

Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
DOUGLAS ARENDT
Military Police, Army, Persian Gulf War
2002

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Arendt, Douglas. Oral History Interview, 2002(?).

User Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette (ca. 50 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Transcript: 0.1 linear ft. (1 folder).

Abstract:

Douglas Arendt, a Grafton, Wisconsin native, discusses his Army and National Guard service in Korea, Panama, and, during the Persian Gulf War in Saudi Arabia. He recalls enlisting with the Army to get experience and college money, volunteering to go to Korea, and competing with others in his platoon to get promoted. He briefly mentions military police training at Fort McClellan (Alabama) and duty in Korea for a year. As a member of a SWAT team during the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, he discusses a training exercise with the Korean National SWAT team where he was assigned to be a mock hostage. He describes being sent from Fort Polk (Louisiana) to a humanitarian mission in the Virgin Islands after Hurricane Hugo hit; he mentions helping with hurricane cleanup and filling in for local law enforcement to prevent looting. He talks about rotation to Panama for guard duty. After discharge from the Army, Arendt describes joining the National Guard and starting school to become a police officer. A month later his unit was activated for the Gulf War, and he recalls how bored he was during training at Camp McCoy (Wisconsin) after having just been active for three years. He describes his first impressions of the Middle East including the heat, smell, and dust. Arendt comments on guarding Iraqi prisoners of war, troop living conditions, and recreational activities like volleyball and playing Game Boy. He describes being surprised by a sandstorm. He recalls having to eat nothing but MREs for the first weeks after arriving, digging showers and latrines, and singing in a talent contest. While in Saudi Arabia, he mentions his girlfriend made all of their wedding preparations. Because he kept in steady contact with his girlfriend at home, he mentions he would stay in the barracks when the other men “would go out to the nudie bars or whatever.” He describes keeping in touch with one friend from the National Guard, trying the VFW but feeling he did not fit in, and enjoying membership in the Grafton American Legion, Post 355. He describes driving hummers [HMMWVs] on narrow Korean streets and almost sliding one into a house in the Virgin Islands. He touches on the accuracy of Hollywood movies such as “Three Kings.” He reflects on going into the service for money and claims he would do it again.

Biographical Sketch:

Douglas Arendt served three years with the Army and five years with the National Guard, and his service duties included humanitarian aid to the Virgin Islands and guarding a prisoner of war camp in Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm. He was discharged at the rank of Sergeant E5 and returned to Grafton (Wisconsin). After the war, Arendt became a school music teacher and credits singing in the deserts of Saudi Arabia for causing him to pursue that career.

Interviewed by Collin Schaefer, 2002?
Transcribed by Alex Rosinski, 2009.
Corrected by Channing Welch, 2009.
Corrections typed by Katy Marty, 2010.
Abstract by Susan Krueger, 2010.

Transcribed Interview:

- Collin: We are currently in Grafton, Wisconsin. I am Collin Schaefer, a student at Grafton High School, and I am interviewing veteran Doug Arendt. Mr. Arendt, could you please state what branch of service you served in, what war, your rank, and places you served.
- Arendt: I was in the Army for three years and I served five years in the National Guard. I was in Desert Storm, my ending rank was Sergeant E5, and I served in Alabama, Louisiana, Panama, the Virgin Islands, Korea, and Saudi Arabia.
- Collin: Okay, we are gonna move on to segment two, and first question: Why did you decide to join the service?
- Arendt: I joined the Army, I was very specific about why I joined. Coming out of high school, there was two things that I considered as a profession. One would either be a police officer and the second choice was a music teacher. So I decided since I didn't have money for college that I would join the Army and give being a police officer a try while I earned money for college to pursue either of those two professions after my military service. So the primary reason that I joined was to get experience as a law enforcement officer and to get money for college.
- Collin: All right. Why did you pick the service branch that you did?
- Arendt: No reason. I had a brother that was in the Army, and he had a real positive experience, so I decided on the Army.
- Collin: Do you recall your first days of service?
- Arendt: I recall the receiving station in Alabama. We flew down -- they flew us down to Alabama, and then we all entered the recruitment center, or the receiving center, and while we were being filed through all of the preliminary paperwork and what not, they asked for volunteers to go to Korea for their first year of service. They needed thirty people to go as a group to Korea, and I thought that would be a pretty cool thing to do so I volunteered and, those thirty people, we were a platoon. There's four platoons in our company during basic training, and we were a platoon, and we stayed together for the first year and a half of our service together, which was good and bad. It was good because I really got to know those thirty people. It was bad because I got to know those thirty people. [laughs] But it was also bad because we were all fighting for the same rank. There's only so many positions available in each company, and being that we were all new recruits and we were all low rank, basically we were vying for position over one another our entire first year

