

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
KELLI J. CARROLL  
Naval Supply Corps, US Navy  
2019

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**Carroll, Kelli J.**, (1961–). Oral History Interview, 2019.

Approximate length: 2 hours 39 minutes

Contact *WVM Research Center* for access to original recording.

**Summary:**

This oral history interview with Kelli Carroll discusses her service with the Navy from 1984 to 2004 including the work she did with the Navy Supply Corps and her tours aboard the USS *McKee*, USS *Cape Cod*, USS *Shasta*, and USS *Coronado*.

Carroll was born in Beloit, Wisconsin. After high school she attended UW-Whitewater before deciding to join the Navy and going to Orlando, Florida, for boot camp in 1984. She discusses being the guidon bearer in basic training, why she started smoking, meeting other lesbians, and firefighting training.

Carroll went to A-School in Meridian, Mississippi, and trained as a ship's serviceman. She discusses how her supervisor got her into C-School where she learned advanced accounting and inventory skills. Carroll was assigned to the USS *McKee* out of San Diego, California, but put in a request to deploy with the USS *Cape Cod* in 1986. She discusses living in San Diego, going to gay bars and enjoying the laid-back attitude of the city. She explains the roll of the support ships in the Navy, describes the living conditions on the ship, her job in stockrooms, and cash handling. The USS *Cape Cod* deployed to Yokosuka, Japan, and Carroll describes it as a positive experience.

After her deployment she was assigned to the Navy Exchange Service Command. Carroll describes her nightmare master chief and how her command handled the situation. She explains how she developed a training program to help sailors on their advancement tests and was nominated for Supply Shore Sailor of the Year and competed for Shore Sailor of the Year in 1992.

In 1993, she was assigned to the USS *Cape Cod* (AD-43) and selected for chief petty officer and describes chief's initiation and shellback initiation. She discusses that she enjoyed mentoring female sailors, describes her deployments during Desert Storm/Desert Shield, changes to ship routine and training during the conflict, and being out at sea for three months at a time. The USS *Cape Cod* was decommissioned in 1995 and Carroll was assigned to the USS *Shasta* (AE-33). During her deployment with the *Shasta* she describes travelling in the Middle East and Asia, fraternization problems with one of her sailors and decommissioning the ship in 1997.

Carroll recalls her experience of the October 12, 2000, attack on the USS *Cole* (DDG-67) and dealing with the aftermath.

Carroll then was assigned to Miramar Naval Station Brig, San Diego, for her shore duty, made senior chief and requested to be transferred to the USS *Coronado* (AGF-11). Carroll describes her experience during September 11, 2001, needing to carry a weapon afterwards and changes in attitudes as a result of the attacks. She outlines her duties on the ship including heading the S-3 Division, security training, and firefighting. She retired in 2004 and received the flag that was flown during her last underway.

After she retired she moved to Appleton, Wisconsin, and describes having difficulty adjusting to civilian life and a period of significant hardship. Carroll discusses her retirement including meeting her

partner, organizing a woman's golf group, camping, and being members of the American Legion Post 539. Carroll reflects on what her Navy service meant to her and why being open about her sexual orientation in this interview was important to her.

### **Biographical Sketch:**

Kelli J. Carroll was born in Beloit, Wisconsin. She enlisted in the United States Navy in 1984, attended basic training at the Orlando Navy Training Center, FL, advanced training in Meridian, MS, and was stationed on the USS *McKee*. Carroll served for 20 years in the supply corps, served on the USS *Cape Cod*, USS *Shasta* and the USS *Coronado*. She retired in 2004 and moved to Appleton, Wisconsin, where she lives with her partner and their two dogs.

### **Archivist's Notes:**

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 Rachelle Halaska, 2019.

Transcribed by Jeff Javid, 2019.

Reviewed by Luke Sprague, 2020.

Abstract written by Rachelle Halaska, 2019.

## Interview Transcript:

### [Beginning of OH2147.Carroll\_file1\_access.mp3]

Halaska: Today is February 18, 2019. This is an interview with Kelli J. Carroll. She served with the Navy Supply Corps from 1984 to 2004. This interview is being conducted at the veterans home. The interviewer is Rachelle Halaska. This interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. All Right. Hi!

Carroll: Hi.

Halaska: Can you just tell me when and where you were born?

Carroll: I was born here in Wisconsin, in Beloit, in 1961 at Beloit Memorial Hospital.

Halaska: Okay, and can you tell me a little bit about your background and, like, growing up before you went into the military?

Carroll: I was actually, attended after I graduated from high school in 1980. I attended UW-Whitewater. I wanted to—back in the eighties jobs for women were quite limited so you either got into something admin or you got into education. I loved kids, always did. I was in, at Whitewater for three and a half years—three years—and kind of decided that at that point of my life there was a) something bigger out there for me and I *wanted* to see the world [laughs] and I knew that there was just something that, there was a calling, and probably like most of us college kids I was in debt up to my butt because of student loans. So I took off after my third year and went—actually I was going Air Force like most of the women did back then. Why I don't know. I think they were afraid of the ocean. So I went in and saw the Air Force recruiter. I had taken my ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] and done all that and basically was told, what job do you want? [laughs] So I had my choice but they also, at that time, told me that it was going to be about a year before I was going to get in. Didn't want to wait a year.

So I walked right next door to the Navy recruiter and they basically told me the same thing but we'll put you on a delayed-entry program—DEP—And within three months the recruiter called me and said, we've got this job, it's as a ship serviceman. The rate involves some accounting—ship stores; bulk storerooms. We also had dry-cleaning plants back then on the ships; they also had barber schools. I was geared more towards the accounting, records keeping side of things so I thought that perfect. Beautiful. So right after they called me I was on my way and I went down to Orlando, Florida, is where the women went to boot camp then.

Halaska: What was the name of the base?

Carroll: Oh, God, what was it down there? Yeah, I can't remember. I know it was in Orlando but I cannot for the life of me remember what the name of the place was.

Halaska: That's okay. So I have a question about—

Carroll: Sure.

Halaska: —when you were considering going into the military were you asked about your sexuality when you entered the service, or did you know about your sexuality at that time and did it impact you at all?

Carroll: I did. I had met my first girlfriend my freshman year in college. In high school I was obviously a sports fanatic. I played softball; the whole nine yards. And there was a whole group of us it was never said, you know, the word "gay" was never said, but there were several women that I hung out with that were a couple and then like I said when I went to [University of Wisconsin] Whitewater my freshman year, I got my first girlfriend [laughs] and that was another part of, kind of—joining the service was—she bagged on me and I thought, eh, There's something bigger out there and Wisconsin wasn't exactly known for its large gay population. So, yeah, I knew about my sexuality when I joined. Was I ever asked? I don't remember ever being asked and if I did I obviously lied because I have always been of the mindset that it's really nobody's business who I sleep with in the privacy of my own home—

[00:05:20.22]

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: —or who I hang out with or what bars I go to. That's my business; and if I want to share it with someone I will, otherwise, it is up to me.

Halaska: Ok, so let's go back to Orlando?

Carroll: Um-hm.

Halaska: Tell me about basic training.

Carroll: I actually [laughs] oddly enough I was the shortest person in the company so you are privileged with becoming what they called a guidon bearer; we had a RCPO that was recruit chief petty officer for the company, and then they picked the shortest person to be a guidon so I basically—she did all the calls and was responsible for us as recruits. Another young gay woman from Tennessee who we became friends in boot camp. So I got to be the guidon and she would call commands and it was my job to hoist the flag so the whole company could see when we were supposed to right turn, left turn and if I didn't do my job properly I slept with the flag [laughs]. So I slept with the flag a lot. Kind of another story about the company commander, back then you had one of three options with the few minutes that you did have when we had like fifteen minutes between PT and eating and drills and we drilled a lot. You could either stand at your rack at parade rest—and the dorms that we lived in had, barracks basically had no AC so you could stand there and sweat like a pig at parade rest or you could sit on the ground and shine boots, shine buckles, shine whatever you could find to shine or you had the—call it a privilege, to go into a small space that they had some furniture on it. We couldn't sit on the furniture, but you could go in there; it was air-conditioned, but you could only go

out there if you smoked. So the company, my, our RCPO was the smoker. So guess where I ended up?

That's when I started smoking. They've obviously done away [laughs] with all of that now. But, yeah, that's, those were your options and I chose to start smoking so that I could make friends with my, our CPO, a wonderful young lady.

Halaska: What does RCPO stand for?

Carroll: Recruit Chief Petty Officer.

Halaska: Okay, so in training you talked about marching and doing drills and those kind of things. What else did you do? What were you trained for in basic training?

Carroll: Basic training. For that we did a lot of, back then you had to learn how to swim [laughs] if you didn't know how to swim they would send you off to swim classes. So, that was part of your graduation. I fortunately knew how to swim. We did a lot of training in firefighting. A lot of training in basic medical stuff—you know, stopping bleeding, giving CPR, that kind of stuff. Lot of firefighting.

Halaska: Can you tell me about the firefighting training?

Carroll: They had simulators, like small areas in a ship and they had what they called water-tight doors and we wore FFEs firefighter equipment and you would have to don your FFEs and get all slugged-out and you learned how to enter a space with actual simulators of fire and they taught you know from the first person who ran the hose and nozzle back to the person, the com[munication] center basically, and reporting what kind of fire it was. We had four classes of fires that we had to learn.

**[00:10:03.12]**

Halaska: Do you remember what those are?

Carroll: Alpha, Bravo, Charlie [laughs]. Alpha was like a paper fire. Bravo was fuel. Charlie was electrical. And Delta was like a Hazmat-type, other types of chemicals besides fuel. God, I can't believe I remember those! Yeah. So you learned the four classes of fires and also what types of equipment you could use—like a little Alpha paper fire, that was a fire extinguisher. Bravo was, used a lot of foam-types of materials that would come out of you have to dip the nozzle, they had a hose that went into a big canister and then when you flipped the nozzle on the water would run through and the foam would quell the fire. Charlie's, you worked a lot with the electricians because if you went into a space and it was electrical and you started using water and it was not a pretty scene. And, you know, just a lot of entry procedures on how you could enter a space and who did what where and, yeah, how to carry axes and, you know, the whole nine. So we did a lot of that. A lot of, just, our boot camp probably was geared more towards a lot of general military processes, procedures, the marching, ceremonies, a lot more geared towards that.

When we got to our A Schools is when we got into our specific rating—The ship serviceman stuff but that came after boot camp; so our boot camp's geared more towards for—you may go to a ship but as a woman you probably won't because women had only been allowed at sea for, let's see, I joined in '84,'78 was when women had officially, officially been on, allowed on ships. So it was a lot of ceremonial kind of stuff. You know was it; we didn't PT with the guys, they did have men down there, but we had a sister company but we didn't have a brother company so there was no interaction between the men and women. They kept us completely separate but it wasn't one of those sitting to learn how to sit properly with your hands—no, you were a sailor and you were treated like a sailor. So, I, you know, maybe for the men. I can't really speak as to if their training was any different because they kept us as far apart as they could.

Halaska: Did you make any friends in basic training?

Carroll: I—Tammy. Her name was Tammy Taylor. She was a little girl from Tennessee. She was our CPO. She and I became friends and then unfortunately she was going off to be an air traffic controller. So she was going to a different part of the country, stateside, to learn her job. I also, the problem with our boot camp I guess was that because we all had different rates and we weren't going to end up at the same place it was hard to make friends but she and I clicked right away 'cause she more or less looked at me and I looked at her and said, Mm-hm.

