

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MARIE REINHARDT
Cryptographer, Navy Reserve, Korea
2017

**OH
1996b**

OH
1996b

Reinhardt, Marie, (b. 1929). Oral History Interview, 2017.

Approximate Length: 51 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

This oral history interview with Marie Reinhardt is an addition to her original interview (OH 1996a, from June 16, 2016).

In this oral history interview, Marie Reinhardt, a Milwaukee, WI native, discusses her service with the Navy from 1953 through 1955 and then with the Navy Reserves from 1955 through 1959, where she worked in communications and then as a cryptographer, stationed in San Diego with the 11th Naval District. Reinhardt recalls struggling to get into the military due to concerns about her being underweight, and she reflects on overcoming social norms regarding women in the military. After completing her training as a WAVE officer, Reinhardt was stationed in San Diego where she lived in the women's officers' quarters, and began working as a cryptographer, coding and decoding secret messages. In 1955, Reinhardt returned to Wisconsin to work as a special education teacher, and to enlist in the Navy Reserves. In 1959, Reinhardt left the Reserves and continued her work as a special education teacher, all the while raising a family with her husband. In the early 70s, Reinhardt founded the United Women Veterans organization to showcase women's role in the military, and to help military women network with one another. Reinhardt also plans to release an autobiography entitled, *Good Morning Ma'am Sir*.

Biographical Sketch:

Reinhardt (b. 1929) served with the 11th Naval District in the Navy from 1953 to 1955, and in the Navy Reserves from 1955 to 1959. She worked as a cryptographer, coding and decoding secret messages. In 1955, Reinhardt returned to Wisconsin and worked as a special education teacher, and in the early 70s, she founded the United Women Veterans organization to help women in the military network with other women, and to showcase women's role in the military.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript, if possible.

Interviewed by Ellen Brooks, 2017.

Transcribed by Rachelle Halaska, 2017.

Reviewed by Matthew Scharpf, 2017.

Abstract written by Matthew Scharpf, 2017.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH1996b.Reinhardt]

Brooks: Today is Wednesday, March 24th 2017. This is an interview with Mary Reinhardt who served with the Navy in active duty from 1953 to 1955 and then with the Navy Reserve from 1955 to 1959. The interview is being conducted at her home at Oakwood Village. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks and this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. Great. So we do already have an interview with you, but we are going to expand on that interview today. So the first thing I want to know is if you can talk a little bit more about when you enlisted and why?

Reinhardt: I enlisted, I tried to get in a think, in 51' but I was still in college and then I taught a year, but I had always wanted to join the Navy. I was too young for World War II. My brother was in World War II, but he died at the veterans' hospital in Milwaukee as a result of his duty.

Brooks: So your passion to join the Navy was inspired by him you would say?

Reinhardt: I would believe so.

Brooks: So you tell me a little bit more about the process for joining.

Reinhardt: Oh my gosh. It was really long and involved, because I've always been very thin, well not now [laughs].

I used to be very, very thin and I went down to Chicago, took the tests, did the physical. I was way below the limit. So they let me know that I passed the other tests but uh I needed to go to great lengths to be examined again. And they also said, you are much too thin now if you get to hundred twelve, I'd never gotten to a hundred; if you get to a hundred and twelve we will consider you. So I went back home, and I ate pasta, I ate pies, drank malts. I did everything you could to try and put on weight it just didn't work. And then I guess the doctor said something to them and they said well if you get to a hundred and five. [Laughs] I kept eating well and then the day for me to go to the doctor to be weighed in, my private doctor, I did something which I am going to blush because I don't usually do, do things like that. I took my father's big handkerchiefs and then I put coins and stuffed them in this peplum jacket so I thought, well. When we got there and his office was busy we didn't have appointments there, but uh, he told me, "get on the scale." And I did. A hundred and three and a half. And he looked at me and said, "You're physically fit, I'm going to put down a hundred and five." Well that was it.

