ann Kelsey added to the transcript that the nickname stuck, and there were virtually no donuts in Vietnam.]

SI: How did your parents react to this?

AK: Oh, they weren't happy, they were not happy. Now, I know my father was just getting ready to retire. He retired actually when I was in Vietnam. They were not in favor of the war; I did not know that at the time. My brother, who was four years behind me, who had been kept

back a year, had graduated from high school in 1969. They were very busy getting him into the California National Guard, I think it was the National Guard, to keep him out of the draft, because he was not going to college, no way, no how, and had made that very clear. So, they did whatever they had to do to get him into a Guard unit to protect him from having to go to Vietnam. They had just succeeded in doing this, and I came home and announced I was going to Vietnam. They were not happy campers, but I was twenty-three years old. There was nothing they could do.

SI: Did they give you any advice before you went?

AK: Not that I recall. I think we mostly just didn't talk. [laughter]

SI: You must have had a good background in dealing with the military. Did you receive any inside tips with dealing with that type of environment?

AK: Oh, no. I knew something about rank just because I knew people in the military. I knew they saluted, but, no, I didn't know anything, as did most of the women who went over there, didn't know a thing.

SI: Well, tell me about reporting in early August.

AK: Yes, actually, I went on August 30th. I forget what dates I put down exactly, but I think it was around August 30th.

SI: You said you went August 30th.

AK: Yes, I actually think that's accurate because I still have my travel orders and my boarding pass from the MAC [Military Airlift Command] flight, and I checked the date for that. I went from Ontario Airport, which was near Riverside, to San Francisco. Then, I took a bus from San Francisco to Travis Air Force Base. Then, I flew on a Braniff contract flight from California, stopped at Hickam in Hawaii, stopped at Andersen in Guam, stopped at Clark in the Philippines, and then ended up at Tan Son Nhut.

SI: Were there mostly servicemen on the flight?

AK: There were a few contractors but mostly servicemen.

SI: What was the mood like on the plane going over?

AK: I don't remember. I remember they fed us a lot, and I remember sleeping a lot. The mood, I know I was talking to two guys--I was in the middle--and I was talking to two guys on either side of me. I don't remember them being depressed or upset, and I think maybe they were officers, not EMs, enlisted men. I don't remember tension. I've read a lot of interviews, and I've interviewed a lot of people who talk about how the tension [grew] as they got closer to landing, but I don't remember any of that. I don't remember people being nervous, which does not mean they weren't. It just means I don't remember.

SI: You said you landed at Tan Son Nhut.

AK: Yes, during the day. It was daylight.

SI: What were your first impressions as you stepped out of the plane?

AK: Well, we came out of the airplane, and it was hot. I was used to heat because it gets really, really hot in Riverside in the summer. It can [be] routinely 110 degrees and sometimes up into 115, 120. I was used to heat but not humidity. It's a very dry heat where I lived. So, it was hot, and it was humid. Of course, you've been on this plane for twenty-four hours, and so you're kind of sensory deprived and jetlagged. We got off the plane. I don't know where the contractors went; I guess they went to the same place I did eventually. The military who had travel orders were all rounded up into a group and put on Army buses and immediately taken away, but the civilians had to clear Vietnamese immigration and customs. We had diplomatic passports, or I did. The contractors probably didn't, but I had a diplomatic passport. By that time, I was by myself, and I had to get myself through immigration and customs and collect my luggage. I don't speak Vietnamese, didn't speak Vietnamese. These folks didn't speak English.

SI: Oh, really?

AK: Oh, no. Somehow, I did it because I had to do it, so I did. I'm standing there outside the terminal with my luggage in this dark blue uniform. Nobody has given me any phone numbers, not that it would have mattered because there were no phones. I did not have any names of anyone in the library program at all. As far as my travel orders said, I was supposed to go to Phu Bai. I'm just standing there, and this jeep pulls up. A couple of GIs say, "Are you with Special Services?" I said, "Yes." "Okay, get in the jeep. We are going to take you to the service club." Well, in retrospect, should I have gotten in that Jeep? Anyway, I did, and they indeed did take me to the service club. The woman who was in charge of the service club, Charmaine Lake, and there was a crafts woman who worked in the crafts program, Lucylee. Lucylee Chiles lives in New York now; she and I are good friends. [Editor's Note: Ann Kelsey added to the transcript that Lucylee passed away on December 23, 2014 from ovarian cancer.] They wanted to know what program I was with, and I told them libraries. They called the library people and told them that they had one. [laughter] Then, they sent a van out for me, took me to downtown Saigon, checked me into the Park Hotel and said, "Okay, rest up and we'll come and get you tomorrow." I'm in this hotel with minimal light, roaches in the shower, but I was just too tired to care. I just fell asleep for however many hours. Then, they came and collected me the next morning, took me to breakfast at the Continental Palace, and then said, "Do you want to stay at the Park Hotel, or do you want to go in the BOQ." I said, "The BOQ." I was not interested in spending another night in the Park Hotel. [laughter] They got me billeted in at the Meyerkord BOQ. Then, you went to the civilian personnel office and got all of this stuff, your ID card, your Geneva Convention card, your mess hall card, all of the various identification papers that you need to have. The next day, I went to work. [Editor's Note: BOQ is bachelor officer's quarters.]

SI: When you were a civilian operating in this capacity, does the military manage your lodging and food?

AK: Yes, yes.

SI: Do you have to pay for that privilege or is it taken care of?

AK: No. As far as I know, the only group that had to live on the economy, of the Morale and Recreation group, was the USO, although if they were running a club in a base camp, then they also got military housing. The USO [United Service Organizations] club in Saigon, the women who worked there lived on the economy. I'm sure the USO subsidized that; you know, the USO paid for it. Some of the Special Services people lived on the economy. They had apartments, they lived in these civilian hotels, and they got a subsidy from the Army to pay their expenses. Whether you lived in a billet or whether you lived on the economy, your living expenses were covered, and food. We all were entitled to eat at the mess hall. [Editor's Note: During the Vietnam War, Special Services, currently called Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (FMWR), maintained libraries, recreation centers and gyms for American service people. Special Services was established in 1918 as the Army Morale Division, followed by the Army Motion Picture Service in 1920 and the Library Service in 1923. In 1941, Special Services became the new name for the Army Morale Division. In 1950, Army reorganization placed Special Services under the Adjutant General's Office.]

SI: Was it the enlisted men's mess hall?

AK: No, no. All of the women, even the lower rated and the NAFs, Non-Appropriated Fund women, we all had at least the equivalent rank of a first lieutenant.

SI: What is the Non-Appropriated Fund?

AK: NAF, Non-Appropriated Funds. There were two paths of government employment. One was the appropriated funds, meaning Congress appropriated funds for your salary. People who were in the appropriated-funds stream were actual civil servants with GS ratings. We had all of the same benefits as a Civil Service employee in the United States. So, we had annual leave, we had sick time, and we were paid according to the GS salary scales. I was paid ten thousand dollars a year as a GS-9, because that was the minimum grade that someone with a master's degree came in at. In this Morale and Recreation program, really only the librarians and the career personnel who were running the programs were in that appropriated-fund Civil Service stream. Everybody else was Non-Appropriated Funds, meaning soft funding, meaning that Special Services would put together the money to pay their salaries, but funding was not appropriated by Congress. It could disappear at any time basically, just like soft funding from the state here. I don't believe they got annual leave or sick time. They had, some of them, a rating, mostly GS-5s; that's very low and were paid probably half of what I was being paid. Those were the people that were in the service club program, the rec centers, crafts, entertainment. That continued to haunt these people. There was a parallel NAF grade scale, for example, NAF-5 or NAF-9. People who went in as NAFs, Non-Appropriated Fund hires, several of them stayed with government employment and then were eventually transferred over to the appropriated-fund track, so they had a Civil Service rating. When it came time for calculating their pensions, they weren't allowed to count the years that they were NAF, so they lost all of

those years in Vietnam. They fought that and fought it and fought it, but I don't think they were ever able to get those years back.

SI: Was there any additional compensation for serving overseas in Vietnam?

AK: It was the same salary, but we did get paid overtime. That was quite a lot of money because we all worked twelve-hour days, six-and-a-half days a week. A forty-hour week was a normal week. All hours we worked over forty hours was overtime, and we were compensated for that. That increased the amount of our salary by quite a bit, but we did not get combat pay.

SI: Those first few months getting settled in Saigon, what was that like for you?

AK: Well, it was obviously an adjustment period, adjusting to the culture change, the climate. I got sick, very sick, sick to the point where they were talking about medevacking me. First, I had a respiratory illness. I mean, you're going to get that. You're on a plane twenty-four hours, and then you come into a place like Saigon that was just teeming with people. You're going to get a respiratory illness, which I did. Then, I got cystitis. I went to the dispensary first, and they gave me some antibiotics, but they did not give me enough. Of course, when the antibiotics wore off, it came back like gangbusters.

Then, they sent me to the Third Field Hospital. I can remember vividly riding that Army bus through downtown Saigon and out towards Tan Son Nhut, because that's where Third Field was, and down what was then Cong Ly. Every time that bus bumped, which was like every three seconds, I thought I was going to die. At Third Field, they said, "Well, you probably need to go to Japan." I said, "No, I just got here. I'm not leaving." [laughter] So, they loaded me up on antibiotics, and that finally got rid of it.

A lot of the two months that I was in Saigon, I was battling different kinds of illness, but I was pretty much working. I didn't stay home sick; I went to work. They just put me in charge of this library; there was nobody else there. The woman who I was replacing, I think I had maybe a day with her before she left. Really, she wasn't at the library anymore; she was packing up. I just kind of fell into it, and I had this staff. This was one of the larger libraries. It was on the second floor of what had been a villa. It was several rooms, and I had a staff of four or five local nationals, Vietnamese women, a couple of cleaning people, and GIs who worked part time at night.

SI: Did the GIs worked part time in addition to their day duties?

AK: Yes, yes. If whatever their duty assignment was gave them free time, they would go out and get part time jobs. That was true everywhere. That was true in all the libraries that I was in charge of. Most of the Vietnamese who were the clerical workers, they spoke at least some English, at least in Saigon. We were able to communicate. One who was kind of the head library assistant, she spoke English very well, so she could translate with everybody else. That was a big benefit. The cleaning ladies spoke no English, and their mission in life was to avoid working. [laughter] My mission in life was to make sure they worked, and that included pulling them off window ledges, because they would climb out a window onto a ledge and hide there.

They would just squat down and hide, and I would have to reach out and yank them back in. I learned a lot about managing personnel real quick by the seat of my pants. That management course in library school did not teach you how to deal with these kinds of things.

All the libraries were air-conditioned, because the books would mold if they weren't. They were all popular places, and this one was no exception. There were always a lot of people in the library. In that library, it was very close to USAID [United States Agency for International Development] headquarters. It was very close to a lot of major military offices. There were people in there doing some substantive research with lots of reference questions, so I did a lot of reference work there, more than just the recreational variety.