Halaska: What was that, Mm-hm?

Carroll: Mm-hm. You're gay [laughs].

Halaska: Oh, okay [both laugh].

Carroll: You're gay. I know you're gay. And I know you're gay, too. It was never said, but it was always known between the two of us and I'm sure there were several others of us that, that I became friends with but again because everybody kind of scattered into the wind you lost track of everyone and that was unfortunate. I kind of wish I would have kept up with Tammy because she was a wonderful young lady. Very, very, very intelligent. We also had two company commanders that ran the company, both of which, again, it was never officially said but it was—they looked at you; you looked at them and, Uh-huh, you're gay. Uh-mm, you're gay.

[00:15:22.25]

Again, nothing never ever said. I did find out later on; um, I think in 1992 I went to New York for a Sailor of the Year and on my first ship I met a woman by the name of Joyce Canlin [??], she was a MS [??] and I went to New York, Staten Island, to naval supply and got a phone call one night sitting in my hotel room. How this woman ever knew who I was I don't know. She was Supply Corps also. She called the hotel and she said, "Is this SH1 [Ship's Serviceman rating] Carroll?" and I said, "Yes, who's this?" And she said, "Well, this is Senior Chief Canlin. You remember me." And I was like, "Joyce. Yeah, I remember you. You were on the USS *McKee* [AS-41] my first ship. She was kind of one of my mentors. Again, it was one of those things nobody said but *you knew*.

And we started to shooting the breeze, and she just was asking about my career, because when I knew her she was a first-class petty officer, so she had made chief and then made senior chief. And we were talking and she said, "Do you remember DP1 Clark?" And I said, "Yeah, she was my company commander!" She said, "Well, she's now my girlfriend. [Laughs] So there was a connection. She said, "Do you want to talk to her? She's right here." And I was like, "Sure," 'cause the DPs at that time, data processors, they were also part of the Supply Corps and we got to shoot the breeze about boot camp and so, yeah, that was a long connection that had been made, and, you know, we talked about things back then and, yeah, everybody knew. There was no secrets.

Halaska: All right. Well let's go on to your advanced training then. Your, the A training?

Carroll: Yeah, they call it A School, and everybody, the Navy, I do believe, unlike most of the other services—within the supply corps rating you could break that down into, you had different departments, like they would have supply department; engineering department, they had the quartermasters that were up in operations, so supply corps had SHs, SK [Storekeeper], DP, DSs; actually the postal clerks [laughs]—so there was a wide range of, so each of us had are own specific school that we went to. And again, that was basic, this is how to be an SH. They taught us about, you know, pressing uniforms, I fortunately never had to work in the laundry. They also had being a barber was a part of—because when you're out in the middle of the ocean you got nobody to cut your hair, you're doing a nine-month deployment and you're hitting port very seldom and the ports that you do hit you probably don't want people cutting you hair, so it was a part of the rate. Like I said the ship's stores, the bulk storerooms, vending machines, cash collection I was fortunate enough that, like I said, when I got into my A School I was really connected to the accounting side, the financial side of things. I really had no desire to ever cut anyone's hair. I wanted something fast-paced and something that—let's just say the day I walked out of boot camp I knew that this is what I was going to do for my next twenty years so I wanted something that I knew when I did get out was going to be very helpful to me. So as I advanced within my rating from I think I was a SHSN at the time in boot camp and I made SH3 pretty quickly mostly because of my college background. You get more and more in-depth into the point where as a senior chief I was an auditor. I was doing the inventory control, the inventory management, I took care of all of that. So there are little steps between A School throughout your career as you advance that you can take advantage of and I did.

[00:20:31.06]

I was fortunate enough to work for a senior chief who saw something in me—not quite sure what it was but he knew that I was going to be very, very, *very* good at what I did and got me into a C school. Now the C schools are a little bit more advanced and they're focused more on, they have like a barber C School that teaches you a little bit more than just general barber and general because they were now having to deal with women at sea—and women have to get their hair cut, too! [Laughs] So you could go to those C schools. Mine was a C school that was geared toward the records and accounting side of things and he was probably one of the kindest men I ever knew; he was a beast at the same time. I was getting up and going to school every morning and he had no one replace me for my six weeks doing my job, but never said a word to me. He just knew



that after I got done with school at four o'clock I would come in, I would do my job till midnight; I would go home and study and finish my homework and I would be back on the ship after class the next day. He saw it and like I said he never said a word to me but it was probably because of this man that I was successful as I was.

Halaska: Mm-hmm.

Carroll: No doubt. He was phenomenal.

Halaska: Mm-hmm. Ah, excellent.

Carroll: Yes. Yeah, it was unbelievable.

Halaska: Um, so where, just going back to your A School, where was the A School in, for that?

Carroll: That A School was in San Diego, which at the time I was on USS *Cape Cod* [AD-43] That was my second ship. Stationed out of San Diego.

Halaska: Okay. So I just want to get—so you were in basic training in Orlando and then you went to San Diego—

Carroll: And I was on the USS *McKee* first—

Halaska: For, with training? I'm sorry, I—

Carroll: No.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: My A School was, oh, I apologize, my A School was down in Meridian, Mississippi—

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: —and then from there we got our orders to, well, whoever they felt like—I just happened to be one of the women in my class that went to C; and then I was stationed out in San Diego; and on the *McKee* is where I met the MS1 Canlin and I also met another woman there and again this is another one of those Mm-hm [laughs]. And she befriended me. She was the legalman for the JAG [Judge Advocate General] officer that was on the *McKee* and she used to come— I ran the clothing store onboard the ship and she would come in and talk to me all the time and nothing was ever really said at first and then she said, "You know, there's somethin' I've got to tell ya. My girlfriend is on the USS *Cape Cod* and they're gettin' ready to deploy and we've talked about it and we would love for you to do a swap and come to the *Cape Cod* with us so that we could go on deployment." And I put in for my swap and there happened to be another young lady on the *Cape Cod* that did not want to go on deployment and the swap went through and that's, I, yeah, that was a huge part of my career probably, again, one of the better moves that I actually made. Went on my first deployment. Met a *ton* of friends, and that was a joy—really was.

Halaska: Excellent. Okay, so when were you assigned then to the USS *Cape Cod*?

[00:25:02.14]

Carroll: I was on the *Cape Cod* from, my first time on the *Cape Cod* was probably from '86 to '90.

Halaska: Okay. And being stationed in San Diego—

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: That's a bit different from Wisconsin. Can you tell me about what it was like being stationed there and what your first impressions of that were—can you describe it for me?

Carroll: Overwhelming. Gay bars like I had never been in. [Laughs] I mean literally, it was, I was blown away by, um, just the whole big-city life; it seemed so much more, I'll use the term liberal. You know, a lot more forgiving and even back then in the late eighties, early nineties, you know, these bars that we would go to were you know mostly gay bars but there were a lot of straight men and women also. Driving was probably one of the [laughs] biggest fearful things. You know you live in small-town Beloit, Wisconsin—freeways were, yeah, a little scary but just the whole laid-back—and San Diego in general. I mean, I spent eighteen of my twenty years in San Diego and I only did two years up in San Francisco on a ship up there so just the whole laid back and it, San Diego because of all the military bases that are around, San Diego was *very* military, I mean they were, they geared towards and specifically Navy. You know, just if you were Navy, you were income and they took very good care of you. I never had any bad experiences there.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Excellent.

Carroll: I had a ball! [Laughs]

Halaska: All right. Let's talk about going out on the *Cape Cod*. The USS *Cape Cod*. Can you tell me a little bit about that ship?

Carroll: That was a AD and it was a destroyer tender.

Halaska: What does that mean?

Carroll: At the time there were only two ships that women were allowed to serve on. They were ASs, which was the *McKee* and it was a sub tender it took care of specifically submarines, from going on board and fixing, working on comms, doing training with the submariners. The AD was a destroyer tender. We worked on and did training on and with and the sub tenders never really deployed but the ADs went with battle groups that were deploying so that if they needed extra people on board, let's say they had a massive fire then they would call on us to come over there and help to fix things or when we

were in port we'd go on different ships and work on things. The supply corps, specifically, when traveling with the battle groups we were their main source of supply so stuff was helo'd [helicoptered] to us and then we would helo stuff—in my rate I can, I'll say something like soda, you know I always carried an abundance because I had huge storerooms so we would helo that, say there was a little DV out there that was running out of [inaudible] for it's ship's store or, in the food service world, needed some hamburgers we would helo it all over there to them and then we may break off from the battle group and hit a port, reload, and then catch up with the battle group again so that we were always their replenishment source and we were also a source of backup for, again, things like firefighting, and, kind of, damage control, communications issues.

[00:30:04.00]

We had specifically trained people that were probably trained a little bit more in depth that could go over and help to assist in any kind of situation that would come up to them

Halaska: What does helo mean?

Carroll: Helicopter.

Halaska: Oh. Okay.

Carroll: Yep.

Halaska: Excellent. Okay, so you helicoptered between the two ships.

Carroll: Sure.

Halaska: Cool. Tell me about living conditions on the *Cape Cod*.

Carroll: I lived in a berthing compartment. At that time, not including the female chiefs, there were, I want to say, two or three different compartments with females on them. The one that I lived in had ninety women. We had what they called coffin lockers, and basically what it was was metal-encased racks where your living space—it was like a coffin, and you would lift up the bottom portion of your rack, and you had a mattress that was probably about two inches high and you would lift that up and there was three different sections in there for all of your uniforms and you had a small hang up locker for your dress uniforms and stuff like that but the only thing, privacy you had was a curtain that drew across the front of it. So whatever was going on up above you or down below you you kind of always knew [laughs] and it was tight living quarters. I think there was like for the ninety women there was—I think on that one there was five showers and five sinks and I think three, we called them heads, toilets [laughs]; that's a Navy thing, a head thing. You know where that comes from? Sailing ships. A head, that's why they call it a head, because in the old days the sailing ships they obviously didn't have flushing water so they always put their I guess what the Army and Marines and stuff would call latrines up towards the bow of the ship because to sail *forward* you have to have the wind coming from behind you, so the smell would go; so they always put the

latrines at the head of the ship so it wasn't blowing back into your face. So that's where the term head comes from.

Halaska: Thank you. [Carroll laughs]

Carroll: And the Navy had a name for everything.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay, so you said berthing compartment? What—

Carroll: The berthing compartment had, like I said the one that I was in had about ninety racks—

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: —and they had a space maybe, some of them not even all of them, maybe fifteen by fifteen with one or two tables in there and everything was nailed to the deck so they, you know, chairs and stuff didn't move that you could sit in and then it had our, had, which was the toilet and sinks and showers. So that's what a berthing compartment was.

Halaska: Okay. And did you get to choose where you bunked—

Carroll: No.

Halaska: —or did they just put you wherever?

Carroll: When you got to be a little more senior, yeah, you had choice. Normally they were very generous to me because I was short and climbing into the top rack was a nightmare. So normally they were pretty good to me, and I had either a middle rack or a bottom rack but in a bottom rack you get stepped on all night long because people are going on watches at midnight or coming back from watches at midnight so if you're someone who lived in the middle rack or top rack had to go on watch, you know, you're kickin' my curtain and you're steppin' on me; and there wasn't a whole lot of room, you could barely turn over and it was all metal and the racks were not single rows, it was a row that was back-to-back so there was a piece of metal in between these three racks and these three racks and then your coffin-locker from top to bottom so whatever was going on in your left, or up, or below you, if someone was listening to music or reading out loud or doing whatever they did, yeah, you knew what was going on. It wasn't very quiet.

