

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

EVANGELINE PATINO

Medical Administrator, U.S. Air Force, Vietnam Era

2019

OH
2157

**OH
2157**

Patino, Evangeline, (1950–). Oral History Interview, 2019.

Approximate length: 1 hour 27 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to the original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history, Evangeline Patino from Racine, Wisconsin, discusses her service with the U.S. Air Force as a medical administrator from 1970 to 1976, including her time at Clark Air Base on Luzon Island in the Philippines.

Evangeline Patino grew up in Racine, Wisconsin, as one of nine children. Two of her sisters joined the Air Force and two of her brothers joined the Army. Patino signed up for the Air Force after graduating from Washington Park High School in 1970.

Patino went to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, for basic training and discusses makeup classes, making friends, physical training, and enjoying marching. After basic training, Patino went to Wichita Falls, Texas, for medical administrator training. There she did a disaster planning training exercise where she removed patients from a burning plane. Patino spent six months in medical administration school before being assigned to Lackland Air Force Base again.

She worked at the information desk at the Wilford Hall Medical Center and recalls when they would check in hundreds of patients from Vietnam in a single day. Patino worked there for two years and discusses crafting in the hobby shop on base and meeting her husband.

In December 1972, she was assigned to go to Clark Air Base on Luzon Island in the Philippines. Patino outlines getting to the island and accidentally spending the first night in a hotel that was also a brothel. Patino describes living in town, civilian security around her house, and being able to afford live-in help.

At Clark Air Base, Patino was tasked with reorganizing a huge stockroom of hospital forms and also worked in admissions, record keeping, and drug testing. She describes giving birth to her daughter in the hospital, patients coming in from Vietnam, and service people selling liquor and cigarettes on the black market.

In 1975, Patino and her family were stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, where she worked in records and kept hospital manuals up to date. She discusses service members being put on diet plans, living in Rapid City, South Dakota, and her husband's work in a mobile army surgical hospital unit.

Patino was discharged from the military in 1976. Her husband received orders to Greece and she describes flying there with her son when he was only a few days old. She lived in Greece for about a year before moving back to her mother's house in Racine with her son and daughter.

She worked on an assembly line in a factory before using her GI Bill to earn a degree in human services from Gateway Technical College. After she graduated, she worked for Racine Unified School District for twenty years as a teaching assistant.

Patino reflects on the camaraderie she experienced in the military and enjoying her time in the Philippines. Patino states that she is a member of the American Legion and participated in a veteran horseback riding program in Illinois.

Biographical sketch:

Evangeline Patino enlisted in the Air Force in 1970 and attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and then went to Wichita Falls, Texas, for medical administrator training. Patino worked at Wilford Hall Medical Center at Lackland, Clark Air Base in the Philippines and Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. She was discharged from the military in 1976, moved back to Racine, Wisconsin, with her son and daughter, and worked for the Racine Unified School District for twenty years.

Archivist's Note:

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

Interviewed by Rachelle Halaska, 2019.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2019.

Reviewed and edited by Jeff Javid, 2019.

Abstract written by Rachelle Halaska, 2019.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2157.Patino_access]

Halaska: Today is August 2nd, 2019. This is an interview with Evangeline Patino, who served with the Air Force as a medical administrator during the Vietnam War. This interview is being conducted at her home in Franksville, Wisconsin. The interviewer is Rachelle Halaska, and this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program. All right, thanks for meeting with me today. Let's just start off with where and when you were born.

Patino: I was born 1950 in Chicago, Illinois.

Halaska: Okay, what part of Chicago?

Patino: Cook County.

Halaska: Okay, how was growing up there?

Patino: Well, I only lived there for six years. Then we moved to Wisconsin, Racine. So, I was raised here in Racine, Wisconsin.

Halaska: What did your parents do?

Patino: My father was a mechanic, had his own business. And my mother was a homemaker.

Halaska: Any brothers and sisters?

Patino: There's nine of us altogether. I've got five sisters, and three brothers.

Halaska: And where do you fit in there?

Patino: I'm the youngest of the girls.

Halaska: How was that growing up with so many siblings?

Patino: Well, everybody knew more than me. [Laughs]

Halaska: Did anyone in your family serve in the military?

Patino: Yes, I had a sister older than me, two years—three years older than me that served in the Air Force also. She was in during the Korean War. And I have two brothers, one older, one younger, that both were in the Army.

Halaska: Okay. So, when—what school did you go to growing up?

Patino: Washington Park High School here in Racine.

Halaska: And then what did you do after you graduated?

Patino: After I graduated I worked for about five months, four or five months, and then I went into the service.