of service, and only the best of us got promoted and you know which brings more rank and brings more respect and brings more money. So you always had to be on your toes because you never knew from day to day how your superiors were looking at you versus the guy next to you because you were the same rank and who was gonna get their promotion first.

Collin: What were your boot camp training experiences like?

Arendt: Boot camp was challenging, but not overly so. I had heard so many horror stories of boot camp that I went in that I think my expectations were a little harder than it actually was. As long as you did the things that you were supposed to do and did them well and when you were supposed to do them, there was no problem. I actually got to enjoy it after awhile.

Collin: How did you keep yourself motivated while in training?

Arendt: Again, we go back to vying for position, and vying for rank, and then there was also the motivating factor of having, -- I had my girlfriend back here who is now my wife, and she would constantly write me and send care packages and whatever and that really helped me through, and it gave me a lot of friends too because I always dispersed my goodies.

Collin: Okay, we are moving on to segment three. Which war did you serve in?

Arendt: Desert Storm.

Collin: Where exactly did you go?

Arendt: We were in, first of all I was in the National Guard when Desert Storm happened, and my unit was activated, which means that we went from a reserve component to an active component. They sent us to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, which is up north by Tomah, and during the dead of winter to prepare us for Saudi Arabia which I thought was just really backwards because we went from below freezing to mid 90s in the course of a day. Um, what else? What was your -- what was the exact question?

Collin: Where exactly did you go?

Arendt: After our training at Fort McCoy, we were sent to Saudi Arabia, and we arrived at Hafar al Batin which is, I guess you would call it, a like readiness, or a receiving station. It was actually like a little city that they sent all of the people that were coming into the country, all of the troops that were coming into the country, and then once we found out exactly where we were going from the receiving station, then they would give our

company an order to move, and they would send us to an exact location. We ended up about twelve miles south of the Kuwaiti border in Saudi and at a prisoner camp.

Collin: Do you remember what it was like?

Arendt: Yep. [laughs] It was hot, it was dusty, it stunk in the city. Once we got out into our permanent location twelve miles south of the border, then there was nothing around us but sand as far as the eye could see, all you saw was sand, unless there was another camp. Generally speaking, the days were hot and the nights were cold because there was nothing to break the wind.

Collin: What was your job or assignments?

Arendt: Is this during the war? We were part of a military police battalion, there was a thousand military policemen and 16,000 prisoners, and our job was to run the camp, the day to day operations of the camp, which primarily meant manning our guard towers around the actual prisoner enclosure. We would work twelve-hour shifts, and when your shift was done, then you got to go back to your tent and play volleyball or Game Boys or cards or whatever you wanted while you were off unless they had other work for you, like cleaning your weapons and maintaining your supplies, etc.

Collin: Did you see any combat?

Arendt: Nope. Luckily never in my military career did I have to draw my weapon. It's something that you don't look forward to if you do have to do it, but luckily I never had to make that call.

Collin: Tell me a few of your more memorable experiences.

Arendt: Well when we got to, one thing about, when we moved to the camp in Saudi, one thing that was memorable was we had to eat MREs which is a meal ready to eat. It's a little big dehydrated meal. For the most part you eat, it's typical when you are in the field to eat one of these every day. You get, the cooks make you breakfast, and they make you dinner and then you have the MREs for lunch, but when we first arrived at our camp and the supply lines weren't very good to our mess sergeant and our mess facilities and the facilities themselves weren't set up and in place, we had MREs for two straight weeks, three meals a day. It was nasty, everyone was constipated, you couldn't drink enough to keep yourself regular, you don't have to put that in there. But anyhow [laughs] So that was an interesting thing, and then another interesting thing when we got to our camp is we had to dig holes for our latrines so that the