**[00:35:18.11]**

And keep in mind these ships, even the ASs and the ADs, were ships that were, just because they had the first women on them, were built for men. So a lot of them, even in a female compartments, still had urinals that they never ripped out because these were all men until '78 and, needless to say, the saying back when I joined was, "Join the Navy. Ride a WAVE!" [Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service] because that's what we were called was WAVES. Men were not happy that women were aboard ship. They made that quite clear quite often. They did not think that we deserved to be

there or that we could do the job that they were doing and the reality of it was that A) we could probably do the job and [lowers voice] *did it better*. [Laughs]

Halaska: Do you have any stories about that that you would like to share?

Carroll: Umm—

Halaska: Any specific instances?

Carroll: You know, actually at sea I didn't have any real problem with any of the men and I think a lot of it was because I was kind of like one of them, you know, I had their sense of humor. I didn't mind cussing. I didn't act prissy. I didn't mind, you know, kind of being one of the boys. So that probably was not a real issue for me; it was—more just some of the side comments that went on, like you said, you know, Join-the-Navy-Ride-the-Wave kind of stuff and it, you know, some comments about not being able to do the job but I think the most frustrating part, and it didn't matter whether you were a junior sailor or even up to the point where I was senior chief was always having to prove myself. Everyday I would walk on board and have to prove I could do it just as well as any man could do it. So that was probably one of the most frustrating parts—for me. Specifically. Yeah.

Halaska: Mm-hmm. Okay. So at this point you're on the USS *Cape Cod*—

Carroll: Mm-hmm.

Halaska: —and take me through what you did on that ship.

Carroll: On the *Cape Cod* I [laughs] I started out in the ship's store running the main ship's store which was right off the mess decks. Then I moved into a position of bulk storeroom; so to prove a woman could do a man's job I was lugging around eighty-pound boxes of candy bars. It was my job and I did it. And then I moved into the records-keeping position and then I moved into—senior chief kind of wanted to get me involved in the cash-handling process so I did a little bit of cash-handling, which you work directly then with dispersing. You collect all the money from the ship's store, vending machines, snack machines, and again it was just another part of the bookkeeping process that he wanted to get me into and then I went back into—by that time they had started to integrate a system—computers were actually coming around—When I first started everything was done manually. It was called ROM, resale operations management system. So he got me back into the accounting side of it and the inventory control and management, records-keeping, and working on ROM so that I could—he knew what he was doing.

Halaska: And was that the one that sent you to the school?

Carroll: Yeah, that sent me to the C School. Yeah.

Halaska: And what was his name?

Carroll: Rubin Cuevas. Senior Chief Cuevas. He was a Filipino man. Very soft-spoken. Very even-keeled. I don't think I ever saw the guy get mad. I would get much more angry than he would [laughs]. No, he was, the guy knew. He was good.

[00:40:12.13]

Halaska: And he was your direct supervisor?

Carroll: He was at the time—you have divisions—again, I was in the S-3 division. He was our leading chief petty officer for S-3. Each one of the divisions had a leading chief. Now, it could be a senior chief or a master chief, but they just called it LCPO, and then when you became the senior enlisted in the department, like at the end of my career I was the LCPO, the leading chief petty officer for the entire supply department. So anything that went on in supply I was involved with whether it was, you know, picking sailor of the years, doing rankings for advancement. Then it was just, the supply department LCPO that was—all the paper work from supply would come to me. I'd go through it and then I'd go in and fight my case with the rest of the LCPOs from different departments, ops, engineering, comms. Yaa, it was entertaining.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: The Navy's so *different* from most branches from what I understand, and it is; it's a world of its own and its, I think it's been around for much longer than any of the other branches of the service but it's interesting—it has its own vocabulary. I always love to joke with kids that—we have a, we call it Vets in the Classroom, and Kimberly-Clark puts it on down here, and you get to go into a classroom for a day and they shift classes but you go in and tell your story and you do this little write-up for the teacher and then they go through all this with the kids so that when you come in there they have questions written out; and some of the stuff is so entertaining, you know, the vocabulary that you use and then they look at you and say, "What's that?" One of the biggest ones for me was I had written that I was an honorable shellback and everybody was just, "What's a shellback?" But, ah, yeah, that was one, but we, the Navy does have its own complete vocabulary and a different world. And when you're out living—in that case my first deployment—with ninety different women, you know, you get to deal with a lot of personalities, and obviously the more you advance then you get into the chief petty officer world you're completely separated from the junior enlisted.

We had our own berthing, we had our own cooks, we had our own everything; so, unlike the other branches, from what I understand, you guys all kind of stayed together, there was no separation; but making chief petty officer was the epitome of your carrier. Once you—The old saying basically was "Because the Chief said," and when the chief talked people listened because you—it was the pinnacle. It was, you were then the subject matter expert. Or so people thought [laughs]. Sometimes that wasn't the case [laughs].

Halaska: Okay. So this first deployment on the *Cape Cod*. Where did you get, do you remember where you went and just—

Carroll: That deployment was actually quite simple. We stopped in Hawaii and then from Hawaii we went to Yokosuka, Japan. They didn't have any sort of tender over there to help—because we had quite a few ships over there. DDs, DDGs, so—

Halaska: What is DDG?

Carroll: Oh, God! DDGs, umm, you know what? I can't even remember the type. Destroyer— Oh, they had so many different kinds; DDGs [guided missile destroyer]—

Halaska: That's okay.

Carroll: Yeah, I don't remember all of the—We went from D back to CGs [guided missile cruiser] to CGFs to [laughs] CGSs; there was so much of it, but they, we basically went over there for six months and worked on the ships over there, brought a lot of supplies over, parts mostly because a lot of these ships didn't have the ability to, you know, if they were getting ready to deploy and they were doing their workups they were out at sea for two or three months. Then they'd come back in and stuff needed to be fixed then. And right then. So that's kind of what we were over there to do was to bring a lot of supplies and mostly simple things that, you know, to fix generators and that kind of stuff, and we had electricians that would go over and work on some of their old electrical equipment for them and just kind of a fix-it ship is basically what did, I did on the *Cod*.

**[00:45:43.07]**

Halaska: How long did it take you to get from San Diego to Japan?

Carroll: Let me see. It took us two weeks to get to Hawaii and then another two weeks because we weren't, yeah, it was at least another two weeks because we weren't traveling with any sort of a battle group, we were just on our own. That deployment was the only one that we actually did on our own. We went to Hawaii and then right to Japan. There was nothing going on in the world that made us stay out with the battle group.

Halaska: Mm-hm. And then what was the name of the place that you were at in Japan again?

Carroll: Yokosuka.

Halaska: Yokosuka.

Carroll: Yokosuka Naval Station.

Halaska: Okay, and then you were there for six months?

Carroll: I would have only been there for four months then. Yes.

Halaska: Okay, and while you were there can you tell me about what your work was like when you were there and where you lived and kind of what your daily routine was?

Carroll: I lived on the ship.

Halaska: Lived on the ship.

Carroll: We lived on a ship. And the routine there was a lot like it was back in San Diego only you were much more isolated. You know, we didn't have an apartment to go home to, and any of your friends that you had—you became very close. There was a very—and I'm Facebook friends with probably fifteen of them, we played ball, we traveled, we, Tokyo Disneyland. I had never thought I would, in fact I still have a watch in there that I kept for one of my nieces so that when I'm ready to move on it's from Tokyo Disneyland. I also bought a set of china, *beautiful* china. Two of them, one for my sister, who has it now and one for my oldest niece. Noritake china, I can still remember the name of it. But we went out a lot after work. I mean the daily routine as far as work went was the same. We went in headquarters at six o'clock and worked till four o'clock, and then our time was ours unless we were also in duty sections, and I believe then normally you were in a six-section duty section so that meant you had to spend from the day, the morning that you checked on board till the next morning. Then the next duty section would take over, and it was standing watches, quarterdeck watches, bridge watches. They had people down in damage-control central.

I mean, there's really watches all over the place watching all of the equipment to make sure that we didn't have fires, and security force. That kind of stuff. But, if you, then we were in three section duty so you had two days off and one day on and we traveled and to be real honest with you we drank a lot. And in Japan there's a place called The Honch and it was specifically a sailor joint [laughs], lots of drag shows, lots of drinking, lots of prostitution. And it was notorious for where the sailors went. They had great drag shows, I'm going to tell ya! The culture there was phenom—I mean, I had never been—I think I was in Canada when I was a kid, but just the culture—You actually learned to speak a little Japanese. The transportation is *completely* different. I mean, there were rickshaws that you see. They're for real; someone pedaling. And they have great mass transit, that's how we got up to Yokosuka, or up to Tokyo. But you didn't—like peeing, they don't have bathrooms like we have. They have like a bathtub, not as high, but it's square like a bathtub and you straddle it and—pee, and do whatever else you're going to do; it's very bizarre [laughs] and I always wondered

[00:50:15.29]

how the old ladies did it, 'cause I was young and I was having issues. Then I'm thinking, holy cow, yeah, jus that, but—And the kids there they loved Americans. I had a ball with them. You know, we would just travel around the city and do our thing, and the kids would always come up and, Oh, American, American! I actually when I got back from the deployment I came home on leave and my second oldest niece her third grade class was learning about Japan so she asked her teacher if I could come in and give a little dissertation on Japan so I got to go into her classroom and I taught 'em a [inaudible] how they remember any of the Japanese now. "Konnichiwa," which actually means hello *and* goodbye. I don't know how they keep track. But, you know, just a little bit of their culture and the food. I'm not a big seafood eater and everything was seafood, but they did have McDonald's. [both laugh] Yes they did!



Halaska: So nice.

Carroll: So we ate on the ship a lot, but, yeah, they had a McDonald's. I believe it was right there on base. Yeah.

Halaska: All right: Are there any other stories or anything else you would like to say about that first deployment?

Carroll: No, I mean other than, like I said, I had met, and, again, another one of those we all knew but a great group of friends, lesbians, that were just like I said to this day Facebook friends and lived with a lot of 'em after—I never dated any of 'em. We kept all that separate because on a ship that could get, You're doing what? [Laughs] You didn't play that. And again, this was before “Don't Ask/Don't Tell” so you didn't even play it, you just, you know, we were just a bunch of friends going out and having fun.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: [lowers voice] But everybody knew it.

Halaska: But everyone knew. Was there any, I guess, tension between the straight girls and the non-straight girls?

Carroll: I never had any issue. Again, I think *politically* it was made such a big deal about gays being in the military but in the real world in the military it was not made a big deal. It just wasn't. It was our politicians saying, Well, they're gonna convert and they're gonna—you know, I wasn't out there to convert any straight woman. I had no intentions [Halaska laughs]. I was gay and that's what I wanted to hang out with. You know, were there situations at times—and, again, it never happened to me—that someone might be offended by the fact that, you know, there were a couple of us that were hanging out a little bit too much together? I'm sure there was but none of it was ever brought to my attention. I mean I was never approached by any of the senior leadership saying just tone it down. Not then. No.

Halaska: Okay. Awesome. All right. Well tell me about where you went next.