Halaska: Okay. What made you want to go in?

Patino: I wanted to go in since my sister had gone in. Long before her I wanted to go in. But I was on the waiting list, that's why I had to wait till six months after I graduated.

Halaska: What was the waiting list?

Patino: At that time it was a six months waiting list.

Halaska: Was that for, for everyone? Or for women? Or just for a certain job?

Patino: No, it was just how it was at the time. I had to wait six months 'cause they had a waiting list.

Halaska: All right. Can you tell me then about when you joined, and kind of getting into the military, into the Air Force?

Patino: Well, I joined out of Milwaukee. And I went from Milwaukee to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio [Texas], which is where I had basic training. And then after that I went to Wichita Falls for medical administration training. And then I went to my first base at Lackland. I was stationed right there at Lackland after basic.

Halaska: Okay. How did you get from Milwaukee to basic training?

Patino: Airplane.

Halaska: Had you ever flown before?

Patino: No.

Halaska: How was that?

Patino: [Laughs] It was—it was different. It was on a small jet from Milwaukee to, where was it, to San Antonio, it was a private plane. So, that was different. Quite different. I'd never been on a plane before, so.

Halaska: Did it scare you at all?

Patino: No.

Halaska: No?

Patino: No.

Halaska: Excited?

Patino: [Laughs] Yeah.

Halaska: Excellent. Was there anyone else on the plane who was—that you knew?

Patino: No, I didn't know anybody on that plane. We were all recruits they picked up along the way.

Halaska: Did you make any friends on the trip down?

Patino: No, not really.

Halaska: All right. When you first got to training, what was that like?

Patino: It was different. We were—I was assigned to Flight One, and they had everybody in a big room. And then they went down calling names and stuff, and then they sent you off to the barracks. And the next morning that's when they put us through going to get uniforms, and, you know, getting our training instructors and stuff like that.

Halaska: When, when did you meet your training instructors, and what were they like?

[00:05:00]

Patino: Very loud. [Laughs] Yelling all the time.

Halaska: What were they yelling?

Patino: Well, we had four instructors. My flight did anyway, we had four instructors. Two trainees and then two regulars. So, they kind of alternated doing our commands, and putting us through training, through the marching and all that stuff.

Halaska: What were they teaching you?

Patino: Well, they were teaching us different marching drills, for one. Then they did taking us to classes. We had to go through different classes. We had beauty

classes, we had military echelon training, learning all the different ranks and stuff like that. We had about four or five different classes we had to go through I remember. I don't remember all of the classes though.

Halaska: So, you said beauty class. And just in case I—this is 1970? Correct?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Can you tell me a little bit more about beauty class? 'Cause I haven't really heard about that yet?

Patino: Yeah. We had to go through the—they had different people come in and teach us how to put makeup on, how to put the different eyeliners, and take care of your hair, and things of that sort.

Halaska: [Laughter] How was that?

Patino: It was different. I had never gone through anything like that before.

Halaska: What did the other women in your flight think of it? Do you know?

Patino: Some liked it, yeah. Some were like, well, I already know all of this. You know? The ones that did a lot of makeup. At that point I hadn't used makeup, so it was all new to me.

Halaska: Did they issue you makeup?

Patino: Well, no. They had boxes and crates and whatnot of different makeup things that you need, you know, eyeliner, the blush, the rouge, lipstick, all that kind of stuff. And then they did nails. They did our nails and stuff too.

Halaska: Wow. [Laughter] Okay, beauty class, learning about the structure of the Air Force.

Patino: Uh-huh.

Halaska: What else? And marching. What else did they teach you during training?

Patino: Well they gave us a choice if we wanted to learn about the guns and stuff. I didn't want to do that. I didn't want nothing to do with guns. [Laughs] So, some went off to training for that, and some didn't. We learned different, what do you call it, different military procedures and stuff like that, things of that sort.

Halaska: Did you make any friends?

Patino: Oh yeah, yeah. I made a lot of friends during basic. Yeah. And we learned to take care of our uniforms, polish our shoes, shine them up, and stuff like that. And they had washers and dryers right there in the barracks for us to use to keep our uniforms clean and stuff. And ironing boards, and irons, and stuff like that all there in basic, so we take care of—then on free time on the weekends, we'd have some free time. We were able to go around the base and stuff. Only one weekend out of basic training you get to go on the town.

Halaska: Wow.

Patino: Otherwise you're pretty much confined to the barracks.

Halaska: And you said you were in San Antonio?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Okay. How did you find San Antonio?

Patino: Took the bus to the entry—take a bus from, from the base to the outside—outskirts of the base. And then you take a bus into town.