excrement would go deep, actually that wasn't for the latrines, that was for the showers. The water had to go deep and we had to put gravel and whatever and make a basin low so that the water wouldn't run. We had to dig bunkers big enough for our platoon to fit in, so a lot of that fell on the shoulders of the bigger guys because it was a lot of axe swinging and shoveling and filling sand bags and what not. So I have pictures of at that point I had been working for a moving company and I was in pretty good shape, and I had pictures of having an axe in each hand. I used two axes to keep my balance and I would swing one axe and then I would swing the other and it would just rotate back and forth and I could dig pretty good. So that was memorable, digging.

Oh, probably the most memorable thing to me that happened when I was in Saudi, there came a point where, there always comes a point where you get a little homesick, and I was a little homesick so I went over a berm, a sand hill, and that was our garbage site. So I was walking around one night and I just started singing anything that would come to mind, anything that I could think of. Those were probably the moments that brought me to my current profession of music teaching, because I found that comforted me, and it brought me back to something that I really enjoyed, and MREs that I had when I was growing up. So that was very memorable, and then I ended up winning a talent contest when the war was winding down, singing "God Bless the USA", and no one knew I could sing, because I had never done it in front of anyone. I sung in church when I was in the Army, but that's about it. So very few of my buddies knew I sung, so when I got up there and started singing, they were in shock, I think is the best way to describe it. So those are some memorable things.

Collin: Did you receive any medals or citations?

Arendt: Yeah. I got quite a few. I was lucky in that in the service, if you do what you are supposed to do when you are supposed to do it, like Mr. Wiskirchen [??] likes to say, "If you do what you're supposed to do when you're supposed to do it whether you want to do it or not, and if you have the ability and the aptitude to do the things that you're supposed to do well, then for some reason the upper echelons tend to smile upon you, and give you promotions and give you awards and make you want to feel good about yourself so that you will stay." So I got three Army achievement medals and other awards during my service time.

Collin: While in service, how did you stay in touch with your family?

Arendt: Mostly by the phone. I'd call 'em collect because I never had money, not unlike a college student. But I would also write, infrequently, but I would write, and Laurie would write me a lot and keep me in touch.

Collin: Did you feel extreme stress while involved in the war?

Arendt: No. I don't experience stress that much for whatever reason, unless there's a lot of things going on in my life, and I didn't think there were a lot of things going on, it was just something I was involved with and something that I had to do and I was happy to do it. But as far as extreme stress, no, that is not part of my personality.

Collin: Did you or your unit do anything for good luck?

Arendt: I don't think so. [laughs] We did all the things that we had to do as far as, there's a very specific checklist of things that need to be accomplished before you move to a wartime theater, weapons proficiencies and making sure that you are up on training on the vehicles that you are to drive and etc., but as far as doing something for good luck, no, I don't think so. I did have Laurie continue our wedding preparations. We were activated I think it was December when we were activated and we were scheduled to be married in August, we had no idea when we would get back, but I told her to keep the preparations going, so actually I wasn't involved in much of the preparations for our wedding because it was all done when I was in Saudi.

Collin: How did people entertain themselves?

Arendt: We played a lot of volleyball because it was like sand anyhow, so the unit brought a net and balls, and we played volleyball during the day and at night some people read or played cards, played Game Boys, whatever you could do to occupy your time, because if you didn't bring stuff along, then all you had was conversation and after a while, conversation gets tiresome.

Collin: Where did you travel while in the service?

Arendt: I started, my training was at Fort Mc Clellan, Alabama. After Fort Mc Clellan, I went to Korea for a year. When I came back from Korea, I was stationed for the rest of my active duty at Fort Polk, Louisiana, but while I was at Fort Polk, we were sent to the Isle of St. Croix in the Virgin Islands after Hurricane Hugo hit. We replaced the law enforcement people from that island so that they could be with their families, to keep from the looting down. So we reestablished law enforcement there. We were there for two months, then we came back, and then later on in my term I spent six months in Panama, and that was a regular rotation for my unit at Fort Polk was to go to Panama for six months to relieve, it was like a rotating thing. They didn't have permanent police there, they had units that would come in for six months

and then go back, and then six months and go back. So we spent six months in Panama.