Carroll: From the *Cape Cod* I went to, it's called the Navy Exchange Service Command [NEXCOM], and what we did there was specific. It was a shore duty but it was specific SH training prior to every ship had to have a major supply inspection every year. So we would go onboard the ships anywhere from a month to a couple months prior to their major inspection and do training in—we'd go over all of their books and do training in, you know, breakout procedures and cash-handling procedures. It is a lot of training to get them geared up and go through their books, and kind of show them what they had done wrong and how to fix it so that it could get fixed by the time the inspection team came onboard.

[00:55:01.01]

So I spent a lot of time, I never deployed, or got under way with any of the ships, it was strictly a shore duty station.

Halaska: What was your rank at the time?

Carroll: I went there as an SH2, a second class petty officer. And I left there as a first class petty officer, SH1.

Halaska: Okay. And so were you part of a team—

Carroll: Yes.

Halaska: —then who was going out and doing this?

Carroll: Yes.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: And I was, actually this is where the senior chief that I was talking about, Senior Chief Cuevas, he set me up for this role. I was the junior person there. It was actually a first-class billet, and I went there as a second-class. I worked with nothing but chiefs, senior chief and one master chief. My nightmare master chief.

Halaska: Uh! You want to tell me more about your—

Carroll: I would love to tell you about my master chief.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: I being the only female there, this gentleman—and I had been there for a little bit, and I had a girlfriend at the time. She worked over, she was an instructor—and I went home one day in the middle of the day after work and the apartment was completely cleaned out. She was bisexual. Yeah. Um, and it was rough. So he thought he knew something that he actually didn't know but again, now this was “Don't Ask/Don't Tell” time frame and I went through a hard time and he could tell and he took advantage of it. He was another Filipino man, very Catholic, wrote me love letters. Called my house constantly. I can help you find God, and he was married, had kids. Yeah, he'd show up at my apartment. I, obviously, would not let him in. I kept the love letters for years and finally I guess I got to a point in life where it was like, okay, I'm over this. Sexual harassment hadn't really been addressed all that much in the early nineties, um, so I had gotten to a point where I just couldn't take it anymore. My XO and CO were in another building across the street and I went over to my executive officer with letters in hand and asked the receptionist that XO's office was—they had a secretary in between the XO's and CO's office—and I said, "I'd like to speak to," and I can't remember what his name was, "Commander," and the commander yelled out the door, "What's this in reference to?" And I said, "Well, it's in reference to the Master Chief. I'd like to speak to you about him."

He said, "Well, if you have a problem with the master chief you need to talk to the master chief." I said, "Well, excuse me, sir, but this *is* serious and it's about the master chief and it's something that's going on." "Well I don't care. You need to talk to him first." So, with a feeling of defeat, because, again, I was not being heard, I went back and I thought, you know what, Kelli, just let it go. Just let it go. By the time I got back to the office where I worked the CO had heard the conversation and told the XO, "You get on the phone and you get the master chief over here. We need to find out what's going on." And he was a full-bird captain. So, as I was walking and—

Halaska: The master chief.

Carroll: No, the commanding officer.

Halaska: Oh, the commanding officer.

Carroll: The CO.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: By the time I was walking in the door the master chief was on the phone with the XO. He hung up and he said I ought to go in and see the XO and looked right at me, and, I don't know, maybe an hour later the XO called me and said, "You need to get over here now." I said, "Yes, sir, I tried telling you that before."

**[01:00:10.29]**

And I showed them the letters and I had actually documented the times that he had shown up at my doorstep, the phone calls, the accusations that were made. And, again, he never said, it was all very under the table, I know you had a girlfriend—he never said it but the implication was there, and I showed the XO all of the love letters and all of the documentation I have and he said, "Okay," and that was it. Nothing was ever done to master chief.

Halaska: Hmm.

Carroll: One of the senior chiefs that I worked with, his name was Bob Jones, good friend at the time, again, he went off and he parted ways. Pulled me over to his desk one day and he said, "Kell," he said, "watch your back." That's all he said to me. He knew what was going on. He just said, "Watch your back." I said, "Roger that senior, got it." And the master chief transferred probably, oh, three or four months later. I think he was due for his rotation anyway. And kind of what was odd about the whole thing was right after he left the new master chief came in, and I had been working on a developing a training program. Again, the teacher in me came out and I wanted to—advancement in the SH world was very tough. They didn't advance a lot, and especially the more senior you got, so I took every manual, every publication, every document we used, everything, and back then we didn't have all the nice fancy—so I had to do everything on our projector, an overhead projector; I mean, it took me months. I developed I believe it was a five hundred question advancement exam and I for a week would give training after

working hours to anyone. I opened it up to all the shifts. The first time I did it I had about ten sailors show up, and then word got out. Woo!

And I'd give a huge pack—in fact, I think I still have it down in the basement—of this training program that I developed so that these kids—I had a, I believe it was a ninety-seven percent advancement success rate with it and the new master chief put me in for NEXCOM, which is where I was working; the little small NEXCOM. He put me in for sailor of the year there and then I went to NEXCEN, the Naval Exchange Center, which was a little bit bigger organization, up to Naval Supply Shore Sailor of the Year, and I actually competed, I won that one and got to compete for the entire Navy's Shore Sailor of the Year. I got beat out by a bosun mate; they did a little bit harder work than the supply-types did, but it was a fabulous experience, and that's where I got the call from the Senior Chief Joyce Canlin, the one who had remembered me from way back when. Got to meet the, at the time the MCPON—and God help me, I can not remember his name either, that—

Halaska: The what?

Carroll: Shame on me. MCPON. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: He is the most senior enlisted, he works with SECNAV [Secretary of the Navy] and with the Pentagon, all those guys, they call him the MCPON.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: And had a tour, a private tour of Ellis Island which is actually where my relatives came through. They were from Ireland. And my own private tour and I had a picture of it downstairs of the Statue of Liberty and I'm standing up and you can, I'm pointing out over the bay over into Stat—actually over into New York, and it was just phenomenal. The whole experience, just the individuals that I got to meet, some of the admirals and for the first time being recognized as a woman in the United States military. And I competed against a *lot* of individuals to have to get to the, just the whole Supply Corps Sailor of the Year, and that drove me a lot and because of that I was actually, my next advancement, which is the same, from E6 to E7, the chief petty officer—from first class to chief petty officer—you take a written test but I was actually selected for chief petty officer in 1993. The average time for an SH to make chief petty officer was between thirteen and fourteen years and I made it in nine.

[01:05:39.11]

[Laughs] Yeah, but it was because of that, and it was amazing how going from one senior command to another senior individual in command what a difference it made because the second master chief appreciated women in the Navy and, you know, knew that, again, I knew my shit [laughs] and I didn't take any shit and I knew how to train.

Halaska: And what year was the Shore Sailor of the Year.

Carroll: That was in '92.

Halaska: '92. Okay. And then—

Carroll: And then I took the advancement exam and was advanced in '93, you go through a whole chief's initiation.

Halaska: Do you want to tell me about that?

Carroll: *Chief's initiation* [laughs]. I will tell you about chief's initiation. I checked back on board to the *Cape Cod* because my time it, my shore duty was actually over so I checked—they wanted me back on the *Cape Cod* so I went back on there. No sooner did I check back on board and I found out I made chief. The advancement is actually in September but from the time the word comes out which I think is three months prior to your actual advancement, your pinning ceremony, they had a chief's initiation so every morning—I think there was a group of seven of us that made it—we would have to be in the chiefs' mess. We would serve them coffee, we would cook, we would clean. We would clean—the guys would do the men's heads and the females would go on and do the females berthing and heads. When you stood duty, in our duty section rotation, again, it was either three or six days, it depended, you would have to stay there all night and if chief said change the channel for me you would have to run over and grab the remote and change the channel for him. Oh, yeah! Then the night before you're pinned—this went on for three months and you—yeah, yeah, *harassed* pretty much. I mean it was very demeaning and it was meant to, it was meant to work, so the Navy thought, make you a stronger leader because if you could take shit from them you could take it from anyone, and it was to build character.

You are now a chief petty officer and when a chief says now a chief means *now*. You are going to be that person. So you need to learn how to say *now* because people get killed if we don't do our jobs correctly. So that was their mentality. Anyway, the night before we had to be onboard at midnight, and they, we each had a mentor, so to speak, and they would pick—we had to dress up and my mentor was also a woman who there was a female SK so she was supply corps also; picked for us to be—trying to remember—we were—what's the—I can't remember, Tinker Bell! I got to be Tinker Bell—Peter Pan!—[Halaska laughs], and she was Peter Pan and I was Tinker Bell. And they have all of these stations and it starts at midnight and you were in these little costumes and it was twelve hours of hell.

[01:10:00.09]

You would be blindfolded and rolled in stuff that you didn't know. You were eating things that you had no idea—they actually had a coffin in there that was full of ice. They also had a thing called the electric chair. So, they would put you in this coffin and you don't know that any of this is bull. I mean, I kind of figured out three-quarters of the way through what the whole idea was, but they would put you in this coffin and get you soaking wet and then take you blindfolded over to the electric chair and you were

thinking you were going to be *zapped*. I shook so hard because I was *so* cold. [makes sound] You know, I weigh all of a hundred pounds. I practically *shook* that chair waiting for them to zap me, across the room. It never happened, but the whole idea was to build character and once you did, and you didn't know what this was, but once you did what they wanted you to do they laid off. They just wanted you to puke. [Halaska laughs] So, I was watching—you know, I watched a few people that had done—because you didn't know what you were eating. I mean, they were—and one of the main things that and and it is [lowers voice] disgusting, was, it's called balut. It's a Filipino delicacy. They are chicken eggs that are partially formed and then they're put in vinegar, and it's a delicacy over there. Yes. And [gagging noise], and I'm not a big sauerkraut eater, I'm not a big fish eater, I mean, there was oysters there was—and none of it was *harmful* but, the whole, so after I saw a couple of 'em then they let 'em just kinda lay there and wallow in their own sorrow so I said, "Fine." I just gagged and puked all over 'em. [Halaska laughs] I didn't care. They left me alone. And then you'd go through your whole shower and they had a huge ceremony and my mentor and the woman that I spoke of, the LN1 and her girlfriend—her girlfriend had actually made chief petty officer and was close to retiring—she was one that pinned my anchors on me for the first time and it was probably the proudest moment of my life. Here was this women that I admired and I absolutely loved and had mentored me and she was there to pin my anchor on. Still brings tears to my eyes, and [inaudible][both laugh]. Yeah.

Halaska: That was great.

Carroll: That was phenomenal. And, you know, then after it's over you walk in the mess and you're one of them, and actually the year that I made it, in '93, was the last year they ever did it [both laugh]. So I was the last one to have to go through the nightmare. Oh, yes! And I, yeah, yeah. It was a horrible three months. So that's my chief's initiation story and now they do a little pinning ceremony and give you a little certificate and say, "Welcome aboard, you're a chief," which to me, you know, it was all part of the hazing and, you know, I think I, well I don't know if I ever brought up on one of my WestPacs going to the shellback initiation and it was the same thing when you cross the equator, and not a lot of ships get to do it but there's two kinds of shellbacks. There's an Honorable Shellback and there's a Golden Shellback, and an Honorable Shellback is someone who has just crossed the Equator. A Golden Shellback is someone who crosses the Equator and the Prime Meridian at the same time. Zero, Zero. And there are *very* few of them around. But, same thing thing, big initiation and this was before the big physical fitness thing was in the military too, so they always took the biggest, fattest, heaviest dude they could find and made him King Neptune and he had a *huge* gut and you went through all of that crap—just people just all over the place, and you slid, and they had kept trash for weeks on end so you're rollin' and goin' through these tunnels of all this stanky trash and it was just—

Halaska: Wait. They made you a garbage obstacle course?