Halaska: Did you like San Antonio?

Patino: Yeah. It was okay. Yeah, you'd get lost, but it was okay. [Laughs]

Halaska: Did you go out with friends?

Patino: Yeah, we went—a bunch of us went out together.

Halaska: Mm-hm. And how long was basic training?

Patino: Eight weeks.

Halaska: Were there any kind of memorable moments that stuck out to you from basic training?

Patino: Yeah, I got a care package from home during basic with a bunch of goodies. And of course everybody shares 'cause you don't get that kind of stuff during basic.

Halaska: What was in it?

Patino: Cookies, and things to eat. [Laughs]

[00:10:01]

Halaska: And you shared with everyone?

Patino: Oh yeah.

Halaska: That's nice. How—were you missing home while you were there?

Patino: I don't know if I missed—I'd really say I missed home. I kind of—I was enjoying the moment of basic training. I enjoyed it. I had a good time. I was a guide, the one that controls the marching step, you know, how fast or how slow we go up in the front. So, I kind of set the pace for the flight as far as how fast to march and stuff like that.

Halaska: Nice. Were you selected for that?

Patino: Mm-hm. Yeah. They watch you from day one to see who they want to do what. Some become the—I was a guide. There was, what do you call them, the head of each roll. Can't remember what they're called now. But, anyways, those are two to control the—when you're marching and stuff. You know, forward, backwards, sideways, or whatever way you march. [Laughs]

Halaska: All right. Were there any other—any other stories about training that you wanted to share about basic? About any other activities that you did? Or places that you went in San Antonio?

Patino: Well, during basic we had calisthenics and stuff like that.

Halaska: Yeah, physical training.

Patino: Every morning you go out and you do your routine exercise stuff with them on the big platform, the instructors on the platform, and everybody around there doing the different stretches and whatnot. And that was kind of fun. That was different. 'Cause you got several flights working all at the same time exercising.

Halaska: Had you ever done kind of physical activity like that before?

Patino: No. No, that was new to me.

Halaska: Did you have to run?

Patino: We did some running, not a lot. Just mainly on the field, on the field running around. That was part of the calisthenics though.

Halaska: Okay. Of the friends that you made there, was there someone who was like your battle buddy? Like who was your, kind of like your bunkmate, or your real good friend?

Patino: Well, I had a roommate. We didn't have a big base, we had rooms. Two to a room. [Laughs]

Halaska: I forget about the Air Force sometimes.

Patino: [Laughs] Yeah. And you have your own private drawer with a lock on it, and stuff. And everything has to be a certain way, you know, folded up, and dressed right, and all that kind of stuff in the closets and—but my roommate was a big tall girl, and I was short, so we got along pretty good actually. [Laughs]

Halaska: That's good. Where was she from?

Patino: She was from Virginia.

Halaska: Were there a lot of women from all over the country?

Patino: Oh yeah.

Halaska: Did everyone get along?

Patino: Yeah, we had one girl that ran off during basic. She couldn't take it, and she ran off. They caught her. By the end of basic training they had caught her. I don't know what happened to her. But that was the only one that ran off. Just that one. She couldn't take all the yelling. The yelling didn't bother me.

Halaska: All right. Was there anywhere specific you went on the weekend? Like out in San Antonio?

Patino: On the weekend the only place you could go was on base.

Halaska: Oh, on base, okay.

Patino: On base, yeah. There was only one weekend you could go into town.

Halaska: Oh, okay.

Patino: So, we didn't go too many places really 'cause you have to march everywhere you go [laughs] during basic, and everybody knows you're a basic trainee, you don't got no stripe or anything, so. But we used to go to this little restaurant around the corner from where the basic trainees were. You know, get a bite to eat or something like that, yeah. Outside of going to the, to the lunchroom, you know?

Halaska: Do you remember what the name of the restaurant was?

Patino: No. It was on base.

Halaska: Okay. Interesting. And then graduation ceremony?

[00:15:06]

Patino: Yeah. That was on the big field with the airplanes. That was something else.

Halaska: Tell me about that.

Patino: Well, we, we marched from the barracks to the field, and then we had our position on the field. Every flight is pretty much lined up in a certain manner. And then you have to march around the whole field like that, and march around.

Halaska: What about the planes?

Patino: The planes are for looks.

Halaska: Were the planes flying above you? Or they were—

Patino: They were just stationary on the field.

Halaska: Oh, okay, okay. And did, did someone, like your fleet commander, or something, get up and talk about your graduation and everything?