And then when I got out of active duty, I came back home. I joined the National Guard because they gave me, I think it was \$2,000 to do it as a signing bonus, and I was thinking about doing it anyhow because it payed for more of my college. I was home for about a month, I had started my schooling to become a law enforcement, civilian law enforcement. I started my schooling at MATC to be a cop, and a month after I got back, my National Guard unit was activated. So I had just gotten off of active duty, and you have your ID card as a green card while you are on active duty, and when you are in the National Guard or the reserve it's a pink card, but now my pink card went back to green. And I was like uh, that really kind of sucked. The timing was just terrible, so I had to actually go to my professors and say I can't finish the semester unless there is some way that I can take your exam and test out of the class. A couple of the classes that I was in allowed me to do that and one of them didn't, but that was just something that had to happen. So then my unit was activated, and we went up to Fort McCoy to do our readiness training for that because most of the people that were in that unit had never seen active duty. So for me, that time was very boring, because I had just finished doing that every day of my life for the last three years before that, but for them it was something completely new. All this heavy arms training and whatever, I was used to it. It was something that I was proficient at and did a lot, but they were doing it for the first time so our time up at Fort McCoy was very boring for me, but as a unit it really benefited most of the people. So then we went to Saudi for a few months, and all total my green card, it was green again for about six months, and then we got back from Saudi and I had the pink card again for another four years.

Collin: What was your most commonly-used mode of transportation?

Arendt: We had Humvees in the units that I was in. Just for your knowledge, it's Highly Mobile Multi-Wheeled Vehicle [HMMWV], and it's pronounced "Humvee" in the civilian world now. Back then they didn't sell 'em that way in the civilian world, but now they do, and now they are called Hummers, because it's cooler than HMMWV. But the vehicles are interesting in that they are so wide. They're like seven and a half feet wide, and when you are driving a regular car, you get used to their width, and their width is about six feet. Well now all of a sudden they are putting another foot and a half on the other side of the vehicle and you really have to get used to driving close to the center line to keep the whole vehicle on the road. In Korea it was a challenge because the roads were smaller because their cars are more compact, so we took up more of the road, which was kind of fun. The vehicles are great, they're noisy, but they are very practical for military purposes because they do have four wheel and

you can go off road with them and they have winches on the front, so in case you get in trouble you can winch out and pull yourself out of the problem.

Speaking of which, I had one such situation. We were in the Virgin Islands after Hurricane Hugo hit, and when we're patrolling at night and you get bored after awhile and you start meandering around and going places you probably shouldn't have gone, and my patrol partner and I decided we were gonna go up on this hillside and see what the view was. Telephone lines were down everywhere, and electrical lines were down because the hurricane really hit the island pretty good. There was no sand on the beaches, it had all washed off and washed into houses and whatever else it could get into. We were driving up this hill, and the road was, there were little trees down on the road but we were riding over them and whatever, but then all of a sudden I felt the passenger side back wheel slid a little bit, so I stopped. We were sitting at kind of a little angle, and I went, "What was that? What happened?" So I locked the emergency brake up, we crawled out on the hood, out through our door windows because I couldn't get out this way because there was a hill here, and the other side was a drop-off. So it was a pretty tight path for this wide vehicle, and we got out on the hood and looked down and the ground had given under the back passenger side wheel, so we were sitting on three wheels at a little angle, and I'm thinking "Oh great, here we go," and I look down over the hill, and there was a house on the bottom of the hill. So I'm thinking "Great, I am gonna be the one responsible for dropping this \$40,000 vehicle onto that house." Not good for my resume. So very carefully I crawled out onto the front hood and down and I took my winch out, I found a tree up the hill a little bit, and tied it around the tree. I had my partner drive very slowly forward as I pulled forward with the winch, and then I left it on the winch. We got past the problem area, and then he had to scoot the back end of the vehicle down, but we decided at that point we weren't gonna go any higher. We wanted to get down, so then he pulled forward and turned the front wheels a little bit and brought the butt end of the vehicle tight against the hill and brought the vehicle back and then we left the winch on just in case the ground gave. But we got past the problem area and then it widened out a little bit and then we were cool and I brought the winch back in, but that was kind of fun. Fun vehicle, and it was fun to ride in the turret.