Carroll: *YES*. Oh G—Oh honey! And eatin' things then and you'd go to each one of these stations and have to do all this—Oh God! It was ridiculous, yeah. But that was, that was the initiation pr—the last thing you had to do you were on your hands and knees the whole time out on a flight deck which is, they're non-skid so they're very rough to your hands

and your knees wore and the last thing you had to do was King Neptune was sitting up there with his big beer belly and he put a cherry in his belly button and you'd have to find the cherry and once you got the cherry, chewed it in front of him, you were done. That was your initiation, and then you got your certificate saying you were an Honorable Shellback. Needless to say, that went away. Yeah, probably about the same time I made chief.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: The hazing. All went away 'cause they considered it—they, it was hazing.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: That was kind of disgusting, having to dig into some dude's big-ass beer belly gut and his—

Halaska: That's gross.

Carroll: —navel and find the cherry [laughs]. *Yeah*, they don't do those anymore.

Halaska: So was there—I mean, from what you heard was there a, I'm guessing there's a long history of hazing in the Navy.

Carroll: Oh yeah.

Halaska: Yeah.

Carroll: Absolutely.

Halaska: Did you hear some stories from some of your senior officers as well about things that they also went through?

Carroll: Officers, no, the officers—

Halaska: Or not officers, I'm sorry, enlisted.

Carroll: The chief petty officer and stuff like that. You know, they all talked in general terms of their initiation and even my buddy, Kathy Gorman, the one that was the chief that pinned my anchors on, she, it was kind of a code of honor that they didn't talk about it they would all just kind of snicker and say, “Yeah, you're gonna have a fun time.” So it was kind of a code amongst chiefs that they didn't really tell you what was going to happen—

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: —but you were going to have fun.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: Their idea of fun was not my idea of fun. [Halaska laughs]

Halaska: All right. So right, you made chief?

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Can you tell me about how your work and things changed after you made chief?

Carroll: Then you become more of an—you're in a leadership position. I mean there is no more having to load stores and, you know, now I am the technical expert. I did all of the inventory control and management. I did all of the ordering. Did all of the mentoring. All of the training. All of the coaching. And I tended to, probably because of who I was, I spent a lot of time mentoring young women because I wanted them to look at my successes and say I can do. So I spent a lot of time training with them, and it wasn't that I kicked them into the curb because I had a lot of good ones that worked for me but I just felt the need to work more with the young women and, again, so that they could try and not have to feel the frustration that I felt getting to where I had gotten. So teaching them how to deal with any kind of situation, be it sexual harassment, be it just something as simple as having to prove yourself—I wanted them to build confidence and say, “*enough.*”

Halaska: Do you have any stories about individuals that you had mentored or anyone that kind of stood out or any instances that stood out?

Carroll: Two.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: One was a young woman who, young Filipino woman, she was good and she was, I was kind of her senior chief that I talked about. I knew she was good and I knew she was going to make it. Her name was DeVore. She was a SH1. She was on the *Cape Cod* with me. Didn't have a lot of experience. Very quiet, very mild-mannered. But she was brilliant, and I spent a lot of time with her training her on—I started her out like my senior chief had started me out, working the ship's store, learn this; work here, learn that. We'll get you into records. Sent her off to the C School, the records keeping C school, learning ROM like I had done. And just trying to help her build confidence because she was such a quiet woman and would, you know—I knew she had the potential to be a master chief if she wanted to. She had that potential.

[01:20:29.00]

It was several years later, because she had left the ship then, that I found out that she had made SH1 and actually made chief and ended up back at sea. What ship she went to, I, it was one of the amphibious type ships that were probably more male than she had ever been on, and she made chief. So I was very proud of her. And there was another young woman she was a SH1. Her name was Garcia. Fiery little Mexican girl. Loved it. She was a lot like me in spirit. She was a go-getter. You know if chief said, do it, we do it *now*. And we do it right. But she is another one that didn't have a lot of records experience so I did basically the



same thing with her. I didn't have to worry so much about her confidence because she had the confidence level of a lion but it was getting her involved in, you know, training and working with junior troops so that she could also be able to do training and mentoring with them and she ended up making chief petty officer also. So those were two of my—yeah, two women that I mentored but I feel very, very proud of.

Halaska: Nice.

Carroll: Very proud of.

Halaska: Excellent, okay and at this time you're on the *Cape Cod* again?

Carroll: *Cape Cod*.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: I did two deployments with that one. And that was when Desert Storm had gone down.

Halaska: Okay. So can you tell me about those deployments? And what you did?

Carroll: Those deployments, those were rather long. Those were both nine-month deployments. Yes, they were nine-month deployments. And we traveled with a battle group, and that's where I got my real taste of being at sea for lengthy periods because there was, I think, at one point on one of the deployments, and it could have been on both, that we were out to sea for three months, and back then we didn't have the communications like you have today, you know. None of us carried cellphones and, you know, we got a little bit of news from home, but very little. They had movie call, and it was still on the old projectors. So the only time you really got to call home was when you hit port. And on those deployments I went from Singapore to Hong Kong 'cause we would break off from the battle group and every ship kind of had it's own little schedule so that you can get at least three days of R&R in Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand. I believe on the first one. On one of the deployments and, again, I can't remember if it's the first or second deployment we were pulling into a port called Diego Garcia and it's actually a little island out in the middle of the Pacific Ocean and it had a little Navy com[munication] station and it was actually occupied by the Brits but we had a small contingency of some military police—MAs—and some comms folk.

Well, ship pulls into port. I'm still with all my buddies, and there's a woman that's standing down at the end of the brow, and I kind of looked at her and she said, "Yo, come in Chief." And I was, like, "Mary Huff, are you kidding me?" She had made chief—another lesbian—How she knew I was back on the *Cape Cod* I have no idea to this day. I don't want to know, but she said. "Grab a group of your friends, and I'm going to show you the best time of your life."

[01:25:04.04]

She had her British counterpart there with her. They loaded us up in his jeep with coolers and took us out to the most remote area of Diego Garcia. Like I said, it's a small island, but it was off-limits to everyone else. They took us out there with chairs, coolers, food, beer. Whatever we wanted. Water. We had it—she had everything set and just dumped us there and said, "Enjoy your night. We'll be back to get you at," oh, I don't know, "Eleven o'clock,

midnight." We built a fire out there. We ate. We caught crab. We watched the most beautiful sunset I had ever—and I had spent a lot of time out at sea—the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen in my life and we just had—I think there was seven of us. And again, all day. And we just had the time of our lives. Her and her counterpart drove out about eleven, twelve o'clock at night; picked us up took us back to the ship. We were snot slinging, yeah. We had had a little too much beer but it was *phenomenal*. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen, and again here was another woman who was a part of my history that I thought I had lost contact with, and one of those, you know, you meet on a ship you say hello in passing, and do your "um-hm," but she remembered me and I, you know, we had had a little bit of contact prior on the ship so it wasn't that we didn't know each other, but the fact that she remembered me out of, you know—the ship at that time had like thirty-six hundred people on it, so these were not small ships. Wonderful experience. And, again, you know, another friend stepping up for a friend. It was wonderful.

Halaska: Oh, cool.

Carroll: And she was, she was a wild lady—Woo-wee! [Halaska laughs] But she was fun. Yeah, it was Mary Jo Huff. I'll never forget her. Yeah.

Halaska: All right. So you said on those two deployments you went out for, like, three months at a time. Can you tell me about what it's like to be out at sea for that long and kind of what your reaction to it was and how you dealt with it?

Carroll: At times extremely busy. Training, training, training, training, from firefighting to security force to, again, this was during Storm so it was a lot of training. You worked sometimes eighteen hour days. It just never seemed to stop. On the weekends, on Sunday, you know, they had Mass, or whatever. Fly a priest over, and, you know, they'd give us the day off and a little bit of downtime. Unfortunately in, you know, most of the world's, from engineering to watch standing because when you're away the bridge has to be manned at all times—and I had the ship's store open all the time because people, you know, they got tired of waiting. So it was almost better at times to have eighteen hour workdays because the boredom after so many months would just—and, again, all we had was mail so you lived for your weekly mail call. That was it. That was what you had for communications to back home. You prayed that you got a letter.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And my family was pretty good about it. And, obviously, a lot of the friends that I had made along the way that had left the ship, and [Kathy??], they always made sure I had a nice letter. So it could be very tedious and, you know, when you're working with battle groups and going to general quarters for hours on end and, you know, learning about, you know, how to protect yourself from nuclear warfare and, you know, donning this kind of outfit and this kind of mask and this kind day in and day out you, you get *tired* [laughs].

Halaska: Mm-hm. You said with Desert Storm/Desert Shield, you guys had, were doing specific training for that. What kind of new training were you doing that was different from what you did before?

[01:30:10.21]

Carroll: A lot of it was different. Probably more for the comms type people up on the bridge and stuff like that. We also did a lot more small boat training and a lot more abandon ship drills because that was now a reality and, like I said, the whole chemical warfare became a lot more of a priority because of what was going on in the Middle East that we really weren't aware of what was going on.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And like I said, they kept a lot of news from us so a lot of the stuff that folks back here were sitting and hearing about we, we just—and we were out there with a group of on, with the battleship group and doing our jobs, so. Security force also became another huge thing. Probably not as big as it did after 9/11, but, you know, the small boat training with, you know, manning gun mounts and stopping small ships, or small boats from attacking and that kind of stuff—I believe by this time the USS *Cole* [DDG-67] had happened also—

Halaska: Can you explain that event to me?

Carroll: We happened to be by the USS *Cole* when it went down. We were one of the first responders, and—

Halaska: And what year was this [inaudible]?

Carroll: Oh God, I can't remember if it was on my first or second deployment that the *Cole* went down.

Halaska: That's okay; just tell me about the—you guys were first responders.

Carroll: We were one of the first ships—because we were close, we were actually anchored out instead of being close, or more. Chaos, chaos. We sent a lot of folks onboard to help with repairing and we were also tasked with, um [grimace sound] some flag-draped coffins and that was really then my first experience with—death.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: Not pleasant.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Can you tell me about—so with that experience from being first responder and your position on a ship, can you, do you remember when you first heard that you were responding and what exactly you heard, how it was phrased to you what was going on?

Carroll: Well, because we were anchored, like I said, not far out from them, normally you knew something big was going down because the—you would hear certain people's names being called up to the captain's cabin and that was normally a pretty good indication that they weren't just having officer's call when they were calling, you know, the ChEng, the chief engineer, and, you know, the ops boss, and stuff like that, you know, you knew that something big. And it just kinda came down after our supply officer had us all muster on the mess decks and had put out what had happened and, you know, a lot of the plan of action had been already put in place between our obvious commanding officer and PAC Fleet and whoever was in charge of in normally the carrier but was in charge of the battle group so they already kind of had a plan. This group was going to go in and do this, this group was

going to go do that, this group was going to go and do this kind of stuff, and, again, we were mostly in charge of, you know, repairing some damage and because we were a supply ship, and they kept the carrier kind of away from there, honors for coffins.