SI: As far as the recreational aspect, was it mostly providing the books, or would you have programs for GIs?

AK: No, we really didn't do much programming. That was really the recreation center's area of operations, the service clubs, that's all they did was programming. The libraries, we would do some things, like on Christmas day, we might put out cookies and coffee on special holidays and we would decorate for different holidays. In terms of actual programming and programs, like you see in public libraries here, no, we didn't do that. That really was the service clubs.

We did do, like in Cam Ranh, I had the woman that was in charge of entertainment, one of the entertainment directors, she decided she was going to put on a play. She recruited the actors from the troops for the play *Beyond the Fringe*. She was pretty liberal. So, they performed *Beyond the Fringe* in the Cam Ranh library. There were ancillary things like that, but the primary purpose there for the libraries was not programming. It was really reading.

SI: When you were in Saigon managing this library, were the women on your staff younger women or all ages?

AK: They were mostly younger. Most of them I think were probably in their twenties. The one woman who was more the in-charge one was probably older, thirties maybe. The cleaning ladies were a variety of ages.

SI: Did you get to know any of your staff and what their backgrounds were?

AK: Not so much in Saigon. I did in Cam Ranh. In Saigon, we were friendly enough, but I wasn't there long enough to really start to get to know them.

SI: What did you do when you were not on duty in Saigon?

AK: Well ...

SI: You were obviously sick for a lot of that time.

AK: Yes. We could go out to eat, because there were a lot of restaurants in Saigon. I remember going to the Mayfair French restaurant, which was everybody's favorite, for French onion soup.

I think I did go to a few parties, but I pretty much stayed inside. I didn't do a whole lot of socializing. Towards the end of September, a whole bunch of librarians came in, but I left very shortly thereafter. They all moved into the Meyerkord, too. I think probably there would have been more socializing going on if I had stayed longer, but they all came--there was Gerri, Pam, Marcia and one guy--there were at least four who came within a few days of each other in late September. By that time, I was already pushing to go to Cam Ranh or pushing to go anywhere. So, I didn't really get to spend a whole lot of time with them, although I did come back to Saigon periodically over the year and we would do things then.

SI: You requested a transfer.

AK: Yes, I did not like being in Saigon at all. It was way too ... [laughter] The woman that was in charge of the library program took me to the Cercle Sportif one afternoon. Did anybody ever talk to you about the Cercle Sportif?

SI: What is that?

AK: The Cercle Sportif was a tennis and swim club, going back to the French, so it started out for the French. Then, of course, during the war, it was very close to USAID headquarters, so people would come there for lunch. People were in their whites on the tennis court with the Vietnamese ball boys and the swimming pool. I'm sitting here and I'm thinking, "You know, I didn't come to Vietnam to support the troops to sit around and watch people pay tennis with Vietnamese picking up the balls." It bothered me. Going out to restaurants to eat, I thought, "This is not what I came here for." I started to ask if there were places more up country that I might be able to go to. Cam Ranh opened up because they were opening a new library in Chu Lai, and the woman who was at the Cam Ranh library they were going to send up to Chu Lai, so then Cam Ranh was open. So, that's how I got to Cam Ranh, and that was in mid-October.

SI: Were there restrictions on where you could go in Saigon?

AK: Not really. There was a curfew. I think it was ten o'clock, but I wasn't inclined to be out after dark anyway. I did go places, like the Rex [Hotel]. The roof of the Rex was a very popular place to go for dinner, to go for drinks, but we were always warned to watch out, if you were in a cab, in those little Peugeot cabs, watch out for somebody lobbing a grenade in. The movie theater that was right next door to the Rex was constantly being [attacked]. They were rolling satchel charges down the aisles in that movie theater all the time, so going to the movie theater was probably not a good idea. I was right next to the market, not the Chợ Lớn market, but the downtown Saigon market very close to it. I went to the [Bến Thành] market [laughter], walked through the market, walked around on Tu Do, Le Loi, Nguyen Hue, went to the Continental Palace, and sat on the Continental Shelf and had drinks.

SI: Did you usually go out by yourself, or did you go with a group?

AK: No, lots of times I went by myself.

SI: Were you in your uniform?

AK: Yes, I was in my uniform. I had civilian clothes. I don't remember wearing the civilian clothes that much in Saigon. I guess I probably did when I went out. If I went out to dinner or something, I wore civilian clothes, but during the day, I wore the uniform, mostly because I would do these things in hour or two snippets between working, because you worked all the time. I got my hair done two or three times in Saigon. Once I went to a place that one of my staff recommended that was God knows where. I was in a cyclo. I was thinking, "How am I going to get back?" [laughter] I was out and around.

The library had a van, so a couple of times, we would ride out to the Chợ Lớn PX, which was the big PX. I remember I bought a hair dryer there, and it was not a blow dryer. This was before blow dryers, this was the kind with the bonnet. [laughter] I remember walking around Le Loi looking at the black market where all of the stuff that was supposed to go to the PX ended up on the street. That was just common. If you needed something and they didn't have it at the PX, you went to Le Loi and bought it on the black market.

SI: This uniform that you had, did most people know when they met you what you were? Was it easily recognizable?

AK: Well, I had a patch that said Army Libraries and then the Special Services logo in the middle. Each of the different branches had an appropriate patch, so Army Service Clubs, Entertainment, Arts and Crafts, so the patches said who you were with. Whether that meant anything to the Vietnamese, probably not, but it looked like a uniform, so that translated into American, some connection to the military.

SI: You said it was dark blue.

AK: Dark blue. Donut Dollies were light blue, and the Army class ones were green. The women, the WAC [Women's Army Corps] Class A uniform was like an olive green. We wore dark blue, and they all looked almost the same.

SI: Who did you report to when you were in Saigon?

AK: I reported to Ruth Rappaport, who was head of Army Libraries in Vietnam. She had been there since the early '60s. She started out with the Navy, when the Navy was in charge of the program, and transferred to the Army in '66 when they took it over. Then, my "immediate supervisor" was Rozanne Barry, who worked directly under Ruth. Neither of these people were ever anywhere near where I was. They were in Long Binh. When I first came to Vietnam, I met both of them and spent time with them, and periodically when I was in Cam Ranh, I would fly down to Long Binh for a meeting. Basically, I had no direct supervision at all. I was completely on my own, as was the case with most Special Services, unlike the Red Cross, where they really had them traveling in packs. There were three or four women at a rec center and at least two going out to the fire bases. That wasn't true with Special Services. There weren't enough of us. So, we were often the only one at an installment.

SI: What was it like in Cam Ranh? What was the library like? What were your initial priorities?

AK: Well, I went up to Cam Ranh, and I was in charge of four libraries. Two of them were actually on the Cam Ranh Peninsula. One was Cam Ranh Army Post, which was attached to Cam Ranh Support Command, the general was there, Cam Ranh Area Support Command. That library was the biggest one, and it probably had about ten thousand books. It was a large facility, as the Saigon library was. Then, I had a smaller library at the Sixth Convalescent Center, which was on the other end of the peninsula. There was the Army, and then there was the Air Force. Then, there was a bridge to the mainland; I actually know now it was a pontoon bridge. Then, at the other end of the peninsula, the Navy. Market Time had an installation there, and the Army Sixth Convalescent Center. So, I was in charge of that library. Then, right across that bridge was Highway 1, Dong Ba Thin, and the 18th Engineers had a headquarters there. They had a very small library there that I was in charge of, a library and the tape center. Then, in Nha Trang, there was a library at Camp McDermott, which was mostly Special Forces psy ops [psychological operations], that kind of thing, and another very small library there.

I just moved around from library to library. There, I was assigned a vehicle; I had a van in Cam Ranh. Ruth had bought these "book mobiles." They were Ford Econoline vans. They were painted green, had Army Library Service on them, and they were outfitted inside with shelves, just like a book mobile. Now, at Long Binh, they actually did use one as a book mobile because Long Binh was so huge. They would drive around Long Binh Post using this van as a book mobile. At these other places, they were meant to give the librarians some transportation. I got a military driver's license, and I drove this van. I drove it from Cam Ranh post to Sixth CC [Convalescent Center] all the time by myself, and I could also drive right across the bay to Dong Ba Thin by myself. If I wanted to drive to Nha Trang, I had to take a GI with a weapon because that road was not secure. In fact, my friend who did the play in the library, she escorted USO shows. That was a big part of her job, and they took sniper fire more than once on that drive between Nha Trang and Cam Ranh. So, mostly I flew to Nha Trang.

SI: How far away was that?

AK: Oh, twenty-five miles, not far at all. I drove it two years ago, and now the roads are so improved, it was like a twenty-minute drive.

SI: To get there, you would get a chopper ride.

AK: Yes, I would go out and hitch a ride on whatever was going my way. Often, they were choppers; they were Hueys. The main air field was the Air Force, the air base, Cam Ranh Air Base, where big planes flew out of, but there was a small Army air field at Cam Ranh Post. That's where I would try to get a flight out first, so that was normally a chopper. If nothing was going where I needed to go there, then I would go to the air base and hitch a ride on a C-130 or a Caribou or something that was flying into Nha Trang Air Base.

SI: What drives the collection policy at these libraries? You mentioned in Saigon, people were actually using the library for research, but when you were at a forward base, what was it like?

AK: It was more recreation. It was general fiction and general non-fiction, but with an emphasis

on the non-fiction. There was no censorship at all. We read the same book selection tools that we would use here, Library Journal Booklist, *New York Times*, and selected books the same way I selected books in libraries after I got home. We had McNaughtons. Do you know what McNaughtons are?

SI: No.

AK: All right, McNaughton was a service from Brodart, and they were rental books. They were the very popular books at the time, fiction and non-fiction. Brodart would make a selection, and there were different levels based on the size of the collection that you were getting that determined the number of books. It was a mix of popular fiction, very popular non-fiction. It was meant to supplement, so a library didn't have to buy eighteen copies of *Portnoy's Complaint*. They could supplement them with these rental books, and when the popularity waned, they could just send them back to Brodart. We had subscriptions to these McNaughtons for current popular reading. When the rental period was up and we sent the books back, the Army bought those collections, which you could do. If you wanted to keep something, you could buy it. The Army bought them all and turned them into the expendable collections that went to the company areas, to recreation centers in fire bases, places where the chances of them getting blown up were even greater than in the base camps. Combined with those and the newspaper magazine kits, they turned that into the field collections. All those were always flown in. They didn't come by ship. That meant we had a constantly rotating collection of currently popular literature. Of course, the books I ordered came by ship, so I never saw anything that I ordered actually come in the library because I was gone by the time they started to trickle in. We had magazines and newspapers that were flown in, so we always had current major daily newspapers and current magazines, which were very popular because you could come and sit in the air conditioning and read a newspaper or read a magazine. A lot of the guys did that.