And then I didn't hear anything and, I'm a teacher—I was a special ed. teacher, with the disabled kids. And when school was out, on summer break, towards the end of summer break I thought, I'm going to go back to teaching, which I really loved. Well one, one or two days before the class was to convene I was at a

doctor's office with my former roommate. And I get this phone call at the doctor's office and they ask for a "Marie Talla," well that's not the way you say my name and then I thought, maybe it's me. Then the receptionist said, "Your sister called and Great Lakes called and they would like you to accept a commission. Wow. Well I left my friend, I dashed home I called him. I said, "Yes," and then I hung up and said, "Oh my god, what did I do!" It was. You know, I hadn't prepared myself because it did not look like it was going to happen and I had some remorse about that but then I had to get ready. Well from that moment on I couldn't eat anything, it wouldn't stay down, there was just too much to do in such a short time. But we did and Momma came down to meet with me—to Chicago, we swore in there, and then we separated. She was very tearful, I was very apprehensive.

[00:05:37]

Oh I should say something about how Papa felt. I got this all sorta, I got this all written out. Papa said, the morning I was to leave, Papa came in the bedroom because he'd got up early to go to work, he pressed ten dollars in my hand and said, "You get sick and they'll send you home." What a hell of a thing to say. [Laughs] But I think afterwards, I thought later, he was just saying that in case things don't work out it will be okay.

Brooks: What did you think at the time when he said that?

Reinhardt: Oh I thought it was a terrible thing to say. It startled me. Made me cry. But he, I did go, Momma was there to watch me be sworn in, then off I went to Newport, RI for my, where I did sixteen weeks of training.

Brooks: So you mention that you have a sister.

Reinhardt: I had two— three sisters

Brooks: Okay so three sisters and just the one brother?

Reinhardt: Yes.

Brooks: Were any of your other sisters, did they join the service at all?

Reinhardt: No one was older, one was younger.

Brooks: What do you think it was about you specifically that made you so drawn to, I know that you were inspired by your brother but—

Reinhardt: I remember as a child that there was always so many movies, and usually musical movies where there were sailors in the Navy and ships and I always thought you have to learn how to dance because in those movies Fred Astaire was, and Dick Powell, they were always dancing, but I liked the camaraderie, and the fact that they were doing something special. So I think that impacted on me.

Brooks: Did it occur to you that it wasn't very standard for women to enlist?

Reinhardt: Oh yes. Oh yes. I lived through World War II and you always heard things about women in the service, bad things happen. And I, I didn't believe it because women all over the world, bad things happen. And I was always a history buff and I really thought, I was sad that I couldn't contribute during World War II because I was just too young. So it was something I wanted to do because I also wanted to prove to myself, to prove to myself that I could do something. Because I went to college and my parents were not for that but because I received scholarships—I was passive resistant. I did decide to go and I continued on.

Brooks: So, you did you have a basic training type?

Reinhardt: We had this special school for WAVE officers, because I got the commission, and that was in Newport, Rhode Island.

Brooks: So can you tell me a little about that training?

Reinhardt: Interesting. I never lived in a dorm, so this was a great experience for me—to be in such a unit and we're all fresh, we are all—didn't know anything about the Navy and to be part of that—and to know that things were happening in Korea.

Brooks: Can you explain that a little bit, what did you know about what was going on over there?

Reinhardt: Well in my high school class there were some casualties in Korea, and then I remember men on bicycles delivering messages about casualties and that really hurt me to think that these young men, my age or a little bit older were dying or missing in action.

[00:10:17]

Brooks: And while you were training were you keeping up with everything that was happening over there?

Reinhardt: I was surprisingly. Papa was wrong, but Mama kept writing. She didn't write English—I mean back in the old country they didn't have much education, but I could read her writing which was part Italian part English. [Laughs] No punctuation, but it was good to hear from home. I learned a lot. I learned that some of the young women were innocent and some of them weren't, but very few of them, and you sort of knew because they just acted differently very worldly, and for those of us we just said [gasp] [laughs]. So it was funnier—I met so many young women that were just like me and there were like different groups in our class of about, I think there was about seventy-two. Some were from the farm, some were from small communities some had gone to the prestigious schools in the east and here I was, from state teachers college in Milwaukee, but I kept up. Graduation was a wonderful thing and then when we got our orders, that was really something and what they did was they reversed,

usually they start with the alphabet, A, B, C. This time they started with the Z and backwards. Those of us who started at the beginning had to sit and wait which was very unusual for us. We were able to put down three of our choices. My parents wanted me to be stationed at Great Lakes because that was close to Milwaukee. Well I put that down, I was hoping I wasn't going to get that, and sure enough I got San Diego, California.