[01:35:02.27]

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And then getting them on board and having helicopters, the helos from carriers come in, do ceremonies and take the coffins home.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay. Thank you for sharing that. Do you—okay, and you said you didn't remember which deployment that was on.

Carroll: It was either my first one or my—yeah, I deployed right after we got back, 'cause then when I got back from my second deployment which that my have been we decommissioned the ship, and then I went to another ship [laughs]. Yeah, I went to another ship.

Halaska: Okay, what was the next ship that you went to?

Carroll: I went to the USS *Shasta*. That was an AE [AE-33]. It was a converted oiler, and again, little by little, women were allowed on different kinds of ships so we were an oiler that a—basically a refueler, but smaller. That was probably five hundred people on board if that many. And, yeah, I was still a chief then. Yeah, was a chief then, and that ship being small I think there were maybe five female chiefs on board, but that ship there I can honestly say my buddies were all men and they—it was one of the very few times that I kind of walked into the mess, and you always walk whenever you were on a ship, especially for women, when you walked into the mess, there, again, and I think I said this before, it was always one of those you always had to prove yourself over and over and over. I can walk on board with a junior chief and arms would be wide open for this guy to walk into the mess, and I would walk in and "Hey, Chief," but once they started to learn who you were and that you could hang with them you were accepted. But you had to prove yourself *over and over and over and over again*, so, you know, obviously I did and I hung out with a lot of the male chiefs and we had a lot of fun. We had a lot of fun. Again, I got there just as the [inaudible][laughs], so I did back-to-back deployments and back-to-back decomm. When I left the *Cape Cod* I had just come back from deployment and then we were doing our stand-down and then we did our decommissioning. I transferred. The USS *Shasta* was up in San Francisco, up in Concord, California.

They were getting ready to deploy so I was out at sea a lot doing my three months, we had to do three month workups and then you got a little bit of downtime and then I deployed again and when we came back from that deployment I decommissioned *that* ship so I had probably four years, maybe five years of just non-stop work. But I actually got to go to some new places. We actually went to South Korea. That ship there, I believe, was the first ship that we pulled into Bahrain and I refused to leave the ship. My male counterparts were allowed to go off in shorts and short-sleeve shirts and whatever they wanted to wear. Women had to go off in long pants, long-sleeve shirts, and their heads covered. And I refused to go. I refused to put my pride in my country and my service and what I had just

done for the Middle East—the deployments—and seeing some of the shit that I saw, I refused to put an American dollar in any of their pockets; it wasn't coming from me.

[01:40:02.25]

So I stayed on the ship for four days. I was not going to put my pride aside, and the guys begged me, [lowers voice] "Come on, Kell, we'll go out and we'll have a great time." "Uh-uh. I'm not covering my head and I'm not [unintelligible], if I want to wear a pair of shorts I'll damn well wear a pair of shorts, and I refuse to leave the ship." And it was pretty much the same thing. We went to Jubayl and Dubai—it's pretty much the same thing. So, but South Korea was fun, it was different. And, you know, a lot of the deployments—there's two fleets. There's PAC Fleet and then the LANT [Atlantic] Fleet which is over on the East Coast. Two different—they do Med[iterranean] Cruises. We call 'em WestPacs, they call 'em Med Cruises because they do as lot of the Meditteranean kind of stuff, but, you know, ours was mostly Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea, Bali was another new one that I had never been too. That was pretty cool. Bali had some beautiful beaches. So you do a lot of the same places, and the only place that I was scheduled to go to on at least two or three deployments was Australia and every time we were scheduled to go something would go wrong. Something would happen and get cancelled. [Laughs] So I never got to see Australia. Yeah.

Halaska: Bummer.

Carroll: Ah, bummer, yeah. [Lowers voice] Australia. Kangaroos [laughs]. Yeah.

Halaska: Of those places that you went what were some of your favorite and do you have any stories from them?

Carroll: I wouldn't say that South Korea was a favorite by any stretch of the imagination. I hated the food, and they were a very uptight culture. And again, after going thru the Korean conflict it was, you know, it was, just, very different. Probably my favorite place—I had a ball in Japan and I think that a lot of that had to do with it was just my first time in a different country and that culture was just and sake. Ooh, God! [Laughs] Yeah, I will never drink sake again. I loved Thailand and Hong Kong and, you know, all for different reasons. Thailand, Hong Kong, and Singapore are a lot of the same culture. The food is all different, but Thailand I could deal with but their food—but a lot of the same cultures. You know, very poor areas. You didn't exactly get to, you know, and Tokyo is a very *large* city. You know, a lot of the places that we went like Pattaya Beach and Phuket are in Thailand. They're smaller, poorer communities, and, again, you know, there's, you'd walk the streets and they all knew we were Americans and the kids just kind of loved us and so it was kind of cool to and a lot of times when the ships pulled in to these ports they would go and do some community projects, like help some family rebuild their hut or, you know, some of the HTs—the hull techs—would go in and help them set up some running water because they knew how to do that on a ship so they could, you know, give them some running water so that they didn't have to go to pumps to pump their water to, you know, bathe in and do dishes and stuff, so, you know, it got you involved in a few of the projects and stuff like that helping, and at Supply Corps we could do a few things under the table to help them out with, so.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: I can't say that any of 'em I didn't like. There was just something a little different about each of them that I always tried to take the positive out of and look at something fun like a beautiful beach, like Bali, and Thailand and Singapore and Hong Kong and helping some of the kids. Again, South Korea, the countryside was beautiful but I don't really think that, at that time in history and probably still, they really didn't want Americans there, they know they needed us, but didn't want us there. So it was just, you know, you could find a cab somewhere and kind of travel through the countryside. It was beautiful, but other than that—

Halaska: What did the countryside look like?

Carroll: Ah, it was beautiful; green, a lot of it hilly. It was not like you would imagine.

[01:45:05.27]

You know, you think of the battlefields of Korea like you do Vietnam. You know, it was nothing like that. The countrysides were hilly and beautiful and grassy, and, you know, they had their animals, their sheeps, and, you know, stuff like that there so it was just very serene to think that *battles* were probably held at this field that we're looking at that, you know, x amount of years ago was the war that my father fought in and here they are with sheep roaming around, eating the grass and, yeah, it was different. Then, again, a lot because we had fought a war there.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay, so after—and so now you're on the—

Carroll: *Shasta*.

Halaska: *Shasta*, okay, and that one was the smaller one with less women on it, so you said there's probably only five—

Carroll: I think there was five other female chiefs and myself, and I'll tell you another little story of training and mentoring with a young woman. We had been under way for about two weeks, not quite two weeks. Oh, God, we had been under way only for a couple days and we were headed towards Hawaii and I had a couple of young women that worked for me, but the third day in one of my wisdom teeth abscessed and they actually flew over a doctor or a dentist from the carrier to the ship and set up a chair so that she could yank my wisdom teeth out. This happened at eight o'clock at night. At midnight [laughs] I get a knock on the door. "Kelli, Kelli! You got to go to the CO's office!" He was our chief master at arms. He was a Filipino guy. And I was like, "Ted, what's going on?" You know all these other female chiefs are like, "[Shushing noise] quiet down!", and I'm just cotton hanging out of my mouth and still bleeding and, "No, you need to get up to the CO's office, now!" And I was like, "Ted, come on!" He said, "No. Now!" And I throw my coveralls on and go up there and walk up there and there's one of my young women and another young man from, he was from the weapons department standing outside the CO's door at parade rest, and I walked by and I looked at her; her name was Samsung and I said, "I hope this ain't what I think." She didn't say a word.

I walked into the CO's office. The supply officer was there. My sales officer was there—he was the guy that I worked for directly, and the XO, and the other young man's chain of

command was there, and the chief master-at-arms proceeded to inform us all of what had happened. The young lady had got caught in—and keep in mind, we had only been under way for three days—was caught down in one of the weapons magazines on top of a missile [clears throat] having sex.

Halaska: Hmm!

Carroll: And we all stood there and talked about it, and the CO knew I was not happy and she looked at me and she said, "Chief, what would you like me to do with this young lady?" And I looked at her and I said—this is the first female captain I had ever had, too—and I looked at her and I said, "To be honest with you, ma'am, fry her!" And I turned around and I walked out, and they had captain's mast a day or two later and they didn't do quite what I had wanted them, they did a thirty-days restriction and thirty-days extra duty and I think they lost a pay grade and she didn't have any pay grade; but the young lady and I had some serious conversations about women in the Navy—what our role is, what it should be, and I basically let her know, you know, I've worked my ass off for about twelve years, thirteen years now, and you are the exact reason that I have to try and prove myself because you just exemplified what men think of women in the United States Navy.

[01:50:12.08]

We're here for them, and if you *ever* do it again I will make sure that you are *out* of my Navy. And we had a lot of long talks. I said this is not what we are here for. You think it's cute, I know you're young, I know you're full of hormones, but I have worked *hard* to make a name for women in the Navy and *you* in one night have destroyed in my opinion what *I* have worked to correct. And she started crying and I said, you can cry all day long but you're going to have to work *a lot* of hours for me to prove to me that I can *ever* trust you again. She ended up doing very well, and I think she understood that women before her went through hell trying to get recognized and trying not to have to be the little servants for the little boys. We're not there to serve them. We're there to serve our country.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And she got it. [Whispers] Oh, I could have killed her. Ahh! And I was in pain [laughs].

Halaska: Are there any other stories from that ship or that deployment that—

Carroll: At *Cape Cod*—sorry—the *Shasta*—you know, I was only on there for eighteen months so I didn't get—like I said, it was three months workup to deploy. I think it was a nine-month deployment. We came back and then it was decomm and—

Halaska: What do you do during a decomm? What was your role during decomm?

Carroll: Getting a—basically they tear the ships apart, so it's getting all of the, for me, getting all of my stores, and all of the parts, and food, and vending machines 'cause we had vending machines and snack machines. Getting ships stores torn apart and getting all of that stuff transferred either to some naval station somewhere or back to a vendor or to another ship and then they do down and they, you know, tearing apart berthing compartments as far as taking mattress—anything that the Navy owned. Those raunchy pillows that they gave you. You know, tearing apart the barbershops and getting all the supplies off there and then, you

know, in a comm's world it was, you know, making sure that there was no equipment left over that, if this thing was turned over to another country. And stuff like that. So my role was relatively busy but simple.

Halaska: Okay. All right then, I think we're going to take a break for a minute.

Carroll: Okay.

Halaska: All right. We are continuing our interview today with Kelli Carroll and, all right, so we just ended talking about the *Shasta* and then the time on there.

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: —and decommissioning. Where did you go next?

Carroll: Next place I went was to Miramar Naval Station Brig.

Halaska: Miramar?

Carroll: Mir—that's Miramar, so that's one of the nav stations in San Diego so I went back down to San Diego. To the brig.

Halaska: Okay, and then is there anything you want to say about that?

Carroll: Ah, really nothing. It was, um, not what I joined the service for.

Halaska: Okay. All right. So how long were you there, and then where did you go after that?

Carroll: I was there for about eighteen months. It took me that long. I had gone to the commanding officer to ask to called my detailer or to ask him to get back to sea because that's where I felt I was doing my best work, and training folks in how to be a ship's serviceman, and did my best leadership where I could actually lead. So from there I went to the USS *Coronado*. That was an AGF-11. Again, another converted amphibious ship and it actually carried the commander for Third Fleet.

**[01:55:07.04]**

We had an admiral on board. Actually he was a two-star.