Collin: What kind, if any, of pranks would you or others pull?

Arendt: Ah, I wasn't real big on pranks only because like I said earlier we were all vying for position. We were all vying for the same rank, and you didn't necessarily want to be known as the one who couldn't be counted on, you didn't want to be known as the one who you couldn't trust something that they said because you weren't sure if it was going to be the truth or not.

You really wanted to be known as the person who if they said they were gonna do something it would get done. So I know my [Approx. 3 sec gap.] brother has a lot of stories. I mentioned my brother earlier that he was in the Army and he has a lot of stories about you know joking around with his buddies and whatever, but I guess I really don't have, I wasn't really a prankster.

Collin: What did you think of your fellow soldiers?

Arendt: I always had in all of my service time, there was always one guy I would always link up with because I wasn't going around for girls or any of that because I had Lori back here and we were always writing and I was the one that always sat in the barracks at night when the guys would go out to the nudie bars and whatever. But there was always one guy who would watch movies or play Nintendo with you or whatever and just bide time. So I would spend a lot of time with that guy and get to know him and sometimes when you go on, if you took leave to come home, at one point I went on leave with one of my buddies and we went to Memphis. He was supposed to get married and it turns out that she was farting around on him and we found that out when we were there. So needless to say that put a big grind on that. For the most part I really liked all the guys that I served with, I should say guys and gals that I served with. But not all of them had the educational background that we get here. I found that we really have a good educational system here **[End of Tape One, Side A, ca. 30 min.]** --As opposed to some of the people that I know from the South who don't speak very well, don't add very well, and that's probably one of the reasons I moved up in rank so fast and surpassed a lot of the people that I was with because we have a strong educational background and my parents were very no-nonsense orientated and a lot of the people lacked common sense.

Collin: Did you keep a personal diary?

Arendt: No. [laughs]

Collin: Okay, we're gonna begin segment five. Do you recall the day your service ended?

Arendt: No. For me it was just -- for a lot of people it's a very significant day. For me it really wasn't. When I finished my term in the National Guard, I finished my term. I finished my eight years, I did what I wanted to do, it paid for my schooling, it paid for my five years of college. It was not a big significant deal to me as it is to a lot of other people.

Collin: What did you do in the days and the weeks that followed?

- Arendt: Got a job. At that point my fiancée was finishing her college and, no that's not right. When I finished the National Guard, I was about to student teach. I was at that point in my schooling, so in the days and weeks that followed, I was still in college and was working through that.
- Collin: Did you make any close friends in the service and do you continue any of those relationships?
- Arendt: I was never really one to dwell on the past too much. I talked about the guys that you link onto or latch onto, of all the guys in my service time the one that I still maintain contact with, he lives in Milwaukee, he was part of my National Guard unit and he and I were best friends for five years and certainly during Desert Storm, that's when we actually met. He joined our unit specifically to go along on the war, he was volunteering to go, and he was the impetus for me buying a Game Boy and he bought a Game Boy and we bought the same games so that we could play together and he lives in Milwaukee and we still have contact and he is still a buddy of mine.
- Collin: Did you join a veterans organization?
- Arendt: When I first got out of the service time, I joined the VFW, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and in the unit that I was in, I went to one meeting and I didn't care for it too much because I thought there was such a significant age difference between myself and the other veterans there, and also I didn't really feel like I had anything in common with them. Even though we had served in a foreign war, and we had that in common, I didn't consider Desert Storm a war to me. It wasn't a significant event in my life, I don't believe. Certainly not the combat that these veterans had seen in World War II or the Korean War or even Vietnam. So I joined that group, went to one meeting, and I stopped going because I didn't feel that I was a part of that group. Recently, probably within a year, I joined the Grafton American Legion Post 355, Rose Harms, and I've been thoroughly enjoying that. The veterans in this organization are very active in the community, so not only is it a situation where we have something in common and that being a veteran during a wartime period, but we also have something in common in that we all joined together in comradeship to better our community, and we raised thousands of dollars every year so that we can give thousands of dollars to community related things. So I am a member of American Legion.
- Collin: We're gonna move on to segment six. What did you do as a career after the war?
- Arendt: When I was in Saudi Arabia, I talked earlier about going over the berm when I was homesick and singing to myself. That was one thing that