Brooks: Do you remember what your third choice was?

Reinhardt: San Francisco, far from home.

Brooks: Why San Diego? Why was that appealing to you?

Reinhardt: I had visited San Diego and it was a beautiful place.

Brooks: So you graduate and you get your orders, did you—was there some time in between when you had to leave?

Reinhardt: Yeah, went home, it was about Christmas time then, so I spent some time, Christmas at home with my family and Papa, Papa is a big part of my life. He and Mama had something going on, I could see they were just interacting as Mama would be smiling and Papa would be frowning. Finally I said, "What's going on here?" And Mom said, "Papa said you were going to come home smoking." [Laughs] I mean it's silly, all that's happening and, I wasn't because I'd never gotten to that point. So, but jump ahead another year when I came home on leave, Papa said to me, "You come to visit me at the factory tomorrow and wear your uniform." I did and he was so proud. There was one of those naked bulbs hanging down in the factory and some of his co-workers were there and he introduced me, he said, "This is my daughter. She is an officer in the Navy." I'd never forget, his blue eyes, his face was so proud. So his forecast had not turned out. Well that is a long story I'm sorry, I'm taking too much time.

Brooks: No that's okay. That's great. And how did that make you feel when he brought you to the factory?

Reinhardt: Very proud, very proud at the realization that he was proud. That he was proud of me.

[00:15:01]

Brooks: That's great. So tell me about your first impressions of San Diego and the base there.

Reinhardt: I arrived and one of the women who was in our class at Newport, her family lived there, but they lived in the island across the bay and I didn't realize that her father was a very important officer in the Navy; I think he was just below the commandant. I didn't know that. So they were very social, very nice, and I stayed there the first night and then realized oh wow, because when I reported the next day, the commander of our unit sort of was taken aback when I said that

I stayed at Captain Goodwinn's [sp?]. [Laughs] Oh this must be very interesting that he—I didn't realize he was so important. And San Diego was just as beautiful as I had remembered.

Brooks: And you stayed on the base there?

Reinhardt: For a while. I stayed at the WQs, which were the women's quarters, the women officers' quarters, but then the accommodations were really nice and this was at the naval station. But then they were going to close that. So I had to find a place to live because they didn't have quarters for the women. And there was—I had met some people at the WQ, so two of us decided to find a place, and we did. So we lived in civilian places and then had to take a bus to get to work.

Brooks: Did you have a preference between living in the WQ and living in your own place?

Reinhardt: No. We had no choice because they were closing the WQ.

Brooks: Did you like one better than the other?

Reinhardt: No. I think I would have enjoyed the WQ too because then you'd have everybody who was in the Navy.

Brooks: Everyone together. So can you tell me a little about what your assignment was there and just your regular duties?

Reinhardt: When I first got there I was not allowed to work in the high security places because my parents came from Sicily, and they had to prove that they didn't have people back there. So that took a while, a lot of research in Milwaukee to get the proper numbers and stuff, but when that came through I worked in the cryptography.

Brooks: And how did you get trained for that?

Reinhardt: On the job.

Brooks: Oh really, wow.

Reinhardt: On the job.

Brooks: So can you talk a little bit more about what cryptography entails?

Reinhardt: Encoding and decoding secret, top secret, messages.

Brooks: Is it something that you were interested in? Was it something that you wanted to do?

Reinhardt: I realized that I didn't have a choice. I mean they make these assignments. Well I got interested in it because—but we were warned not to say anything to anyone. One time they put us all together, called everybody in who were working the watches, because we have the evening watches, the day watches, the midwatch,

twelve day cycle. And we were all called in by the captain who said, "They know who you are, so be careful what you say and who you associate with." Which scared the heck out of us.