SI: Let us take a quick break.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: Ready?

AK: Let's go.

SI: You mentioned there was a tape center at one of the libraries. Were there other types of media?

AK: No, no. Reel-to-reel tape was the only media. Well, there really was no media to speak of at that point, except reel-to-reel tape and vinyl. There were no cassette tapes. Film strips were really not part of the equation. Yes, there was a tape center. Mind you this was pre-1976 copyright law. [laughter] The tape center had a collection of vinyl records, a fairly sizable one, and they had lists of these vinyl records and the playlists from each album. The soldiers could go in with their blank reel-to-reel tapes and pick the albums that they wanted recorded, and then the soldier that was assigned to the library/tape center would tape the album onto their reel-to-reel tapes and give it back to them and then they could go play it. [This happened] especially at

Cam Ranh, which had a lot of transportation units. They would convoy, but they spent a lot of time in the base camp. They had bought tape recorders and all kinds of electronics from either the PX directly or through the Pacific Exchange Catalog. I have a whole closet full of these reel-to-reel tapes with this music on them. They would take them back to their quarters and play them, and it was pretty current stuff, all kinds of music, jazz, country, soul, classic, pop, just all kinds of music. That was more popular than the books in that library, I can tell you. [laughter]

SI: Tell me a little bit about your day to day activities. What was the average day like for you?

AK: Well, the library was opened from eight in the morning until ten at night. I would usually work from eight to eight or maybe eight to six. We got a lunch break, dinner break, and sometimes I would eat in the mess hall. They had a snack bar, and sometimes I would eat at the snack bar.

I was living in a trailer. All the women in Cam Ranh, military and civilian, were all billeted in what was called the mini-court, which was a fenced-in area with trailers. So, it was all the women and the field grade officers, with the rank of major and above, were living in these trailers, women in the front, field grade officers in the back. There was a guard posted at night that walked the perimeter. There were Red Cross, Special Services, WAC, and third country nationals, women. We were all living in four trailers. Each one had two small bedrooms one larger bedroom, and they all had kitchen facilities. If we either got care packages from home or we could scrounge food, which wasn't that hard to do, we had a stove, we had a refrigerator, [so we could cook]. It wasn't just cooking out of the electric frying pan, like a lot of people did, although, we had that, too. We could actually cook, and if we scrounged food, we would, because it tasted a lot better than what we were getting in the mess hall. We could eat breakfast there, that kind of thing. People would send us boxes of cereal and stuff. You could buy some food at the PX. To this day, I cannot even look at a can of Old El Paso. [laughter] It was a very popular PX item. They did have canned food in the PX. Plus, it meant a little time where we weren't the only women in the middle of a sea of men.

SI: How many women would you say lived in this area?

AK: Well, four trailers, three rooms, about a dozen. Mostly Red Cross, it was mostly Red Cross.

SI: These third country nationals ...

AK: Third country nationals.

SI: ... Were they Australian?

AK: The one I was with was an Australian. She worked for the PX.

SI: Talk about that aspect for a minute, usually being the only women among mostly servicemen. What was it like? Did you encounter any problems?

AK: I did not encounter any problems, but many women I know did. The craftswoman, the Special Services woman whom managed the craft shop, who was at Cam Ranh and also transferred to Chu Lai when the librarian moved up there, she was assaulted in her quarters in Chu Lai. The nurses at the air base, more than one was assaulted. Of course, I was there when Virginia Kirsch was murdered in Cu Chi. [Editor's Note: After graduating from Miami University in Ohio in 1970, Virginia "Ginny" Kirsch volunteered for the American Red Cross to serve with the Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO) with the so-called "Donut Dollies." Kirsch served at the 25th Infantry Division base at Cu Chi. On the night of August 16, 1970, two weeks after her arrival in Vietnam, Kirsch was murdered in her room. Although the subsequent investigation implicated several American servicemen, none of the suspects were brought to trial.]

I remember a lot of people didn't have transportation, and so there was a lot of hitchhiking that went on. Once I was driving back to Cam Ranh from Sixth CC, and an MP [Military Police] was walking and hitchhiking and I picked him up. I picked him up because he was an MP, and he said, "Don't ever do that again." [laughter] I said, "Well, I only picked you up because I could see you're police." He said, "I don't care. You don't know who is out there. Do not pick any hitchhikers up again." I said, "Okay," and I did not. I think it was somewhat different for me, because my role was different. The women whose job was to play games with the guys, to socialize with them, to chit chat, I think they were in a more difficult place than I was because I didn't have that type of relationship with the soldiers that came in the library. I behaved toward them the way I would have behaved toward anybody who had walked into the public library I worked in in California. It was a much more professional interaction. I think they saw it that way. I don't think I had the same situations to deal with that the women who were there really for recreational activities.

SI: These cases of assault that you brought up, were they brought to the attention of the military justice system, or were they things you heard about?

AK: Well, the murder of Virginia Kirsch definitely was brought. The woman I knew who was assaulted at Chu Lai, she talked him down before he actually did anything and she got him out. I'm not sure she even reported it. I don't know that I would have even known about it, except that I was up there like a day or so after it happened. She was still very shaken up, so they told me, but I'm not sure she ever reported it. The issues at the air base, I did not know about them when I was there, but I went to a couple of parties at the air base right after I went to Cam Ranh and I had a bad feeling. Something told me, "You don't want to be here," and so I never went back. I heard about these years later when I became friendly with women who had been there, and they didn't report them.

SI: Would you say there was a culture of silence?

AK: Oh, yes, just like there is now.

SI: Tell me about working with your patrons and what that was like and how it was different for each of these four libraries that were under your control.

AK: At Cam Ranh, there were a lot of guys taking correspondence courses. There was USAFI [United States Armed Forces Institute], but it was the Continuing Education Office and they had an office at Cam Ranh Army. Again, these were transportation units, so between their convoys, they had down time. So, they were taking correspondence courses, and they came in and did homework, homework like if they were at college in the states. I did interlibrary loans for those guys. I got books from the Headquarters Library in Honolulu for them and helped them research their papers and really helped them with school work, not a lot different from CCM, the County College of Morris.

The other three libraries were recreational types, not a lot of real reference questions there, but more readers' advisory than reference. The Sixth CC was a hospital that was mostly people who were sick from diseases, lots of malaria patients and other tropical diseases, and guys who had been wounded but not enough to medevac them out. In other words, they were going to go back to the field. They were just kind of passing time, and they had a lot of time on their hands, especially the malaria patients because they didn't have to stay in the wards. They were out wandering around looking for things to do. I actually redecorated that library with a bunch of these guys. I scrounged paint and they helped me paint, and we rearranged the furniture. That was kind of a programming thing. [laughter]

SI: Were all your patrons there ambulatory, or did you have to bring books to them?

AK: No, they were mostly ambulatory. Almost everybody in that hospital were able to get out of bed. If they were not ambulatory, they were at the Air Force hospital, which was like an evac [evacuation] hospital, the Twelfth Air Force Hospital. The patients who were seriously injured or seriously sick, that's where they were. This was truly a convalescent center, so they were almost all ambulatory.

Dong Ba Thin, well, like I said, the big attraction at Dong Ba Thin was that tape center, and the actual book collection was tiny. They had to have room for all those record albums [laughter], and it was a very small building anyway. The library part of that was really kind of an afterthought. In fact, I don't think there was even any place to sit down in there.

Then, the Nha Trang library was also very small but very well used, and the woman who was the local national employee in that library was very well educated. Her family, they were Catholics. Both she and her husband and their families had come down from the north in 1954 when they split the country. She spoke English very well, was very well educated, could really do a good job of subbing for a real librarian. She could really answer reference questions, which in the other libraries, that wasn't the case.

SI: Did your staff consist mostly of local nationals?

AK: Yes, yes. Each library had one full-time GI assigned. Their duty assignment was Special Services, that was their MOS [military occupational specialty], and they were assigned to the library. There was one soldier at each of the libraries in that category, some better than others, like the drunk at Sixth CC that I had to have removed. Thank goodness there was a first sergeant at Sixth CC who was willing to work with me, because this guy, not only was he drinking all the

time, but he was also harassing the Vietnamese woman. That was an ugly situation, and yet another personnel thing they don't teach you in library school. There, again, there were these part-time GIs who worked the night hours.

This women in Nha Trang was really good. I get emails still from soldiers who used that Nha Trang library, saying how wonderful it was to have it there, remembering that woman, and just what it meant to them. Especially from Nha Trang, I get them from Cam Ranh too, from people who were at Cam Ranh, but Nha Trang was exceptional. It was a very small collection, maybe at max a couple of thousand books but really well used.

SI: Were you over there about ten months in this position?

AK: Yes. From October to, again, the end of August.

SI: Did you always get the supplies you needed? Was that a constant battle getting what you needed to do your job?

AK: No, in terms of library supplies, the supply network was very well oiled. Ruth Rappaport knew her stuff. She was quite a lady. She really knew the system, and she knew how to work with it. In terms of library-related supplies, we had very little problem at all. They had a central cataloging and processing unit in Saigon, where the books came in, so all the books came to us ready to go on the shelf with catalog cards and shelf list cards--not shelf list. We didn't have a shelf list there. They had a master shelf list in Saigon, which got blown up, a rocket. [laughter] It was right across the street from the Presidential Palace. A rocket came in and, notoriously bad aim, overshot the palace and landed in the Library Service Center, in the middle of the night fortunately, but during National Library Week. [laughter] It kind of made a shambles of the shelf list. In terms of the library, it worked like clockwork.

In terms of general facilities management, not so much, like the air conditioners. I spent a lot of time keeping those air conditioners running. They were window air conditioners. They were on all the time. They were constantly breaking down. I had to develop this whole network of soldiers who either knew how to work on air conditioners, knew how to scrounge for parts for air conditioners, to keep those things running because they had to keep running. If the air conditioners weren't running, those collections were toast. Requisitioning those kinds of items, no, you couldn't do it. You had to develop a bartering methodology to keep that stuff going.

SI: What would you trade to get an air conditioner repaired?

AK: Well, a lot of it was just you developed friendships [laughter] and you'd call and say, "Hey, if you've got a few minutes, can you just come down and look at this and see if you can figure it out?" They were helpful; the guys wanted to be helpful. Within Cam Ranh, the library was part of First Log [First Logistical Command], at least in the beginning. It switched to USARV [United States Army Vietnam] later in 1970, but it was part of First Log and we were part of Cam Ranh Special Troops. There was a big pool of people to draw from, not just the Special Services office, but everybody who was part of supply, part of the motor pool. All of those were Cam Ranh Special Troops. My predecessor had already developed a network of people who had

skills and had cultivated that, and I just took it over. As one guy would leave, they would know somebody else who could step in and take over. It was this little grassroots networking that made it work. There was that.