affected my life and my decision making in becoming a music teacher. But the other thing was really hearing the stories of civilian law enforcement from the other people in my National Guard unit that were now sleeping in the same tent as me for the months that we were in Saudi Arabia. You hear all their stories about things that they had gone through and things that their families had gone through because of their law enforcement career, and that's something that I didn't necessarily want to put my fiancée through in our family life and certainly any kids that we had as our family grew. So those things affected my decision making in becoming a music teacher, and that's what brought me to the profession that I am at.

Collin: Do you attend war reunions?

Arendt: No.

Collin: Hollywood has been known to embellish events such as wars to make it more exciting to the audience. In your experience, has Hollywood done this to the Gulf War in movies such as *Three Kings*?

Arendt: [laughs] Did you guys see the movie? I thought the *Three Kings* was very whimsical. I don't think there was much truth involved in it, I thought it was kind of silly. There's no way that anything like that could happen because of accountability purposes, the vehicles and weaponry and ammunition and everything is accounted for. So Hollywood definitely went overboard on the *Three Kings* and that was very, a very fantastic situation. But certainly there are other wartime movies that really hit the mark. Certainly *Saving Private Ryan* and movies on those lines, they try to represent the wartime scenarios as realistically as possible. *Black Hawk Down*, very, very realistic, very in touch with reality and so sometimes they do and sometimes they don't, but *Three Kings* was just ridiculous.

Collin: Some people have been known to be disrespectful to those in the service. What can you say to those people?

Arendt: [laughs] Some people just need to realize that, especially the older generation veterans, they weren't in it for the money. Most of what I've talked about in my service time, yes I've enjoyed and wanted to serve in the military and gain the discipline that's involved in the training and certainly some of the skills that are involved in the training, but my primary focus for joining was to get money for college. But that's not the case for the older generation veterans. They were in it for love of country and to support their families in the times of the Depression, there's not much, so I guess they were in it for money at one point too, but certainly love of country comes into play and that needs to be respected. It really

needs to be respected, and people should be thinking about that.

Collin: If faced with the opportunity to go back to the day you enlisted, would you enlist again?

Arendt: In a heartbeat. I thoroughly enjoyed my time. Had it not been for the fact that I had a fiancée back here, I probably wouldn't have left active duty. I had a great time. I went in it for money for college, but I thoroughly enjoyed it. I saw a lot of the world in my three years on active duty, and yeah, I would do it again. I would recommend it to anyone who doesn't have money for college or anyone that's not focused enough to go to college. That was another thing that I really gained in the military was the discipline to focus myself, because I was a little unfocused in high school and grades weren't a big concern to me. I did well, but that was through ability, but through the military I gained the focus to take that up a notch.

Collin: What would you say to those who would like to, or are thinking of joining the service?

Arendt: Choose an MOS, a Military Occupational Specialty, that you're considering as a life focus for you. You'll gain knowledge, you'll gain ability. It may not be the same knowledge or abilities that you would need in the civilian world, but it certainly gives you a platform to grow on. Do enlist, but do it with a goal in mind, that you want to build some skill.

Collin: During this time of your life, you got to experience many things only some people can talk about, such as what were the living conditions in Saudi Arabia?

Arendt: We were in a tent. We slept on bunk beds, not on bunk beds, on cots with sleeping bags. We paired off, and next to me was my buddy in Milwaukee, and then my cot was about from me to the couch away, so about maybe two feet between us, and then we actually took some boxes, some boxes for the meals, the MREs, meals ready to eat. We took those boxes and we had some wood and we made a little dresser out of the boxes and the wood, and we had pull out drawers out of cardboard. So we tried to make it as homey as possible. We made ourselves a little end table between us so that we could play cards on it and cribbage and what not. So that was our little living space, but the living space was right there, so if there were snores in the tent, you just kind of had to deal with it. There were thirty of us in the tent, that wasn't uncommon. One thing that we did have to watch out for also, you're saying living conditions in Saudi Arabia, there were sandstorms, and the first sandstorm experience we had was very interesting. We had, during the day we would take the