Brooks: So in your mind who was the "they" who was the enemy who you were

Reinhardt: I imagined the Russians.

Brooks: So you just mentioned and you talked a bit in your first interview about the watches and the cycles can you tell me a little bit about what it means to be on watch.

Reinhardt: The cycles, there were the four cycles, they were three days each. Well, either three days, which was from seven to three or four, then there was the evening, which was from eleven to seven thirty—all around there. And then there was—let's see that was morning, day, midnight, and there was another one. What would be in between? Evening watch. Yeah.

[00:20:21]

Brooks: What did you do on watch?

Reinhardt: We were there to answer or to send out any messages, receive the messages, we didn't deliver the messages except in the building, and then we had to wear a gun. And we did have training for that.

Brooks: How did that go?

Reinhardt: As one of the women said, "I can throw it better than I can shoot it" [laughs] and they always had an ambulance there in case something went wrong. But we didn't do that. We also underwent gas mask—had to wear gas masks. We had to simulate jumping from a ship. I mean, we did some things that never in the world you would do otherwise. I was a non-swimmer, that's another story, and I was at the beginning of the alphabet, so I figured if I balked they're going to have problems. Scared the heck out of me, to climb that ladder up, up, up, then standing on this little, must have been a two by four, you put your feet over that and then you jump. We had life jackets, but they warned us that you'd better hold on to that because as you hit the water and come up you could break your neck.

Brooks: Wow, that is a little scary.

Reinhardt: Very scary. I know a lot about it because I've been writing, we have a book, I'm writing a book and it's going to be called *Good Morning Ma'am Sir*. Because there was always this enlisted person who would get on board the bus that I took, which was just the regular city bus, and he'd see me and he'd stop still and salute and say, "Good morning ma'am sir!" Which was absolutely wrong. You could say good morning ma'am or good morning lieutenant or whatever.

Brooks: Do you think that he did it to be funny or—

Reinhardt: You know I wondered about that

Brooks: But you'll never know?

Reinhardt: Never, no.

Brooks: So yeah, that was a question that I was going to ask you so I can ask now, so you're writing a book, do you have plans for the book and when you might be finish or is it just an ongoing.

Reinhardt: I've been writing for years about that. How I got interested in, more or less what we've been talking about, what it was like to go there, the experience of being there, the things that we did in the Navy. And yeah, I have—must be this pile, and I remember working on it lately because I'm getting older and my kids ask and my grandkids ask me. I tell them, "You'll have to read my book." But some of those stories that they've read, it will come back to me when we are talking about something. When you were in the Navy you did such and such. So that's part of the history.

Brooks: Are there any stories from that book that you didn't tell in your last interview that you wanted to include in this?

[00:24:01]

Reinhardt: Well I remember hearing about lesbians, I didn't know about lesbians. I was that naive. You know, my parents being immigrants, they kept us pretty protected, and we knew that certain things we could do and certain things you cannot do. Well, I was assigned to be the officer on the night shift, and this was at a location outside of San Diego so that involved, it was an isolated place, where many of the workers, the sailors that worked in communications lived. So I got there late afternoon because I was to stay overnight, and as I checked in, there was this enlisted girl and she said, "I'd like to talk to you." Okay, that's part of my job. So I said, "Let's go to my room." We got to the room. I was going to close the door and she said, "No, don't do that," because if she did that, it would incriminate me. I didn't—you see I wasn't thinking. I said, "Okay." If she feels comfortable with the door open, why not."

Then she sat down and said, "I didn't want you to close the door because I'm a lesbian." I thought, Lesbian? What the heck is that? I thought I will have to look that up. I mean we were really naive. Then she started to tell me they were going to take her out of the service because they didn't want things like that to happen, and if I could do anything. All I said was that you will have to take it to your personnel officer to speed this up, because her base, and the people she lived in the barracks with, the women she lived in the barracks with, didn't like her. So all I could do was encourage her; there was nothing I could do. I think it might have helped her.

Brooks: Do you know what happened to her situation?