Halaska: And how was that different than not having—

Carroll: That ship didn't deploy. It was more of a training command. We did short stints with, like, carrier battle groups for two or three weeks worth of training. We'd go out and work with them and he would be, he being, Third Fleet Commander would be working with other CO's, the ships in the battle group working out battle plans and doing, like, play scenarios of incoming aircraft or small boats, or, you know, when we're going to bomb this and when we're not he would be like the coordinating trainer of all of that. And always had big wigs on board so it was a—and you might go out for two or three weeks at a time but that was, that was about it. We'd come back in. Not as much underway time.



Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: But it was where 9/11 happened.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: And I can remember to this day sitting in my office and watching the news when the planes both hit and the plane went down in the field and just sitting there for quite a few hours because obviously everyone was at that point kind of oblivious to what was happening and why it was happening, and I had mentioned before when you hear certain people's names called to the captain's cabin something was going on. Only this time one of my positions was senior enlisted watch bill coordinator so I was responsible for not only my division but the supply department, being chief petty officer I was also responsible for all the watchstanders on board the ship. So this time I got to hear "Senior Chief Carroll [inaudible] to the Captain's cabin." So I knew it was big.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And got up there and he informed us, and we all had to—at that time they had already had our secret security clearances ready for us to sign and he went through with us what was going on and gave us a rundown and then said, "XO, take Senior Chief," and there were the Command Master Chief and the MA, he was senior chief—another good friend of mine—and several other officers—the ops officer and ChEng and all those guys and come up with a security force plan. I had only at that point carried a weapon on watch. We carried Glock 9s and we had a shotgun, and from that day til the day I retired, 2004, 2001 to 2004, part of my daily routine was going down to the armory and getting my Glock and strapping it to my hip and I had never had to do that before. *Complete* change in attitude as to, you know, training. It had always been one of those [sound] Yeah, well, it's time to do security drill. Yeah. No, it was very strict. Very regimented. Very planned out. The day that it happened we gave, we went into two-section duty and so you had twenty-four on, twenty-four off; you still had to show up for your second day of work but you got to go home that night, and then you were on for twenty-four.

That was one of the things that we implemented which we were on six-section duty. So, we're—they called it port to starboard, port and starboard. Twenty-four on and twenty-four off. And, then, certain people carrying weapons and just a completely different attitude towards the reality of, and for me this was kind of my second reality because I had gone through the whole cold scenario, and what was interesting was we gave people in shifts the day it happened and after everything had come down and everyone was told what was going on, we gave everybody three hours in shifts, again to go home and pack a seabag because you didn't know when you were going to be leaving the ship again.

[02:00:50.03]

Fortunately, we did not have to deploy anywhere, and we may have gotten underway, I'm not quite sure because they wanted to get most of the ships out of the piers, out to sea; so that we had, you know, sitted in a pier with stores being delivered and this coming and this going, you know, the way everyone was thinking was it could be any one of us at any time so every time a truck pulled into the pier you were thing, Oh, shit [laughs], and security

onboard, onboard, obviously got, but security at the front gates got much more. You know, they used to look at your sticker, and either salute at you or wave you through. There were lines, and all of the trucks that were coming, you know, on to deliver things and, you know, to the ships or the Navy Exchange, whatever was there, the mess hall, they were all searched, and you'd get a lot of complaints from vendors you know, We're just trying to get your stuff. It's like, Yeah, we're trying to stay alive. I don't know you from Adam. So, it was a completely different attitude and you really realized that it wasn't going to be fun for a long time.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay, so after 9/11 you served on the USS *Coronado*, correct?

Carroll: That's where I retired from, yes.

Halaska: And then what was your job on the USS *Coronado*?

Carroll: Several. I was the divisional leading chief petty officer, so I was the S-3 division, which I had been since I had been a chief. I had made senior chief at the brig. So I went on board with a little bit more responsibility. So then I was also the supply department leading chief petty officer. I was the senior enlisted watch bill coordinator. I was a section leader. I had also been and retained my position from ship to ship as they called it DCT, damage control training. So I helped in not necessarily having to don an FFE anymore but to actually train people how to firefight in classes of fires and then I was also a security force trainer. You know, how to go through watertight doors without getting shot. You know you watch on *Criminal Minds* and they're holding their little guns and—but, you know, that kind of mentality; you don't keep your Glock 9 down at your side and, you know, a buddy system on how to enter spaces and back each other up, and there was a lot more of that training and using a lot more communic—

**[End of OH2147.Carroll\_file1\_access.mp3]**

**[Beginning of OH2147.Carroll\_file2\_access.mp3]**

Carroll: —ation, you know, verbiage, not just—and then, yeah, I'm in here and then walk out. You were communicating with your buddy constantly. Clear. And then your buddy would go to the next watertight door and you'd be standing there with your gun in your hand and waiting for them to open up the door and then, you know, so there was a lot more of security force training that I did onboard the *Coronado*.

Halaska: What were they, what was that kind of training preparing the sailors for? What were you training for, what was it that you were most worried about at that time?

Carroll: Someone running up the brow, under the quarterdeck, with, you know, like vest of whatever and also, you know, again, the truck pulling up the pier or the ship—the small boat—because there was a lot of traffic in the San Diego harbor. I mean it was just not always big Navy ships as you entered the mouth, there was a lot of sailboats, and, you know, a lot of traffic. So you never knew when that small boat coming in was going to pull alongside the ship and you could be the next USS *Cole*. So that was more what training was for because, again, you know, when 9/11 happened I don't think anybody really knew the extent of what was going to be happening down the line, but we prepared for it, and it was a mentality change like I said, you know, a lot of times the training was, well, I restore your FFE, and

prove to me that you can do it, or show me that you know how to enter a space with a gun, and it became very regimented and very serious.

Halaska: Mm-hm. You said that you also trained your sailors like with firefighting?

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: [Inaudible] and can you tell me, you talked a little bit about how you were trained in firefighting when you were in basic training.

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: How has that changed over the years? What—

Carroll: You know, after Desert Storm, again, it was more worried about chemical types of attacks and stuff so, you know, the whole firefighting, you know maybe some of the different chemicals that we used to put out a fire had changed but the basics had been there for years and years and years so how you fought a fire never really changed, maybe some of the methods that you would use and communications, obviously, you know. When I first joined we didn't have headsets and all the comms and all that it was a world of non-computers. At least on ships, and, you know, so there was a lot more comms that went on with firefighting than previously, and that was just an evolution. And security, same thing. I mean, we wore headsets instead of screaming out, "Hey, it's all clear!" You know, you didn't want a lot—Jimmy Bob know that we know where he or she was, so everything was done very quietly by headsets.

Halaska: Okay. And then, back a long time ago in the interview, you said that you were switching from paper to computer during the time, during your career, can you tell me a little bit about what that was like and how it changed things?

Carroll: It changed things dramatically. things became much faster [laughs], obviously. It, computers, the whole computer thing, for all of us was kind of a new world, especially the old farts like myself. So, having everything much more automated the younger kids that were coming into service were a little bit more computer-savvy than some of us old-timers. So, there was a transition of, ha, ha, you may have been a good records keeper when you were doing it on paper, but I know how to use the computer.

**[00:05:08.22]**

So for the junior folks there was kind of that transition of, yeah, you may be younger and savvier on a computer, but I still know more than you do. So I could figure it out a lot faster than you because I, you know, you know what the form is and, you know, it's just a matter of finding it. It's not brain surgery. But they would always think that they had a heads-up. Most of us that had been there and done that caught on real quick. But, again, you know, in the bigger picture of things a lot of rates went away, I talked before of the DSes and DPs—those were two supply corps rates that went away and they became, the rates combined, one was a data processor and the other was data systems and they became ITs. So they did the same thing but now it was just all computerized, so they worked on computers, they worked on coding. The other rate that went away was the radioman rate. They didn't have radiomen anymore. They all became ITs because it was all computerized, so several of the Navy rates

went away and merged into something different. Which was painful for the old-timers, because, again, they, you know, they were dealing with junior sailors that had gone to their A schools, that were trained in these processes and working on these computers and, you know, some of us had some—we weren't dumb by any stretch, we probably had our computers at home but we didn't know 'em like these kids knew 'em.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: So it was interesting. [Laughs].

Halaska: Okay. Are there any other stories from the *Coronado* that you would like to tell?

Carroll: The, ah—probably, not, maybe not necessarily deal with the *Coronado*; more my retirement. I was never one to. I didn't like a lot of hoopla. [Laughs] So I pretty much when I left the *Coronado* I took my shadow box that they had made for me and I had asked that during my last underway I have the flag that was flown on the mast during my last underway and they presented that to me with a certificate from the commanding officer. I packed my seabag and, left regret. I wish I would have had a ceremony so that my family could have possibly understood and appreciated a little bit more of what my service was about, and talk to my father who is a Korean vet. My brother was in the Army during the time that I was in the Navy, and, you know, they live right down the street from me and it's always, "Well, Mike was," "Well, Mike was," "Well, Mike was"—my brother's name—you know, and the day 9/11 happened Mike made it all the way to Germany. It's like, Dad I was out there [laughs], but it's never any stories of Kelli and the service. It's always, your brother, he was with the 101st Airborne. It's like, yeah, okay, but you never hear a Kelli story. He was proud as hell of my brother being in the Army but his daughter who spent twenty years—fifteen years at sea, five deployments, saw a lot of stuff, went through a lot of crap—there's not a pride story.

I'm sure he's proud, but there's not a story about it. He doesn't run around telling his buddies, and high-five, and, hey, [laughs] my daughter just retired from the Navy! There is none of that. So I wish I would have had a retirement ceremony and had people like the Kathy Gorman's of the world and Master Chief Cuevas, the guy who pretty much started my career, and some of them get up and speak and say, "Wow, do you guys realize—," but I wasn't into the pomp and circumstance. I didn't want that. I just wanted to go home. I do regret it now.

**[00:10:12.12]**

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: I do.

Halaska: Okay, looking back at your service and the time that you were in as well, you were in pre-“Don't Ask/Don't Tell” and then “Don't Ask/Don't Tell.” Can you tell me a little bit—and you mentioned a few times that, you know, it's just understood that you don't talk about it—

Carroll: Mm-hm.

Halaska: —or that there weren't really many issues with it, but can you just tell me a little bit about how these policies affected you?

Carroll: [clicks tongue] I guess because when I went in there was the no gays in the military the change from that to “Don't Ask/Don't Tell.” I don't want to say it didn't have an impact. “Don't Tell/Don't Pursue”—everybody always forgets that “Don't Pursue.” Um, didn't—I mean, it affected me and it made me happy that I could serve—but I still had to shut my mouth. That was very frustrating. But, it, in terms of change for me, we were always quiet about it anyway, so it didn't have as much of an impact. You know, I felt much more comfortable going to good friends whom it was that, Mm-hm, yeah, I know you are. And, you know, inviting them over to the house and doing that kind of stuff, and oddly enough one of my best friends when I was on the *Coronado* was a senior chief master-at-arms, so he was the police, and we golfed probably every day. They all knew, but he couldn't say anything. I could never, you know, I always found it interesting that we could get under way for two or three weeks, they knew I owned a condo, they knew that I had dogs, but they never talked about my ex. And why they would never say, “Well, who's watching the dogs?” They never asked. “Well, who's going to watch your apartment or your condo while we're gone for, you know, out to sea. Who's going to watch the dogs?” They never asked. They all knew. But they knew they couldn't ask me. And it was a shame because they were very good friends. I would have loved to have had them and their wives over to my condo to, you know, grill out and do stuff like that, but if I did that I was specifically putting senior chief's career in jeopardy because he would know and being the chief cop onboard the ship he would have to tell, it was his obligation, and I never wanted to put them in that sort of position.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: So that was frustrating, and that was probably one of the biggest challenges for me is I knew all these guys knew, but a lot of them were in positions that if they found out they were obligated and it would put their career in jeopardy and I didn't want to do that. I would rather have shut my mouth, go about my life, and keep my career and their career intact, because it would have been very unfair of me to say, “Hey, Ike, guess what?”