Then, there was the constant tension between the Special Services officer and the sergeant first class in the Special Services office, and me because I had a vehicle and they didn't. That got very nasty. Talk about the anti-war protesters taking it out on the soldiers, well, these two guys were making me a personal vendetta because I was driving and they were walking. That violated every bit of their military culture, that a captain and a sergeant first class had to walk, and this twenty-three-year-old civilian was driving. I did not have any sexual harassment issues when I was in Vietnam, but I had plenty of workplace harassment, what you would call now a hostile workplace.

SI: Would you mind sharing what they would do, how they would make it hostile?

AK: Oh, well, they would deny services. If I needed facility-related things that I couldn't get from the library people, like lightbulbs or fixing something, they wouldn't do it. They just said, "We're not going to do it." I would talk to the library people about this, but basically it was very clear, "This is your problem; you've got to handle it," so I did. There was an intimidation factor, more nastiness, just general nasty behavior, open hostility [to] me and the other Special Services woman, who unfortunately had to actually work inside that office, both of us. I think a lot of it was they just didn't want women there. They didn't want to have to deal with us, they didn't want to have to work with us, and the fact that I had a vehicle was just adding fuel to the flames. They just were hostile and nasty. Now, she had more problems because she had to move these USO shows around this area, so there was a whole array of things that she needed that I didn't need at all in terms of transportation and billeting and food. They would just stonewall her all the time to the point where lots of times she would billet people in Nha Trang instead of Cam Ranh. Especially the sergeant first class was your typical women-should-be-at-home-with-babies type, who was really having an extremely difficult time with having a couple of young women in his territory.

SI: Had they been in Special Services before?

AK: The sergeant first class, yes, I am pretty sure. The captain, no. I don't think he was even career. I think he had a sports background, and that's how he ended up a Special Services officer. He either enlisted or was drafted but for the minimum amount of time, whatever it was. He was definitely not career, and the first sergeant was kind of leading him around. More than once, I just went over their heads and went to the general. Obviously, if you make it to general, you can't be that openly hostile, so you could at least talk to him. On occasions when I thought it was serious enough, I would just go directly to the general.

SI: You said your friend was in charge of USO accommodations. Did you get to see a lot of USO shows?

AK: I did not see any of them, which is not to say that they weren't there. I just never bothered to go see them.

SI: Were you allowed to go see them?

AK: Oh, yes, sure. I did meet a couple of football players, Ron Swoboda, football, baseball, I don't know. [laughter] Anyway, they did handshake tours, and for whatever reason, they were at our trailer for a short period of time, so I met them. There were shows at Cam Ranh all the time, but, no, I never went to any of them. [Editor's Note: Ron Swoboda was a major league baseball player for the New York Mets.]

SI: You mentioned in the write-up that there were very few facilities for women. How did you have to adjust to that all-male world?

AK: Well, there were no bathrooms. That's one of the reasons why I got cystitis. Even in Saigon, there were no bathrooms. I would have had to walk back to the BOQ to go to the bathroom, and I didn't. That's how I got cystitis.

At Cam Ranh, again, we had a bathroom in the trailer, but nothing, absolutely nothing in any of our work areas, at least when I got there. When I left, I had succeeded, along with the Red Cross social workers, in getting a latrine. It took us almost ten months to do that. I think we got it in June. Again, this was a real hardship for women who had no transportation, because they couldn't go back to their quarters to go to the bathroom. For me, to leave the library and drive ten minutes up the road to the trailer court, you really can't do that. So, coffee cans. I would tell the GI to guard the door, and I used a coffee can. Sometimes, I went with the Vietnamese ladies behind the Conex [shipping container]. That was just what you had to do.

We lobbied and lobbied and lobbied. There were two Red Cross women who were social workers, who handled the emergency leaves and that kind of thing, who had an office that was catty-corner from the library. We fought and fought and lobbied and lobbied, and finally we got a one-seater latrine with a padlock. I had a key, and they had a key. Then, we and our Vietnamese women staff, could use that latrine. That was June--I left in August--that we finally got that. Otherwise, it was catch as catch can, and I went by the side of the road many times. Somebody [would be] saying, "You better watch out for mines." [laughter] Then, of course, there were the piss tubes. The Air Force, I have to say, had indoor plumbing. There were actual toilets at the Air Force. The Army, no. They had piss tubes scattered all over the place. You would be walking to work in the morning, and here would be the guy in the piss tube. Has anybody described a piss tube to you?

SI: Yes, it was like an artillery shell that went into the ground.

AK: Yes, yes. With about half way up, you have a piece of wood. They'd say, "Good morning." "Good morning." [laughter] It just seemed a normal thing. Not so normal. [laughter] It was normal for there.

SI: One thing that I hear from a lot of the veterans is that you go into the service and there is this worsening of language and drinking and gambling.

AK: Yes.

SI: How did that affect the women that you served with? Was there a change in language?

AK: Oh, yes, there was a definite change in language. I think we all had a change in language, [laughter] which we had to be careful with when we got home and I still have to be careful with. Yes, a definite change in language. Gambling, I don't know. Maybe the guys were gambling; probably they were. None of the women I knew, we never did that. There was gambling in the EM clubs, I'm sure of it, but I never went. It's probably one of the reasons why I never saw a USO show; I stayed away from crowds. I didn't go in the officer's club, I certainly didn't go to any of the clubs. I didn't go in the officer's club, the NCO [non-commissioned officer], the EM club, I didn't go in the USO club. I just stayed away from crowds, and I think that was an instinctive self-preservation tactic. I was able to that, and I did it. Some of the women couldn't do that, but I could and I just stayed away. At Cam Ranh, there were two camps. There were the drinkers, and there were the druggies. Everyone knew where the druggies hung out, and if you weren't a druggie, you didn't go there. Everybody else drank, and, yes, I drank a lot, a lot.

SI: Was that the culture?

AK: I was not a teetotaler when I was in college either. We would go out in the orange groves and drink beer when I was at UCR, and we were obviously underage. I was not someone who didn't drink. My parents drank. My grandparents, my father's parents, were teetotalers, but my parents weren't. I wasn't. In Vietnam, you had a ration card and you could only buy so much liquor, but it was so cheap and it was really good stuff, Chivas Regal and Johnny Walker Black. The PX had really good liquor. I was not a smoker. I had never smoked. I would buy cigarettes for the guys who had used up their ration for cigarettes, and they would buy liquor for me. It was something to do.

SI: Would you say that the drug problem had a big impact on the base?

AK: Yes, yes. At Cam Ranh, yes, there were big drug issues, and there were big racial issues.

SI: Was it mostly marijuana, or were there other drugs?

AK: It was hard drugs. They were getting hard drugs.

SI: Can you describe the impact you saw?

AK: Well, one of the ancillary impacts, and it was due to the racial riots that had happened right before I got there and also I think the drug problem, was that you weren't allowed to carry a weapon on Cam Ranh Army Post. All of the weapons were locked up in the company areas. You could only carry a weapon if you were on guard duty or if you had to drive off post or if there was a red alert. Everything was locked up. The word was, and I'm sure it was true, that they were locked up so they wouldn't shoot at each other.

If soldiers came in from the field, they had to meet that post's standards, which means they had to

spit polish their boots before they could go in the PX. They had to lock up their weapons. The guys who were coming in from the field did not want to surrender their weapons and didn't see why they had to spit polish their boots, so there was a lot of tension from those rules being enforced at the PX and the mess halls and that kind of thing. The whole time I was there, I was thinking, "We're in a middle of a war zone here and they don't let these soldiers have weapons. There's something intrinsically wrong with this picture." A couple of times there were red alerts. The VC [Vietcong] came across the bay with satchel charges and blew up the ammo dump, which was quite impressive. That sticks with you. The scene was these guys running around, they can't find the keys to open the weapons cabinet to get the guns out. It was a situation where if it had been a bigger force, they probably could have overrun the place. They did overrun Sixth CC about two months before I got there. They came across and rolled grenades and satchel charges into the wards killing people, and again it was a case where they wouldn't allow them to keep their weapons on the wards. The drug issues and the racial issues definitely had an impact. Well, like I said, everybody knew where you could get drugs and where the people who were using them would go, and if you were not in that category, you just stayed well clear of that area, and I did.

SI: Let us just pause real quick.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: You mentioned the one example of the GI who was drunk and harassing the staff members. Were there any other issues with the people under you abusing drugs or alcohol?

AK: Well, not affecting their jobs. No, that was the only one. The guy that was the full-time soldier assigned to the Cam Ranh Post Library, he was a football player or something. He was more interested in my letting him off for a few hours, so he could go over the sports pad and play basketball than anything else. The guy at Dong Ba Thin was pretty straight. The woman in Nha Trang had that operation well in hand. So, it was really that one guy at Sixth CC, and that was a real problem because he was just drunk all the time.

SI: Tell me about some of these attacks that happened at the base. First, when there was an attack, what were you and the other civilians supposed to do?

AK: Well, no one ever actually told us, but common sense said you got under cover somewhere. We had a bunker in the middle of the trailer court that was really disgusting beyond belief. My method was to roll under the Army cot that I was sleeping on and pile the mattress and the blankets around me, which in the size of the room that I was in, where that bed took up most of the space, that pretty much padded the entire room. We were rocketed and mortared a few times. The library was hit at one point, again, in the middle of the night. It hit the roof of the library above the reference room, a hole in the roof but minimal damage really. A lot of them were duds, too; they didn't actually explode. The time they came through and blew up the ammo dump, that was probably the most major attack that I was in. The rocketing and mortar, the incoming and outgoing, you would just get used to hearing it and you learned to distinguish the sound, whether it was incoming or outgoing and so it was just part of the landscape. The closest I ever came to getting killed was when I was in my trailer at lunchtime, I was sitting on the bed,

and a bullet wizzes by, like ... [Editor's Note: Ms. Kelsey makes a sound like "zip."]

SI: It went right by your head.

AK: Right by my head. I got up, and I looked. Sure enough, there's the hole in the wall. It had come through. Of course, these trailer walls are plasterboard really. It had come through the front of the trailer, right through the wall where the bedroom was, right by my head, and then out the back. Given the time of day and everything, I was pretty sure this wasn't the enemy.

[laughter] I went out and dug that bullet up in the sand. I bypassed the Special Services office and went right to the support command, right into the general, and I said, "You know you really should tell your units not to fire in the direction of the mini court when they're doing whatever they are doing." It may not have even been the Army because we were backed up against a mountain, and on the other side of the mountain, that's where the Navy was. So, it could have been who knows, who knows what it was, or just a couple of guys out there fooling around on the other side of the mini court, who knows. I wish I had kept the bullet though; it would have been a good souvenir. [laughter]

SI: Did you find it stressful operating in this type of environment?