Reinhardt: No, this was a night, another night when I was stationed there, and the Navy people were all in the barracks; they were entertaining each other in the main lounge. Then the lights went off. What do you do then? So I thought, I'm going to have the sailors leave. Which I did of course, a lot of groans, but I didn't want them going up, men and women, didn't meet with a lot of cheers, let me tell you. But they did leave, and for a long time the lights were out when they finally came back in again—back on again, and that was one of the experiences I thought, "They didn't teach you that!" So that was my other experience there. [to Brooks] Would you like another?

Brooks: I'm okay right now, thank you though. What was—can you tell me a little bit more about being an officer and how that was maybe different than being an enlisted person?

Reinhardt: A lot, a lot different. I mean, I realized many of my people, women in the class, came from—well it was different, they didn't come from, their parents were probably judges, and lawyers, and professional people. Papa peddled fish and didn't have any education. Well, he did go to second grade, but he was demoted to first grade because he would get up at two o'clock in the morning to go out fishing with his father and brothers. So, when he got to school in the morning, he fell asleep. So, it was hard to say that my parents were not educated, but I did okay.

Brooks: Did you feel that you had more in common with the enlisted folks.

Reinhardt: Definitely, definitely.

Brooks: Do you ever regret that decision to become an officer?

Reinhardt: Oh no. No, it was an eye opener. I learned a lot. I think the enlisted, some of them knowing my background, we got along very well. I'm talking too much.

Brooks: No not at all, you're doing great. Not at all. Is there anything else, any other stories that you want to mention about times when you were still in active duty?

[00:29:59]

Reinhardt: We didn't have much free time to do socializing because of the way the watches worked. I know I had some opportunities to date but I'd have to say, "I can't. I'm working the watch those days." And they took it as a refusal, but what are you going to do? This is the truth. When people are enjoying themselves socializing, I was at work. Holidays and whatever.

Brooks: Did you meet any resistance from civilians being a woman in the Navy.

Reinhardt: Not really, because at that time in San Diego Navy personnel—they were required to wear navy uniforms. So all that you would meet, coming and going, because sometimes when I was leaving in the morning, people, Navy personnel was coming out to the harbor. We had little to do with the civilians.

Brooks: When you did have free time how did you spend it?

Reinhardt: Sleeping.

Brooks: Any other, dances or—

Reinhardt: Sometimes, there was one time when, someone had a beach party at Mission Beach, which was further out than San Diego, and I was just getting off the midwatch. I hadn't had breakfast and they were serving, well the punch was good but it wasn't punch. I remember that. Then I went to work that night and they were saying, "You don't look very good Miss Colla [sp?], you must be getting the flu." "Yeah, I'm getting the flu." But I'll never forget that, I called that chapter "Punch Drunk at the Beach" [laughs]. Oh I feel like I'm talking too much.

Brooks: No, I don't think you are. I like that title a lot. How long were you there?

Reinhardt: In San Diego, two, well almost two years.

Brooks: And you said you got to go home after about a year?

Reinhardt: I got home after training and then about a year after that.

Brooks: Do they call it R&R or leave?

Reinhardt: No it was just home on leave.

Brooks: Home on leave. Okay, did you get to go anywhere else on leave?

Reinhardt: Oh sure we went around, a lot of places in the southern part of California. There were so many I can't even, La Jolla was one, which was very close. Then we went up in the mountains and different places. We went to Mexico to see the bullfight.

Brooks: So after your two years were up, did you come back here to Wisconsin?

Reinhardt: Came back to Wisconsin and I accepted a job in Milwaukee as a special ed teacher.

Brooks: And at that point, so I guess I should ask, when you enlisted and after you accepted into officer school did you sign up for a set amount of time?

Reinhardt: Well, we were required at least to serve two years.

Brooks: Okay, so you are done with your two years active.

Reinhardt: But when I got home I joined the Navy Reserve and took classes for Naval Officers at Marquette. [Inaudible] every summer two weeks of training duty usually at Great Lakes.

Brooks: Why did you decide to do that?

Reinhardt: I still liked the Navy. I still felt that in case something happened in the world, I would be part of it, and I had special work ethic, working with confidential and top secret stuff.