tents that we roll up the sides to let the air go through. They still had mosquito screens on the inside and then they had the hard shell on the outside and they zipped down the sides. So we were off one day, and some people were playing volleyball, some people were in the tent reading or doing whatever. I was playing volleyball at the time, and at one point we saw a helicopter land about 500 feet off to our left and we saw the pilots hop out of the helicopter and start running towards us. I'm like, "What on earth is there a helicopter landing here?" This was like really out of the norm. A helicopter doesn't land 500 feet away from a camp. "What on earth is going on?" Then all of a sudden we didn't see the helicopter anymore. As they ran, then we looked off to the side, and there was another camp down the ways from us, and then all of a sudden we didn't see the camp anymore. We had never experienced this before so we were all very confused by this. Well then we realized that it was a wall of dust, it was a wall of sand, and the sandstorm was moving right at us. So we hightailed to the tent, got the sides down, zipped them down just in time for the sandstorm to hit, and we barricaded ourselves in the tent, and we were holding the door as hard as we could because the wind was pounding, and it was pounding the sand like a sand blaster. Then a couple minutes later it was gone, and it was like nothing happened other than the fact that there was now this coat of sand on everything. So that was very interesting and that added to the confusion of this living condition.

Collin: What were living conditions like after Hurricane Hugo?

Arendt: When we got to the Virgin Islands during Hurricane Hugo, we moved into a condo. We had a condo. It was a vacated condo, it was right off the lake, right off the beach. It was gorgeous except for the fact that there was a foot of sand in it. There was a foot of sand, the windows were blown out, because when the hurricane hit, it blew the sand, rocks, everything right through the windows and the glass, and then all the sand blew in. So there was a foot of sand that we had to clean out of the whole building. [Blank spot on tape] So we had to clear out the sand. We had cots and sleeping bags again, but we didn't have the organization that we had this big open area, we didn't have that anymore. So some people slept in the hallways, some people slept wherever you could set up your cot and your sleeping bag. The bugs weren't very friendly to us. There was no running water, no electricity. So at night you were pretty much out of luck unless you had a nice flashlight. Pretty cruddy for about the first month or so. Then the sand started coming back to the beach, started getting washed back up to the beach, and then it was like living in paradise for a month.

Collin: What was your experience during the Seoul Olympics?

Arendt: We had, I was part of a SWAT team for our post at Camp Market. During the Olympics, the weeks prior to the Olympics, they were training the Korean National SWAT team, and our SWAT team was recruited to be hostages in a mock hostage situation, where we were posing as the U.S. National Swim Team, and so the terrorists took us hostage at the Aquatic Center of the Olympic Complex. We spent the whole day as hostages, which basically meant that we were in the building and that's it, and the terrorists were negotiating with the law enforcement or whatever, but we didn't hear any of that because we were hostages. So after a while we got a little bored, so I went up onto the high dive and dove into the Olympic pool, which was full of nasty, scummy water because they hadn't cleaned it in a while. My ears hit at the same time and I couldn't hear for about a half an hour but I'd do it again. Then after a while the terrorists came back into where we were and rounded us up and they took us, they went in the middle of us and tied us together, our hands together in a circle around them and there was a helicopter there, and they made us walk out to the helicopter, we had a ride to an airport because the terrorists were taking us now. They were taking the U.S. Swim Team to an airport to go out of the country. So we got to the airport and once we got to the airport they landed and they walked us into the hangar the same way because they want the hostages around them so they don't get shot at. So we walked into the hangar, and as soon as we got into the hangar, the SWAT team rappelled from the ceiling and forced all of us to the ground and apprehended the terrorists. So that was pretty cool. We didn't really see anything, and all you heard was the ring of the repelling as it rubbed the rope, but it was very fast. They did a nice job, we got freed.

Collin: That's the end of our discussion, I guess you could say. So Mr. Arendt, thanks for your time.

Arendt: Thank you.

Collin: So if there is anything you would like to add, you can go ahead and add it now.

Arendt: Nope.

Collin: All right.

Arendt: Thanks. **[End of Interview]**