AK: I don't remember being stressed, except for my interactions with the Special Services personnel and some of my other personnel issues with staff. That's what I remember as being stressful. The conditions that I was living in, I don't remember ever being stressed by that.

SI: You said that the night the ammo dump was attacked was pretty memorable. What do you remember about that attack?

AK: Oh, I remember the ammo dump blowing up.

SI: How far away were you from it?

AK: Couple miles. It was like the whole sky blew up. There was this huge ball of fire. It just covered the whole sky, with accompanying sound effects. I'm pretty sure that's why I don't like fireworks.

SI: You commented on the racial problems. How would you describe the relationship between African American soldiers and white soldiers as you saw it? Was it palpable among your patrons?

AK: There were some African Americans who came in the library, but mostly they were white. I didn't see any tension at all among the soldiers that I worked with. The first sergeant that I mentioned at the Sixth CC that helped me get rid of the drunk in the library, he was African American. There was a Special Troops sergeant who was African American at Cam Ranh Army who did a lot with the various Special Troops units. I think he was probably a sergeant first class. There was a Cuban also. In fact, they flew him to Hawaii and naturalized him while he was in Vietnam. There was no tension there at all, but we all knew each other. Again, what went on in the barracks, what went on in the clubs, I have no knowledge of, because I just stayed

away. That, I suspect is where the tensions really came out, when there was too much drinking.

SI: During your year there, did you ever go on leave or get rest and relaxation?

AK: Yes, we were entitled to an R&R, and I went to Hong Kong. I took all of the annual leave that I was earning as I earned it, so I went to Thailand for a week. On the way home, I spent a month in Japan.

SI: What were your impressions of these different areas, particularly since you have a background in studying these areas?

AK: Oh, yes, I loved it. That was a big perk of being in that part of the world was that I had the chance to go to these places that I learned so much about, read so much about, and thought I would never ever be able to visit. I love Thailand. That was just fabulous. I went shopping and went to the temples and went to Ayutthaya, before it was even close to being restored, and the floating market. It was wonderful. Hong Kong, I remember going and looking at the Chinese border and wondering if I would ever be able to get to China, and I did in the '80s. Again, more shopping. [laughter] It was more than just shopping. It was the food, and it was the culture and the museums. It was just fabulous. I loved Asia then, and I still do. I've seen not very much of Europe, but I've been all over Asia.

SI: Have you ever studied any Asian languages? Did you have any background when you went to Vietnam?

AK: No, I never will because I'm tone deaf. I can't hear the tones, and if you can't hear the tones, you can't speak these languages.

SI: How did your view of the war change during your time in Vietnam?

AK: Yes, it changed completely. My "Ra, ra, support the government at all costs" attitude that I went there with lasted about a month and a half. The things that I saw in Saigon, the graft, the corruption, that made me want to get out of there in the first place, that got me up to Cam Ranh, just seeing this constant back and forth, we take this, we've got this, but now we don't have it anymore. Now, we're going to go back, and then they're going to take it away again. It became clear to me in talking with the Vietnamese who worked for me and listening to their histories that this was not a war to make the world safe for democracy, that this was a civil war and that we had no business messing in it, that the Vietnamese were not going to roll down the peninsula and take over Australia. [laughter] The whole Domino Theory was just totally, totally wrong, and they were lying. The politicians in Washington and the whole body-count thing, I could see they were just plain lying.

SI: Did you ever discuss this with the people you were there with?

AK: Oh, yes, we talked about it all the time.

SI: Among the civilians?

AK: Civilians and military.

SI: There was an anti-war movement among servicemen there. Did you see any signs of that?

AK: Just the beginnings. Really right as I was leaving, that started to manifest itself. That's also, of course, when the fragging started to become a real issue. Most of the time that I was there, the anti-war actual protesting really wasn't visible, at least where I was.

SI: You mentioned in the write-up that Cambodia was a real turning point for you.

AK: Oh, yes, that was it. Cambodia, that was the end for me. When the Dong Ba Thin Library, the 18th [Engineers] called me up and said, "We are all leaving. You have to come and close up the library." I went over there, and they were all convoying out. This was April of '70. They were all convoying out and loading up the trucks. I said, "Well, where are you all going?" They said, "Cambodia." I'm standing there. I'm watching this convoy pull out, and AFVN [Armed Forces Vietnam radio and television network] broadcasts Nixon's speech saying we are not invading Cambodia. I thought, "What a pack of lies. I'll never believe anything a president or a politician says ever again, unless I have personally vetted it," and I never have. That was the end of it for me. I felt no support whatsoever for the United States being in that country after that.

SI: What else stands out about your time in Vietnam that we have not gone into, maybe about your everyday activities or singular experiences you may have had during that year?

AK: It was pretty boring. I worked all the time. When I wasn't working, Special Services had movies all over the base every night. They had a whole crew of GIs that went out and showed movies, or they would take the movies to the company areas. Then, the guys in the company area would load the projector and run the film. They had a movie showing at the mini court every night, which I sometimes went to. I read a lot [laughter] and drank a lot and socialized with a very small group of people, mostly Special Troops. It was Special Troops and not even the Red Cross. It was the woman from Entertainment and me and the two Red Cross social workers, but we didn't really socialize with the Donut Dollies.

I didn't even know what the heck the Donut Dollies were. I did not know why they were there or what they were doing. They would come in the library and ask all of these strange reference questions, which I would get them the answers for, you know, trivia-type questions. It wasn't until the '90s that I found out that they were creating these programs to go out in the field and play games with the guys. I had no idea what those women were doing; we just didn't talk to each other.

SI: Why were these questions?

AK: Oh, you don't know about the Donut Dolly games.

SI: Was it a Trivial Pursuit-type of game?

AK: Yes. They would create what they called programs, and a lot of it was like twenty questions or Jeopardy, those kinds of things. They were based on a theme, so they would come up with a theme and then they would have to create the program around the theme. Part of it was twenty questions or Jeopardy questions. Then, they would play crazy games like Pin the Tail on the Donkey, just anything to get the guys' minds off whatever they were doing. They were always going out in the field, so they had to continue to develop these programs all the time. As long as they were in that particular spot, they were going to the same places, over and over, so they had to come up with new stuff so they didn't get bored. Oh, yes, you should interview a Donut Dolly. [laughter]

SI: Do you think there was some reason why you did not interact with them, maybe because your jobs were different?

AK: Now, all of us women are pretty close, and we've talked about that a lot, about why we didn't interact more. You would think that there were so few of us, and that when we were brought together in a billet or something that this camaraderie or bonding would develop, but it didn't. From hearing other women talk, it seems that that was the case not just where I was but in other places, that if you happened to be in a situation where you were working with other women on a daily basis, like the Red Cross tried to have at least two, maybe three or four, they would bond together as a group because they were with each other every day, sort of like the Special Services woman and I because we interfaced a lot in our jobs, so we got close, but [not] outside of that. Special Services, we almost always worked alone. When I would go to Saigon, I would socialize with the other librarians who were in Saigon and Long Binh, but that happened maybe three times the whole time I was there. It wasn't a continuous thing. I don't know exactly why it was. The nurses, the Air Force nurses, I went over to the air base every week and did my laundry, because they actually had a washer and dryer in a trailer there outside the nurse's quarters. I never interacted with the nurses, but we remember seeing each other. When we met again in the '90s, we recognized each other. [laughter]

SI: How did you meet these women later on in life? Is through an organization or did you meet people along the way?

AK: It was the Vietnam Women's Memorial dedication that brought a lot of us together, and then following that, the Internet.

SI: Have you been able to reestablish contact with women you actually served with?

AK: Yes. The entertainment woman, she and I have reconnected. Both the women that befriended me when I landed in Saigon, one is local, so I see her a lot, and I'm in touch with the other woman who's in Texas. Even the Australian, we reestablished [contact], actually at the dedication. The Australians were marching right behind Special Services. I turned around and there she was, right behind me. So, we reestablished contact, and I actually went to Australia in 2007 and stayed with her. Yes, we have. There are a couple of closed Yahoo groups. There's one for Donut Dollies, there's one for nurses, there's one that's a more general women in Vietnam. There's a closed Facebook group "We Also Served." Yes, there are a lot of reconnections. People that we didn't know there but who were there at the same time or even if

they weren't, there is this kind of common bond now that we're close.

SI: The women that you served with, would you say they had similar educational backgrounds? Had they gone to college?

AK: They had all been to college. That was a requirement for the USO, the Red Cross and Special Services. Everyone they hired had to have a BA. So, they didn't hire anyone who was not a college graduate. There were secretaries working for the embassy or CIA or whatever who didn't necessarily have a degree. Of course, the nurses at that time probably didn't have degrees because they were graduating out of hospital nursing schools. The four-year RN barely existed then. The Morale and Recreation people, they all had to have a BA in order to be hired, and librarians had to have masters.

SI: What was it like coming back home from Vietnam? What was the process like? Where did you see your life going at that point?

AK: Well, I knew that I was not going to extend. I knew that for sure. I was ready to leave. The other librarians did extend. Even Kathy, even the entertainment woman, she extended. There were only two of us, from the whole group that came in that time period in the fall of '69, there were two of us who came home after the year. Everybody else stayed for at least six months. Some of them stayed for two years. I had resigned actually before I left Vietnam. I'd already put in my papers to resign. I threw away all my uniforms at Cam Ranh. Because I had resigned, I didn't have to travel in the uniform. I threw all of them away, everything, shoes, everything. Everything I had worn in Vietnam did not leave Vietnam with me. I kept the patches. I took the patches off the uniform sleeve and I kept the patches, but everything else went. I had arranged this one-month tour of Japan to start as soon as I had left.

I took a, I think it was, Air America flight out of Tan Son Nhut to Yokosuka Air Base in Japan. Then, I took the train from Yokosuka to Tokyo. I was in Tokyo for a few days on my own shopping [laughter] before I actually hooked up with the tour. Amazingly enough on this tour was a couple from Riverside, California, who had come into the branch library where I worked all the time. It was a real surprise. They were there with their grandkids; they were on this tour with their grandkids. It was serendipity. We went all over Japan, everywhere. We went to Kyoto, we went to Osaka, we went just all over. It was just a fabulous tour. It was just so interesting seeing all those places, the Zen gardens in Kyoto. The World's Fair was in Osaka that year, so we went to the World's Fair. It was just a wonderful trip. Of course, I didn't realize it, but it gave me the decompression time that a lot of people didn't have before I went home.

SI: Was it difficult to readjust from life in Vietnam to regular civilian life?