[00:35:05]

Brooks: So the reserves consisted of these classes that you took at Marquette and you said two weeks of training every summer. How was that? How was the training duty?

Reinhardt: It was fun. It was interesting and it was good to be part of the Navy for that short time. And it was at Great Lakes—some people get to go far, but I just got Great Lakes.

Brooks: Was that your preference or?

Reinhardt: No, we didn't have any choice. They sent us where they wanted us to go.

Brooks: Was there anything that you missed about being active?

Reinhardt: The feeling of camaraderie. The feeling of belonging to something big; something important and part of history. I liked that.

Brooks: And you didn't get that same feeling being in the reserves?

Reinhardt: I did because there were other Naval Officers; I guess there were just two women, myself and this other woman I met. It was a neat experience. I'm glad I did that.

Brooks: And then in 1959 is when you stopped your work with the Reserves?

Reinhardt: I didn't continue; then I got a proposal from Sicily [laughs], but forget about that. I became engaged. I broke the engagement, then I met my husband. So then I dropped it, because we were going to move to California, not to San Diego unfortunately, but in the northern part of California. Then the babies started to come.

Brooks: So tell me a little about that decision to get out of the service and what that entailed to be discharged.

Reinhardt: I did miss working with special needs children. There is something very endearing about them and trying to understand them and making them feel good about themselves, and that part I liked. That they were happy to come to school you know and that we got along well; barely had any discipline problems. In fact one time a kid said to me, I was having a social studies lecture, if you'd call it a lecture, and then the kids seem to be interested. Then one little boy raised his hand, and I thought, Wow. He stood up and he said, "You know why we like you? You don't yell at us." I mean what you can say after that. I have some of these stories about teaching special ed kids, and at that time they didn't define the different special categories. So we would have emotionally disturbed,

retarded children, trainable children, autistic children. But they hadn't—they weren't putting them in categories so we had all of those in one class.

Brooks: What ages or grades did you usually—

Reinhardt: It was primary from six, it went up to about thirteen in my class.

Brooks: And so that was one reason that you decided that you were done with the Navy was because you wanted to pursue your education career?

Reinhardt: Mmhhh [yes], working with special needs because I actually—I was a special need child myself because I was so thin that they had a special class called "Open Air." They [inaudible] open area even in winter—we sat in classroom with the windows wide open with county issued overcoats and hats and tried to do school work—one teacher for all these different categories. I was in there for five years. Had a hot breakfast, hot lunch, took naps in the afternoon. When I got to go to the regular classroom, that was a big adjustment. It was nothing like the other class, where we were weighed weekly, temperatures taken daily.

[00:40:25]

Brooks: Do you know how tall you were when you were trying to get into the service?

Reinhardt: I must have been five four.

Brooks: Okay.

Reinhardt: I was tall, but I was thin.

Brooks: So you moved to California, and what did your husband do?

Reinhardt: He used—civil engineer, graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Brooks: Is that how you met? From the area?

Reinhardt: No, in Milwaukee. There was a Catholic alumni club for people, men and women, who had graduated from college and beyond where they could do social things. Like we'd run—monthly we would have a mass, and then we'd go to one of the hotels and we would have a breakfast, and then they would have sporting events, trips to Chicago for plays—there were all kinds of social things to do. And I met him at a Christmas party.

Brooks: Was he a veteran?

Reinhardt: No. No.

Brooks: So you didn't really have that in common. Did you share that part of your life with him after you were married?

Reinhardt: No not really. Except for holidays where veterans got together, then he would participate in that.

Brooks: So you moved to California, your husband was a civil engineer, you were teaching special needs kids—

Reinhardt: Not there I wasn't, because I got sick. And after a few months in California, we moved back to Wisconsin.

Brooks: And then were you able to continue your career when you were back here then?

Reinhardt: Yes, when we moved to Madison—nope before we moved to Madison I worked five years for the Milwaukee Public Schools in special ed. And then had the babies, three of them, and then returned to do some substitute working, sometimes long term, with special needs children. I did for a number of years until, it was time for the kids to go to college and then I went back to work as a substitute. Which is another—lot of interesting stories about that experience.