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And I didn't want to do that.

Halaska: All right. So tell me about retiring and how getting out of the military was for you, getting out of the Navy was for you?

Carroll: Very challenging. I didn't really realize at first and I don't even think when I retired they had called it anything. But, I was suffering from PTSD. I was so used to the military life, the structure, the organization, the I'm-the-chief mentality. The first job that I went to I struggled and ended up having an affair which destroyed a 12-year career, or a relationship that I had with a woman and we probably weren't meant to be together anyway, but it destroyed that, and I also went through a period of depression, and I think my sister after my ex had left realized that something was going on.

[00:15:31.23]

My ex and I had two dogs and when she left she basically walked in and said, "I found a new place. I'll be out of here in a week." And she took the two dogs with her. So it was me in this house by myself. And, again, my sister kind of realized what was going on and she said, "Well, why don't you go to the humane society and rescue yourself a little dog and I'll pay for it." And I was like, "Oh, okay." And that's where I got my little Molly. And things had got to a point where I couldn't talk to any of my family about it because I knew they would never understand what you go through. Not having been there, you just don't get it. So one day I just kinda felt that this world would be better without me and that I had nothing in the civilian community that was worthwhile that I could share or bring from my military experience so I took Molly and we sat in the car. I turned it on and sat there for, I don't know, fifteen, twenty minutes, and all of a sudden it was like a light bulb went off in my head and it was like, you selfish bitch. You just rescued your forever dog, that you love. How unfair is that for that little eight-month old puppy that you rescue her and give her a forever home and now you're going to sit here with us because you can't suck it up. So, I turned the car off and said, You know what, senior chief, suck it up. And I did. And I started getting much more involved with the world again. It's how I met my current partner. Actually met on Match, and started out as good friends and going on seven years. So, I was lucky.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: That little dog saved my life. And I love her for it. And I'm with a wonderful woman.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Do you want to tell me about your meeting your partner?

Carroll: Yeah, we actually, oddly enough, she's retired Navy [laughs]. She was out in San Diego for a lot of the time that I was out in San Diego, and we talked a lot on Match before we even met each other and once we did meet—There's a little place here in Appleton called Harmony Cafe and it was kind of a little gay hangout, a little coffee shop, and we met there—and talked, and over the years we've talked, and oddly enough out of all of the times between the two of us that we spent in San Diego we can only find one person in common that we remotely knew. And there's a huge gay and lesbian community, but, that was, and the woman happened to be a friend of one of her ex's and she was someone, and I'm kind of embarrassed to say it, that I had a one-night stand. [Both laugh.] She used to go to the bar all the time, and, it happened. [Both laugh] Haven't you ever heard of that phrase, U-Haul lesbians?

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: Yeah, okay, you've heard of it too. Yeah, it didn't even get to that point [laughter].

Halaska: Okay, so after your retirement did you move back, you moved back to Wisconsin?

Carroll: Yeah, as soon as I retired I moved back to Appleton. My parents were still down in Beloit but my sister and my nieces were here in Appleton, and about two or three years after I retired my sister bought them a condo up here and so they've been up here since then.

**[00:20:10.09]**

And I have a brother that lives in Sheboygan Falls. He's ex-Army. I think he did four years.

Halaska: Okay so after you left service what kind of work did you do?

Carroll: I worked, my first job was at Ma Kimball here, Miles Kimball. I ran the warehouse out there, the receiving docks for probably about two years, and that's where I had the affair. And then I decided I was going to take some time off and find me, and then I went back to work for a company called Trident, and they were a corn ethanol company of engineers and they design these plants, and they wanted someone to come in and setup a warehouse management system and write up standard operating procedures and setup their small storeroom warehouse-type deal so they hired me and I worked there for a couple years and that's about the time that I met Carol and we wanted to do a little bit of traveling and stuff so I took some more time off, and that's actually when I found out I had type 1 diabetes, was right after I quit there. So we went through that whole flop and twitch. I don't know how, why I have type 1 diabetes, but I do. And then I went back to a company called Tech Industries and they're an Italian-run company and I did their shipping/receiving and did their orders for 'em. I had gotten to a point in life where I didn't want to lead [laughs]. You know, I just wanted to do something stupid and come home from work and play in my yard and take hikes and stuff like that I didn't want to be in a leadership role anymore. I worked for them for I think it was about three years.

And then I had shoulder surgery this last—2018, and I took the whole summer off 'cause Carol and I love to golf and travel and I was gonna—I went back to work for about three weeks and I just couldn't do it, and she said, "Just take the summer off," and I said, "Oh, okay." So I did, and then we got through the summer and we did our little RVing and wasn't much kayaking going on then but I think we did it once. And now I work for Kwik Trip and I just stock shelves. It's a mindless job but it's flexible. Carol and I run a golf league on Thursdays. A bunch of good old girls, I'm probably the youngest out of all of 'em. And so Carol and I run that on Thursdays and they allow me to golf on Thursday mornings and they allow me the ability to, given notice I can go and we hop in the RV and take off for a week here, a weekend there. She, Carol does all the planning. I don't do any of that, so, that's her job. [Whispers] She's very good at it. Very good. Excellent.

Halaska: Do you access any or have you used any of your veteran's benefits?

Carroll: The VA and I don't get along real well. Um—

Halaska: Can you tell me about that? [Carroll laughs]

Carroll: Well, I can just tell you a recent story. I went to the VA a couple of times when I had first retired and was not real impressed. I just, I was there probably beginning of December I went, I thought, okay, I'll get back into the VA system. The least they can do, it can't be that difficult, is go through optometry and get a pair of glasses. Alright, I've been back there twice and they've screwed 'em up, so they couldn't even do my optometry correct.

Halaska: And which VA is this?

[00:25:02.10]

Carroll: Appleton.

Halaska: Appleton?

Carroll: Yeah, the one here. It's small and they all seem to have attitudes like, again, Oh, you are a woman who served. Women's health care in the VA—stinks. It's just not there.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: And even something as simple as a mammogram, you know—They built that one up in, big VA up in, Green Bay that was supposed to, you know, they'd be doing surgeries and all that kind of stuff and, you know, they've had it on the news here several times. They can't find doctors, people don't want to go there, the operating rooms have gone basically untouched. People just—my Dad goes to the VA, and he goes to the VA and does his little yearly checkup and gets his meds for basically free, that's why *he* does it, and, oddly enough, he had been to an appointment—this happened early last year like in April—He had just been to his appointment, blessed, good-to-go, walked out the door, a couple months later he had a massive heart attack, well, maybe not a *massive* heart attack, but he had a heart attack and he ended up in one of the hospitals here and had to have his aortic valve replaced. Something the VA couldn't catch.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: Yeah. So I don't deal with the VA very often.

Halaska: Okay, what about other veterans organizations?

Carroll: I am a member of the American Legion. It is Post 539. It is an all-women's post out of Green Bay and we have think, Carol and I have been with them for three or four years now and brought some new blood into an organization that was mostly World War II vets and Korean vets. You know, more the nurse corps types. So I think Carol and I have brought some more—They come from a generation of men, it was all about taking care of the men, and our philosophy was: we were women in the service, let's start acting like it. So we have kind of swayed them little by little and there are a couple other women in there too that are this way, we're there to take care of women vets, and that's exactly what we gear ourselves for. At Christmastime we go around to and call nursing homes and find retired women veterans. Up at King we make beautiful baskets for them and deliver them as a group and, you know, sit and shoot the breeze about our military backgrounds and our service and loved to hear—In fact, as a World War II veteran in my Legion post that was a World War II Navy and it is just an *absolute* ball to sit and listen to her, and their boot camp and, you know, it was all about how you sat properly and crossed your legs and—she's hysterical, but I love her to death and I tell her, you know, it's because of *you* that I had the opportunity to serve the way that I served. And she's very shy about it [whispers], "Oh, no, no, no." "That's not true." I said, "Yet, you don't understand, I am today and was able to serve the way I served because women like you who were not acknowledged for serving their country—served. You-set-the-path." So she's a ball to talk to. But, yeah, we're geared specifically towards women.

Halaska: All right, cool.

Carroll: Women vets.



Halaska: Mm-hm. Are there any other organizations or—

Carroll: Ahh, Old Glory Honor Flight.

Halaska: Okay.

Carroll: We volunteer for a lot of events that they have. In fact they just had their biggest fundraising gala up in Green Bay and they actually are taking a flight of veterans, in fact I think they leave next week, back to Vietnam.

[00:30:06.02]

Fifty Vietnam vets, twenty of them were there, and we were greeters, and it was probably in my civilian capacity one of the greatest honors I had was to shake those men's hands and thank them for their service and welcome them home. But we do a lot. I was a guardian. On one of the flight I had a gentleman that was a Korean vet, and we had a *fabulous* time. I actually took him and his wife out to dinner. We met 'em—They live here in the Neenah-Menasha area, and I got in touch with him previous to going on the flight and wanted to meet him and his wife and talk to him about some of his experiences so when we went to the memorials [in Washington, DC] and stuff we could, you know, kind of share things, and it was an *unbelievable experience*. Unbelievable.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: I—Just—The organization is phenomenal, and it's another thing that the women's post here is pushing for is a all-women's Honor Flight. So we have had one of the gentlemen who sits on the board of directors to one of our Legion luncheons, and I don't want to say we accosted him, but we let him know that there are a lot of women out there that would like to be acknowledged, and, you know, what a way to put the Honor Flight in the spotlight much more than it is by doing all women and acknowledging that—we *served*.

Halaska: Great. All right. [Clears throat]. Excuse me. I'm just going to ask you some, like, more *reflective* questions about your time. I guess, what would you want people listening to this interview to know about your time in the Navy, and what that experience meant to you?

Carroll: It was, without doubt, the proudest twenty years of my fifty-seven years of life. I served every day with honor, courage, and commitment, and if they called me back tomorrow I'd be on the first plane outta here. And I'd do it all over again. Serving my country was the greatest thing I've ever done.

Halaska: Also, why was it important for you to do an oral history that not only looked at your military service but also took into account your sexual orientation as well?

Carroll: Telling my story is important to me because of my successes, and some of my failures. We all have them. The sexual orientation—we're out, we're loud, we're proud, we served, and we have nothing to be ashamed of.

Halaska: Is there anything else that you would like to add before we close up this interview?

Carroll: You know, I loved my Navy and I loved the people that I served with, comrades, and my sisters in arms. Be they gay or straight, it makes no difference. We were sisters in arms, and we served. [Laughs] You know, I can't stress that enough.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Carroll: That, and it has been, obviously, a pleasure and an honor me being another young woman who served her country bravely.

Halaska: Thank you very much. Excellent. All right.

**[End of Carroll.OH2147\_file2\_access.mp3][End of interview]**