AK: Yes, but having that month, not just coming straight back, I think made a big difference because it allowed me to be in a middle place. I wasn't back in the states, but I was doing normal things in a normal way with people who had no connection at all to Vietnam or the war or anything. I did this tour. When the tour was over, I took the train back to Yokosuka and got on a plane back to Travis, but the plane I was on back to Travis had no soldiers, well, no soldiers from Vietnam on it. It was really full of dependent families, who were being transferred from Japan

back to the States. It was a plane full of wives and babies and toddlers. There were some military, but it was mostly dependents. When I got back to Travis, and of course I was in civilian clothes, there was absolutely nothing to connect me with Vietnam, nothing. In fact, they were supposed to take my passport away because it was a diplomatic passport, but because of the group I was with, they just passed me through, so I still have the passport as a souvenir. [laughter] I went out, and I retraced my steps. I got a bus back from Travis back to San Francisco Airport, and then I flew from San Francisco to LA. My parents picked me up.

I totally did not stand out. There was absolutely nothing to indicate where I had been, but I could see what was going on in the terminals with the soldiers who were identifiable, and it was not pretty. There were Hari Krishna groups, there were anti-war groups, and they would surround them and just yell at them. I didn't see any spitting. I never saw any spitting, but they would harass them.

SI: At that point in your life, what did you want to do? Did you have an idea of where you might go for work?

AK: Well, yes, sort of. I had met a guy in Vietnam. He was one of my air conditioner go-to people [laughter] and he was from New York City. We had gotten pretty close in Vietnam. He had left in June. I was already thinking maybe I would go to New York because we were writing every day, and so I thought, "Well, maybe I will go to New York." I wasn't thinking past one day at a time really. I got back to Riverside, and, again, totally jetlagged. I slept for two days. Then, I started to be with my family. I got in touch with some of my really close friends from college and high school that I kept in touch with, that had written me while I was in Vietnam.

I was feeling very uncomfortable because I didn't have any point of connection with anybody really. No one wanted to talk about Vietnam. It was perfectly clear to me that talking about Vietnam was not a socially acceptable thing to do, and in some situations, it could be a dangerous thing to do. I went to visit my girlfriends, and they were married. They were having babies. Some of them were on their second baby. There was no common ground. My family, well, of course, they were just glad I was home in one piece, but they didn't want to talk about Vietnam. They didn't want me to talk about Vietnam. I was just generally very uncomfortable. I had this escape that I could go to New York, so I did three weeks later. The guy I knew, his father was a superintendent, a building manager, at an apartment building in Brooklyn, so he had gotten me an apartment for ninety-nine dollars a month. [laughter] How I wish I had kept that place. [laughter] His mother was very nice. He was Puerto Rican, his mother was Puerto Rican, and his father was from Spain. They were just very nice to me.

Right away, I'm thinking, "I've got to get a job, got to get a job." I filed for unemployment. I was entitled to unemployment from the government, so I did collect a couple of times. It was me and a sea of GIs, or vets at that point, at the government unemployment office on 23rd Street. It was like being back in Vietnam. I just sent out resumes to every library in the tristate area, but I kept Vietnam off that resume. I said I worked for the Army, I said I was a librarian, I said what I did but not where. What I did in terms of library work was library work that you would do anywhere.

I got a job. I had taken children's literature classes in library school when I was a public library type, so I got a job. I got to New York in, I guess, October. I had a job before Thanksgiving as a children's librarian on Long Island, in a little library on Long Island. I started working. I learned how to do story hours, *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, puppetry, a lot of programming, and didn't say a word to anybody about being in Vietnam, not a word. I'd also applied to the big libraries, NYPL, New York Public, and Queensborough Public and Brooklyn Public, and about three months later, I got a call from Queensborough that they had an opening. I took that, because it was significantly more money. Then, I was there for a couple of years. The guy that I met, we got married in '71, and we never talked about Vietnam. Even though we'd both been there, we did not talk about Vietnam. That lasted about five years.

SI: When did you finally feel comfortable talking about Vietnam, or even just mentioning that you had been there?

AK: 1992, with a brief little window in '75.

SI: What was the window in '75?

AK: That was when I was getting Vietnamese out of Vietnam, and I needed congressional help and help from a lot of different areas. I needed the time off from work, so I had to tell the people I worked for what I was doing. Then, I kept my mouth shut until 1992, when I went back to Vietnam.

SI: When you took the job at Queensborough, what type of librarianship were you doing?

AK: I was public catalog/telephone reference. What that meant was that, again, no computers, they had this huge catalog with all of these index cards. It was like a shelf list with the locations of books in the whole Queensborough branch system. People would call up and want to know if we owned a book and where it was. We would look in the catalog, and then we would tell them what branches it was located at. That was the public catalog part. The telephone reference part was your traditional telephone reference operation. We were down in the basement in a little room with a whole bunch of ready reference tools. All calls that were reference were directed to us from the switchboard. We were to answer questions in five minutes or less. If the question was too complicated or if we didn't have the resources to do that, then we referred them to one of the subject areas. The library was divided, history and biography and popular literature and social sciences. So, it was a quick answer, and if anything was more complex or we didn't have the tools, we would refer to the subject area.

SI: At this time, you were living in Brooklyn.

AK: Yes.

SI: What were your impressions of living on the East Coast after living in all these different areas? How were things changing in the '70s?

AK: Well, I suppose I would have been more culture shocked if I had come from California to

New York, but having Vietnam in the middle there, going to New York was not nearly as much of a culture shock. Again, I was, "Oh, wow, all these museums." The time when I was job hunting, when I didn't have a job interview, I would get on the subway and I would just go all over Manhattan and go to the museums and the Empire State Building and the big department stores, shopping. It was just wonderful. I just loved the city; I still love the city. I went to Broadway plays, concerts in the park, and I just thought it was wonderful. The pace was fine. I was used to moving fast anyway, because you had to move fast in Vietnam. Something came your way, you had to jump. I immediately loved the city and the restaurants and the food, so I don't feel like I had an adjustment at all with that. It was great; I still think it's great. I live here not because of New Jersey, no offense. [laughter] We did a lot. You could get an orchestra seat in a Broadway theater for twelve dollars. The guy who was going to be my husband, he had gotten a job pretty quickly too with an elevator company, and so we were okay in terms of having discretionary money. There was nothing to spend money on in Vietnam really. When you went someplace, you could spend money, but we had both saved a lot of money in that year, so we were having a good time. I lost the train of the question.

SI: I was just asking about living in the city.

AK: It was really great, when I had a job. I worked all my life, and so that time period not having a job made me nervous. I was sure I would get something, and I did.

SI: Would you say that you had any lasting effects from your time in Vietnam, trouble sleeping, things like that?

AK: Yes, but those didn't manifest until the late '70s. When I first came back, I didn't have any. There was nothing at all.

SI: You get out in 1970. The war goes on for another five years. What was your reaction to the end of the war? How did you get involved with bringing Vietnamese to the U.S.?

AK: Well, I kept in touch with the Vietnamese that worked in the two libraries, Cam Ranh and Nha Trang after I came back. We wrote regularly. One of the women who worked in the Cam Ranh library married a soldier and came to the States, to Fort Benning. Georgia, she had a son. She had been married to a Vietnamese, who had died, who was killed in the war, and she had a twelve-year-old son. Her sister, who worked in the Cam Ranh Library, she had two Amerasian children, one who was born right after I left and then contracted polio. So, we kept in touch, and I kept in touch with Duc, also called Dove, at Nha Trang. Now, her husband was ARVN, and they had several children. I kept in touch with some of the people, the Americans, for a little while, but by '73, I had lost touch with everybody except the Vietnamese. I guess that was all part of the do not speak of Vietnam, do not think about Vietnam, do not talk about Vietnam. [Editor's Note: ARVN is Army of the Republic of Vietnam, the ground forces of the South Vietnamese military.]

When everything started to fall apart in the spring of '75, there was really nothing I could do for the woman in Nha Trang because Nha Trang was overrun before there was any time. Lee and her two kids and her sister's son and one of her brothers were in Saigon. The first thing that we

did was we got the three kids on a baby lift flight. It was Betty Tisdale's orphanage An Lac. They made a movie about [it]. Betty was flying that plane to Fort Benning, because she was married to a colonel then and that's where he was. We got the three kids on that flight. Lee had to sign away rights because they had to be orphans. She signed away parental rights--including her sister's--to the twelve-year-old, and they flew to Fort Benning. Then, Hanh went to meet the plane and took the three kids and reestablished that this was her biological son and her niece and nephew. The three kids got out in early April. [Editor's Note: Betty Tisdale organized the evacuation of over two hundred orphans from Saigon in 1975, right before the North Vietnamese took over the capital city at the end of April. In 1980, the movie "The Children of An Lac" told the story of Betty Tisdale and the rescue operation.]

Then, I contacted my congressman. At that time, the only way to communicate was TWX [Teletype Exchange Service] and telegram, so I got people to say they would sponsor as many of this family as could get out. I wrote letters, I sent telegrams to them, [so] that they would have paper in their hands. The congressman did the same thing. We were just sending it out, sending stuff out. We had no idea if it was getting to them.

In late April, I got a phone call from Guam, and it was Lee. She and her brother, they had gotten to Tan Son Nhut. They showed my letters, and the guards let them through. They got on a chopper and got to Guam. So, they all settled in Columbus, Georgia and [are] still there. The kids have all done well. In the '80s, under Orderly Departure, we brought over the youngest brother and another sister and all their family, so that was another dozen people. [Editor's Note: Lee's Vietnamese last name is Le. Her first name is Phuoc. She Americanized her name to Lee. Created under the authority of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Orderly Departure Program [ODP] provided for the immigration of Vietnamese refugees to the United States starting in 1979.]

SI: It sounds like your congressman was pretty helpful in this.

AK: Andy Maguire, from Bergen County. Yes, he was.

SI: Were there any roadblocks that you found from the government or other quarters?

AK: Well, it was so chaotic that there were roadblocks in the '80s when dealing with refugee status and all of that, with the sister and brother, but in '75, it was just so chaotic. Every place that I could think of or the congressperson could tell me to send to, we sent to, in the Department of State. We sent to Lee and her brother individually. We just kept sending the paper out hoping something would get through. In fact, the paper did get to her; the telegrams did get to her. That's how they got out, because they never actually tried to go the embassy route. You know all those people that went to the embassy to try to get over the fence. They didn't actually go that route. They went to Tan Son Nhut.

SI: Going back to your career, you had this job at Queensborough. What was your next job after that?

AK: My husband and I bought a house in New Jersey in Paramus, so my next job was back to

children's librarian. I was a traveling children's librarian for three little libraries in Bergen County that got a state grant to establish children's services. It was Allendale, Franklin Lakes and Upper Saddle River. Again, I was doing the circuit and doing the same thing, lots of programming, children's reference. The circuit thing was getting a little old, so I was there for two years. We moved in '73.