Brooks: Yeah I would imagine.

Reinhardt: So it has been a full life.

Brooks: I know from your other interview that you started a women's veterans group.

Reinhardt: Oh yes, that's right I forgot about that.

Brooks: Yeah, let's talk about that a little bit.

Reinhardt: United Women Veterans. There was someone from the—the Marines are—always Marines, the women Marines. There was one from the Air Force and I was from the Navy.

Brooks: So it was the three of you?

Reinhardt: The four of us.

Brooks: Four of you. Did you have someone from the Army as well?

Reinhardt: I don't recall that we did.

Brooks: So tell me a little bit, how you met and how you got the group started.

Reinhardt: Well, we realized there were other women veterans around Madison, but we didn't know each other. Sometimes they would have events, but the women were never represented. So we got together, one of the women worked for the Veterans here in Madison, so we got names sent out, had a get together, and got to meet other women veterans, and it started from there. We even had a newsletter going. We've participated in Labor Day and Fourth of July and I think Memorial Day. One event was a parade that welcomed home the Vietnam veterans, and I think that was the very first parade. We didn't know how the people would react because there were a lot of people who objected; they didn't think highly of the Vietnam veterans, but we decided to wear dark skirts, white shirts and ties, red ties, and our hats. And we marched and it was amazing. The women, especially, clapped on the sidelines, one rushed up handed me some

flowers. I mean it was just terrific that people wanted to see that we women did serve.

[00:46:05]

Brooks: When was that parade?

Reinhardt: I don't remember the date, but it was probably in the early seventies maybe.

Brooks: So it was around, when the Vietnam War was still happening? So that's about when the group got started?

Reinhardt: Yup, we got started, we had a flag made and there is a statue of liberty on the flag and I stayed with it for a long time. But then the kids went off to college. I was still working with the veterans group, but then I got older and things started to happen, and that was the end of that. But I do go to the Veteran's Hospital and check out there.

Brooks: Do you know if that women's group is still active?

Reinhardt: I believe so, but I'm not sure.

Brooks: Kind of hard to keep track of everything.

Reinhardt: Right, right. Because up in coming—and maybe some of the women now days don't feel the same way as we did, and then my generation and the generation before me are dying off.

Brooks: So you, maybe the women today don't feel the same way as you did, or have the same experiences. What do you think are some of the main things that you experienced as a female veteran and what do you think might be different today?

Reinhardt: We worked together and did the best we can as women to show people, yeah we did things. I don't know what the feeling is today. I did notice there are some differences. I don't know if they are as proud as we were, but there are still some women who have joined the service, you get some good training which is excellent, and I recommend it if my granddaughters wanted to go. I would say you should, I mean it's good. You learn a lot.

Brooks: What else would you tell them about the service if they were interested in checking it out?

Reinhardt: Keep your nose clean. Be prepared for meeting—you'll meet some obstacles, but this time you know which way is right and which way is wrong, because it's easy to just fall, but it's true here in civilian life too. Yeah, I think that's what I—do what you have to or give it your best. Excuse me, I'm going to show you—I'm going to bring you something.

Brooks: Okay.

Reinhardt: This is me, and all this are stories [noise of moving objects around].

Brooks: Those are the stories that you are writing for your book?

Reinhardt: Yup, [inaudible] but it goes on and on.

Brooks: That's great.

Reinhardt: It's good to have someone who wants to know what things were like.

Brooks: Yeah, and that's the thing. I think your story as we talked is very unique, not only because of the time that you served, but because you were a woman in service, so we don't have a lot—not a lot of people talk about the Cold War and the Korean War and especially women's involvement. Those stories are particularly important since there aren't as many of them.

Reinhardt: All of our experiences are different.

Brooks: Yeah definitely.

Reinhardt: So innocent, so naïve. [Laughs]

Brooks: That's great. Is there anything else you want to talk about while we still have the recorder rolling?

Reinhardt: No.

Brooks: Anything you think you left out?

Reinhardt: Well maybe, no, I think not. No I think that is it.

Brooks: Well, all right, great. I am going to turn this off.

[00:51:00]

[End of recording]