Then, in '75, the head of children's services opened up at the Morris County Library, and I applied for that and I got that. That was a department head, so I was doing more of what I had been doing in Vietnam. I was in charge of staff and no programming. The county library was not doing any programming; it was all done at the local libraries. I was happily out of the craft and puppetry [laughter] activity. We did a few story hours, which I always liked doing story hours, but it was more administrative and children's reference, which I always liked. I was never interested in adult reference. Vietnam was my only time doing adult reference and I was never interested in going back into that, but I did like doing children's reference.

SI: At that time, did children's services receive adequate funding?

AK: Oh, yes, we had a huge budget, something like a ten-thousand-dollar budget, which is a lot of money in 1975 for just a children's room. At that time, we were very well funded. That, of course, eroded over the years, but when I first started there, we had money out the ears, more than you could spend.

SI: You had had a leadership responsibility role in Vietnam. Was that something you wanted to get back to you, or did that not matter to you?

AK: It didn't matter to me at that point particularly. I took that job in Bergen because we were moving, and, again, I didn't want to be without a job and that one came through. It was local. It was very close. I had experience doing that kind of work, so it worked out. Two years of that was enough, so I was ready to move on to something. Children's was fine. I just was tired, working for three bosses who are right on you, and that was an adjustment from Vietnam. In Vietnam, I was really totally independent and completely self-reliant. Queensborough, I wasn't really at Elmont, the public library on Long Island, long enough, but Queensborough was a very structured, hierarchical organization, much like the Army, so I fit into that very well. Bergen County was a little more loosey-goosey, but tight, you know, they expected you to do everything and take all of the time that you had to take to create all of this stuff, much of which was your own time, but you could not deviate from the stated hours of work. I had trouble with that because I was always moving around, I wasn't in one place. I would be in one place for two hours and then drive to the next place for three hours and then drive to the next place for a couple hours. I didn't have a workday. It just was annoying. Again, that job was paying not very well, and the job at Morris County was paying substantially better. At that point, because I took a big pay cut going from Queensborough to those libraries in Bergen County, moving to Morris County put me back where I would have been at Queensborough. There were a lot of good reasons to make that change, even though it meant that I was commuting forty-five minutes.

SI: Once you got with the county library, you were in children's services for about seven years or so.

AK: In the late '70s, that's when the computerization started. I was no dummy; I knew that that was the future with libraries and I needed to get in on that anyway I could. Of course, there was no relationship between computerization of libraries and children's room. So, I just volunteered. They started to do a retrospective conversion and I had a cataloging background, so I volunteered to work extra to learn OCLC [Online Computer Library Center] and do retrospective conversion. In the beginning, it was my own time, but eventually there was a whole operation set up and we were paid extra to do that. We converted the entire County of Morris, all the libraries in Morris County. I also worked for Pro Libra, an agency specializing in library projects, so I also converted George Washington University and a lot of other big places around the country working for Pro Libra. I knew that's where the future was, that that's where libraries were going. If I could get in on the ground floor, I was going to, so I did.

That ultimately led to my being part of the group that brought automation into Morris County, the public libraries, and then, when I went into the college in '83 as associate director, a lot of the reason of why I got that job was because I had converted the college library as well. My automation skills figured in a lot in my getting hired, also my ability to hire and fire, mainly fire. [laughter]

SI: That is a tough part of the job.

AK: Yes, right. Many, many people avoid that at all costs, but that was one of the Vietnam legacies. When you've had to deal with a drunk in the back room of a library, you learn that you've got to do that. You have to do it. That library needed a lot of help personnel-wise, and I was willing to do it.

SI: In general, how was automation received by the people you were working with? Were they eager to see this change, or were they resistant?

AK: It was a fairly young group, and they were eager, very eager. There were a few older ones who were very against it. In fact, one of them was the head of tech services at the Morris County Library, and she retired because she just didn't want to deal with it. Then, they hired this guy from, I think he was working in Rhode Island maybe or Massachusetts. Anyway, he was a technological whiz kid, [laughter] with a very big personality. He just took the reins and off we went, full speed ahead. So, he did Morris County, and then afterward when Morris County was almost done, he went to Bergen and he is the driving force still behind BCCLS, Bergen County Cooperative Library Systems. We had a group who really was interested in automation, really wanted to see it happen, to see it succeed. The county library director, who had many faults, but one of his strengths was that he also saw that this was the future for libraries, and he was behind it one hundred percent and fought for the funding and got those systems in.

SI: In 1983, you went to the college.

AK: Yes.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about your time? That was probably the longest portion of your

career.

AK: Yes.

SI: Tell me about your time at the County College of Morris.

AK: Well, when I went there, they had just gotten the automated system that the whole county had at the time. They were part of that county system. The director had been there five years, and he had taken over a real rat's nest of bad hires. The college opened in 1970. The first director who John replaced, personnel was not his strong suit, and he had made some very, very bad hires. The negativity around that library was legendary. Students would come to the county library and say they would not set foot in the County College of Morris Library. The people were nasty and hostile and not helpful, and the circulation desk was like something out of a horror movie. When the director's wife was in the hospital, the nurses came to him to complain loudly about the library, when they found out he was the director. That's how bad it was. Clearly changes had to be made. He got this slot created for an associate director and then brought me in to make the change, to be operations basically. We spent about ten years cleaning things up, and it was successful. Now, you don't hear anything but wonderful things about the CCM Library, and they have a wonderful staff. It's just a complete turnaround, but the early days were difficult. That was very much like Vietnam. I knew the rules. I knew what I could do. I had been a shop steward at Morris County Library; I brought the union in. They were unionized at the college, and I knew exactly what the rules were and how you had to play the game. I followed them to the letter, but I would not give up.

SI: Is that why it took ten years? You had to work within the rules.

AK: Yes. That's right. [laughter] That's right. I learned that in Vietnam; you cannot give up. You have to confront these things and you have to do it by the book, but you cannot just ignore it.

SI: What other aspects of your career at Country College of Morris would you consider an achievement, things that you are particularly proud of, besides reshaping the staff?

AK: Everything that we did in terms of bringing computerization and computers, just bringing computers into that library. When I went to work there, there were no computers in that library, except the terminals for the circulation system. The administration did not see the value of having computers on the floor for the public to use. By various means, we managed to get some computers in to search databases, and then we just kept building it. As new things came along, we tried to be the first ones to do it, electronic interlibrary loan. We went with InfoTrac, when people were still sending in interlibrary loan forms. These students, they need the stuff now. This is a community college; they can't wait four months. Four months is a semester. They need it now. Anything that we could do to get it to them faster, we did, and that has paid off. [Editor's Note: InfoTrac was one of the earliest automated citation databases linked to the full-text articles on microfilm.]

SI: Were your supervisors supportive? I would imagine you saw the potential in the Internet

when it first developed.

AK: Oh, yes.

SI: Was an easy sell to the folks above you?

AK: Well, it was easy sell to the library management, but it was not an easy sell to college management. I vividly remember a faculty meeting in, my goodness, probably the late 90s, when the president said that they would think about email in five years. [laughter] That was shot down right away because even the faculty understood that that was a nonstarter. Yes, it was a hard sell in the beginning to the college administration that this is the way we had to go, but it came along and came along. Now, it's completely different, and they have this huge IT [information technology] department. At one point, we had to hire our own computer people. We had library assistants whose jobs were to take care of the computers, because there was nobody in the college to do it. We really were out there on our own, but the director had a budget. He had a lot of leeway with that budget, and that allowed us to do things.

SI: Is there any other aspect of your career that you would like to talk about?

AK: I had this whole other side career, because after I got divorced in the mid '70s, being a librarian in one job was not enough to allow me to eat and pay my mortgage. I could do one or the other. I had to get other jobs. The head of reference at Morris County got me connected to the library at Knoll Pharmaceuticals, which was in Whippany just down the road. I started working part time there in '78. They were part of BASF, and I'm actually still working for BASF. Well, I started doing clerical stuff in the library, and then I helped them automate. Then, I did retrospective conversion of their whole collection myself, handwriting sheets from Marchive. I couldn't even do it on the computer at that point; it was too early. Knoll was sold in the early 2000s, but I stayed with BASF and I'm still doing cataloging for all their North American libraries, telecommuting. I do it all from my house. That part-time job allowed me to survive. Then, I had the third job with this linking center that did the retrospective conversion for all the Morris County Libraries, so that was another part-time job. Then, in the mid-'80s, the director of the college library and I started a consulting company, doing automation and technology planning, and we're still doing that, too. I had between three or four jobs my whole career. [Editor's Note: Marchive is a company that provides electronic bibliographic records, similar to OCLC.]

SI: Simultaneously?

AK: Simultaneously, yes.

SI: What are the big differences you see between working for private company and an academic librarianship?

AK: Actually, there's not a whole lot of difference, I've got to say. [laughter] There's more difference I think in working in a public library, but academic libraries and corporate libraries have a lot of similarities. They all have personalities that need to be dealt with. I think the

corporate libraries have a harder time making a case for their existence than the academic libraries do, because in academia, the library's kind of a given. You're not going to get accredited if you don't have a library, so that it's not something you can just chop off at the knees. Corporate libraries are more vulnerable in that regard. The people who use the library, the way they use it, very similar.

SI: At BASF, you were helping researchers.

AK: No, I catalog.

SI: Is the library directed to researchers?

AK: Yes, the libraries are directed to researchers, but I don't have any contact with the user base at all. I barely have contact with anybody. [laughter] They either email me or fax me title page and verso, and I catalog. If there's no cataloging, then they send me whatever it is, and I do original cataloging. Right now, I'm in the process of cataloging e-books on their Kindles and Nooks, which is almost totally original cataloging. That's a big project, interesting though.

SI: Tell me a little bit about the early 1990s when you came back to your Vietnam experience. What precipitated that? How did it come about?

AK: Well, a flyer came around in '91 from—it's the organization that sponsors exchanges, faculty and student exchanges.

SI: The government?

AK: No, it's an NGO [non-governmental organization]. CIEE, Council for International Educational Exchange, they were sponsoring a faculty exchange. Well, it wasn't an exchange; it was the Americans going to Vietnam, with the university in Ho Chi Minh City and the university in Hanoi. You had to apply; your institution had to pick up fifty percent of the cost. I looked at this flyer, and I thought, "I want to go back." I filled out the application, and the academic vice president, to whom I will always be grateful, agreed to fund that fifty percent. He didn't know then that I had any connection to Vietnam. I filled out everything, sent it all in, and I was accepted. There was supposed to be a group going in the summer of '91, and then I was supposed to be in the January '92 group. The Vietnamese pulled back on the summer group; they didn't let them come. I think there was a party congress or something. Anyway, they didn't want Americans in there. They combined both groups to go in January, so it was like fifty people. We were the biggest group of Americans to be in Vietnam since '75.

There was still the embargo. There were no diplomatic relations. We all met in Bangkok to get visas because you couldn't get visas in the United States. We were at a university in Bangkok; we were all sitting around this huge conference table. Everybody was going around and saying who they were and where they were taught or what institution they worked at and why they were interested in this trip. Well, three quarters of the people at the table were Vietnam veterans, and most of the others who were there had immediate family members who were Vietnam veterans. So, it was very clear what this was. They were all professors, there was one other librarian, but

this was the vanguard of the vets who wanted to go back.

We flew into Hanoi, which was really weird. We're all on this plane and most of us were in Vietnam during the war, and here we are flying into Hanoi. It was such a big group that there was no place in Hanoi to accommodate us, so they took us to this old French resort on the Gulf of Tonkin. It was south of Haiphong. We went through Haiphong and then went out. Đồ Sơn, that was the name of the town, and that's where we spent about five days. There was no heat. It was January, so it was cold up there. We were wearing every single piece of clothing we had brought it was so cold.

It was a fascinating experience, the back and forth with the Vietnamese. Most of them spoke some English, a lot of them spoke French, and that's how I had gotten by in Vietnam in the '60s. I spoke French, so I could communicate with some of the Vietnamese by speaking French. I still remembered enough to speak a little French then. Of course, this group just bonded together because we were all talking to each other about Vietnam, about being in Vietnam during the war. For a lot of us, I think this was the first time we had talked about it. I'm still close friends with several of the people from that group, and I actually went back in 1992 with one of the guys who teaches in a college in Kentucky. He took an alumni group back, and I went with them. That, in 1992, not 2010, was when I first started to talk about Vietnam.

Then, when we got back, that was when there started to be a lot of publicity about the Vietnam Women's Memorial, so I got involved in that. That's when I started to connect with people. They had something called "sister search." You could write a letter saying you were looking for an individual or you were looking for a group of people. I said I was looking for people who were with Special Services. They would send the letter out to people in their database who said they were with Special Services, but it was a double blind. It would go out, but if the person didn't want to respond, they didn't have to. I heard from a woman in California who had been with Service Clubs, with the rec centers, a couple years before me, and she was trying to organize the Special Services reunion for when the memorial was dedicated. So, she and I started working together. Then, that's how I found Lucylee, who was in Manhattan, and Judy who lives in Summit five minutes from me. We all got together, and I wrote the section in the dedication book about Special Services. Then, the Internet was starting these BITNET lists and LISTSERVs were just getting going. There was this Lydia Fish's VWar-L. I got on that and met a whole bunch more people. That's when we came out of the closet basically.

SI: I am just curious on this initial trip, how long was it?

AK: It was a month. I was gone even more than a month because I spent two weeks in Thailand before we went to Vietnam. I left in mid-December and came back in early February.

SI: How many women were on the trip?

AK: There were several women.

SI: Okay.

AK: I was the only woman who had been in Vietnam during the war.

SI: Would you say that was a cathartic experience?

AK: Yes, it was.

SI: Did you actually get a chance to interact with a lot of North Vietnamese? You must have been very tightly controlled on what you could do.

AK: Well, yes, we were very tightly controlled as a group, but we could freely interact with our counterparts. There were about fifty of us and there were about fifty professors from the university in Hanoi and the university in Ho Chi Minh, but not all together. We were in Hanoi and then we went to Ho Chi Minh. Within that group, we could interact as much as we wanted. We walked around in downtown Hanoi, and we were just mobbed with Vietnamese, just the general population. Everybody wanted to practice their English. First, they wanted to make sure we weren't Russian. We quickly learned the Vietnamese word for American, and when they found out that we were American, they wanted to talk. They wanted to be able to speak English with a real English speaker instead of a cassette tape. I never encountered any hostility, except once in 1994 in Quảng Ngãi around My Lai. There was some hostility there and with good reason, of course, but other than that, I never encountered any hostility at all. They were happy we were there, they wanted to talk to us, they wanted to hear about our families, they wanted to hear about America, they wanted to know how their English sounded. It was a very positive interaction.

Then, in Ho Chi Minh, there was a library school and a library--you just can't imagine what that was like--at the university there. They put me and the other librarian and connected us with the woman who was in charge of it. She had this list of books that she wanted, library school books, that of course they couldn't buy because of the embargo. When we got back, we split that list, and we each bought half of the books on the list and shipped them to her. This library, they had books tied up with bailing wire that were clearly just disintegrating. It was awful beyond belief. Vietnam had not changed at all. In 1992, the Saigon I saw looked just like the Saigon I had seen in '69.

SI: During any of your trips, did you go back to Cam Ranh?

AK: Finally, I did get on to Cam Ranh in 2010, because the air base is now the Nha Trang Municipal Airport. They're looking to build some big resorts and bring in some big tourist bucks there. Before, the airport was at Camp McDermott, the site of Camp McDermott, where they had a small air field, but now they've turned the air base runways into a big airport. Big planes can come in. They built a new road, so you don't have to go out to Highway 1 and go up to Nha Trang. They built a road at the mouth of the peninsula, so you can go straight from Cam Ranh to Nha Trang and cut about twenty minutes off the travel driving time. That, of course, was all blocked off. You couldn't go anywhere near that when we were there. They're building resorts like crazy in that stretch. I was able to get to that part of Cam Ranh. The area where I was, on the Army side, there's still a military base there, so I couldn't get over there at all. I have hopes that someday before I die, I will be able to get back there.

SI: How many times have you been back to Vietnam?

AK: '92, '94, '96, '99, 2001, 2010.

SI: You mentioned a woman from the library school. Do you go back to visit people from that initial trip?

AK: Well, she's retired. All of the people that we knew on the Vietnamese side from that initial trip are now all retired. We kept in touch with some of the students for quite some time, but they've all drifted off now.

SI: Did you ever get the sense that the Vietnamese were guarded with you, or do you think they were speaking freely?

AK: The conversation was focused very much on education, and it didn't deviate very far from that. We were not talking about the war very much at all. There were a couple of exchanges, particularly in the north with people who had clearly been North Vietnamese Army. Mostly, it was an educational program, and that's where the conversation stayed. Now, it's completely different. Things are really pretty open. Travel, we had to turn our passports in. The hotel would keep our passports. It was restrictive. You couldn't just go wandering around. You could walk around in the area where you were. They didn't keep you from going out on the street or anything, but don't go to the next town. Now, it's pretty open. They shut down the Highlands every once in a while, but mostly you can go anywhere you want to go now.

SI: You have done a lot of writing and speaking about your experience in Vietnam. When did that start? Was that around the same time?

AK: Yes, in the '90s.

SI: Do you find that audiences are receptive? How are these exchanges?

AK: Well, I mostly talk to students, high school students and college students. Yes, they're very receptive; they're fascinated.

SI: When the National Vietnam Memorial was dedicated in the 1980s, did you go?

AK: No, no. I didn't have anything to do with any of the stuff that happened in mid-'80s. The dedication of the Wall, the welcome home parades, nothing. I didn't think of myself as a veteran, and this was for veterans, so I didn't think it applied to me.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to say about your life or your experience with Vietnam?

AK: I don't think so.

SI: I am just looking over the material you sent. You have been very active in professional associations.

AK: Yes.

SI: As a closing question, how do you think your time in Vietnam made you the person you are today?

AK: Well, it certainly changed my life, in good ways and bad ways. It made me very independent, very self-reliant, able to take care of myself, not afraid to do things, not afraid to confront things, so that's all good. The downside of that, as it were, is that I'm part of the end of the generation where women aren't supposed to do that, and a lot of the guys in my generation have trouble dealing with women who have those kinds of personality traits. I would say it certainly affected my personal relationships, because, in the end, the men that I was involved with expected a certain sort of behavior and I wasn't conforming to the mold. That caused a lot of problems, certainly it caused my divorce. I made sure that I couldn't have kids because I was afraid of dioxin. When the Agent Orange stuff started to come out in the early '80s, I was between marriages at the time, when I started hearing about this, I thought, "I know enough chemistry to understand what was going on." I thought, "I'm not going to take a chance here," so I had my tubes tied in my early thirties. Not having children, I kind of regret that, but I think I made the right decision. [Editor's Note: The United States government used the chemical defoliant Agent Orange to clear jungles in Vietnam. It consisted of a mixture of herbicides, including the chemical contaminant dioxin. Agent Orange is linked to a number of serious health problems in humans, including cancer, diabetes and birth defects.]

SI: Was the area you were in heavily exposed to Agent Orange?

AK: Well, at the time I didn't know that, but I didn't know that, so I didn't know that it was, I didn't know that it wasn't. Because I had no knowledge and nobody could tell me anything, I just assumed that I was exposed. In subsequent years now, of course, as they've done more and more studies, they have determined that for years they told these WACS, these women Army veterans, who were having problems, whose children were having problems, "Well, you were in Long Binh and Saigon. You weren't exposed to anything." Now, they know that they liberally sprayed the perimeters, and I remember seeing the guys coming around and spraying the perimeters around the mini-court. They would come into the trailer with DDT on a regular basis to spray and get all the vermin out. No, they weren't flying planes over and dumping it, but I don't think that that means that I was not exposed. The number of women I know who have died from reproductive cancers in the last several years, many of whom were at Long Binh, tells me that we were exposed, even in base camps. I've got a few little PTSD things, like fireworks.

SI: You said you had some issues in the late '70s.

AK: Yes. I think that was probably brought on by my divorce, the stress from that, because that's when I started having trouble with fireworks and I started drinking too much again. There were some issues in the late '70s, which I worked through, more or less, but I still can't be around fireworks. I like to be sitting facing out, which is a typical Vietnam vet thing. I truly understand

the meaning of vigilant. If I am on a subway or a subway platform, I'm swiveling all the time. I'm constantly looking around. My friends don't understand that. When they say be vigilant, I know exactly what they mean. I think only somebody who has been in that kind of a situation can really understand it. I stay away from big crowds. I wouldn't have been watching the Boston Marathon. I don't go to parades. Being in that kind of large-crowd situation, where there's no escape, where I can't identify an escape route, is something I avoid. When I going into any public building, a theater, a movie theater or anything, I immediately locate every exit. It's the first thing I do when I walk in. Those are all vestiges of Vietnam. People who haven't been in that kind of a situation don't do that, but they should, especially now.

There were downsides, but I went there because I wanted to show that not everybody was against the soldiers and I think I did that. I hear from soldiers who tell me what it meant to them to have the services that I provided, to have it available to them. I feel like I did what I intended to do, and the fact that I was able to travel, that's a big plus, as far as I'm concerned. I hate to see all these people having to go to war. I really hate the current wars because they haven't learned a damn thing from Vietnam, except don't blame the soldier. They did learn that. They learned not to blame the soldier.

SI: Thank you very much. I appreciate all your time and candidly answering all the questions. Thank you very much.

AK: You're welcome.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----

Reviewed by Avery Kelley 4/10/2019

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 6/12/2019

Reviewed by Ann Kelsey 7/18/2019