Patino: Oh yeah, oh yeah. [Laughs]

Halaska: Excellent. And then tell me about where you went after that?

Patino: After basic I went to Wichita Falls [Texas] for training, for medical training.

Halaska: How'd you get there?

Patino: On a bus. They took us all on a bus together and drove us to Wichita Falls.

Halaska: Were a lot of the women that were in your basic training also going to Wichita Falls?

Patino: No, everybody got different orders. So, everybody that I went to training with was from different flights, I guess, I don't know. [Laughs] They weren't from my flight, I know that.

Halaska: Okay. What were the living conditions like at Wichita Falls?

Patino: Wichita Falls again had two rooms. Rooms with two people assigned to the room. They're all pretty, pretty close to the same thing as basic training. They weren't open base or anything like that. [Laughs] Very different from the Army.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Yes. What, what was training like there?

Patino: There we had to put two weeks of KP [kitchen patrol] duty during base—during training there. And we had like a tea house if you wanted for religious training, if you wanted to go for that. I went with the—at that time I was Catholic, so I went to the training there for that. And services and stuff like that. And we did marching. Had to be a mile or two just to go to the—where the school was. We had to march across the flight line to get to the training, to the classes and stuff. We had to march there every day, and march all back. So, that was—we had during training we did airplane flight disaster where you had to go in and get out of the injured from the plane. They had a plane set on fire and everything. And then they had some were medics, some were just corpsmen, and different things like that to help get all the wounded out from inside the plane. Some were patients, some were, you know, the medics to get them out. It was a disaster plan. That was part of the training. We had classes every day for medical terminology, and different first aid treatments and stuff like that during base—during that training.

Halaska: How did you like that?

Patino: It was different. [Laughs] Very different. I had never seen anything like that, the airplane crash and stuff like that. So, that was—it was kind of scary, I guess you would say, because of all—I mean it was real flames and stuff coming out of the plane. And you had to go inside to retrieve the patients and stuff, and bring them down the hill, and you know? It was a disaster.

Halaska: Did you—so you had to take a patient out of the plane and bring them down the hill.

Patino: Right.

Halaska: Like were you and someone else carrying them down the hill? Or how was—

Patino: Yeah, you—well, a bunch of us went in there. Some were assigned as patients and they put on these fake wounds and stuff on them. And then they laid inside the airplane where all the flames and stuff were. And then some had to go in and retrieve them and get them out safely, to a safe spot outside the plane.

[00:20:08]

Halaska: So, you had to go in and get—

Patino: Get the patient out.

Halaska: Okay. How big was your patient?

Patino: It was a guy. [Laughs]

Halaska: It was a guy? Did you have a hard time getting him out?

Patino: Well, it was two of us.

Halaska: There were two of you?

Patino: Yeah. They kind of paired up to help get them out, yeah.

Halaska: Well, that's good. So, with your, so, with your classes, learning medical terminology, and first aid, and all of that, how was that? How were—how did you find the teaching? Was it good, was it easy? Or was it difficult and challenging?

Patino: It wasn't easy 'cause I didn't know any of that stuff. So, I was learning as I go, as we went along. So, I picked up some of the stuff, but not all of the stuff. I had to learn some of it once I got to my base. So—but I did learn, I did learn some of the basic stuff.

Halaska: Did you study, like, with your roommate?

Patino: Oh yeah.

Halaska: Did you create study groups?

Patino: Yeah, we had study groups.

Halaska: Were there tests?

Patino: Oh yeah. [Laughs] To see how far you went and what direction. If you were going to be a medic, or you were going to be administration. That's how they divided us up according to what we learned during that training. So, not everybody was going to be a medic, not everybody was going to be administration.

Halaska: Okay, so they had everyone training at the same place who was going to be administration or a medic. And then was it men and women?

Patino: Yeah, yeah, it was a mixed class.

Halaska: And then, some of you went into administration, and some of you went towards the more advanced medical—or medic training.

Patino: Right, right.

Halaska: Do you—did you want to be a medic? Do you remember?

Patino: No, I don't remember. I think I had signed up because I wanted to be into physical therapy type work. But I didn't—I didn't quite make that area.

Halaska: Mm-hm. So, medical administration. What did you learn with going into medical administration?

Patino: I learned a lot of the terminology during that training. 'Cause I didn't—I never had been around any of that kind of language before. So, I had to learn it. And I learned a lot of the language. But as far as the first aid treatment and stuff, that wasn't my thing. [Laughs]

Halaska: How long was your training there?

Patino: That was six weeks I think it was. Six, something like that.

Halaska: Okay. And then did you, did you also do physical training while you were there as well?

Patino: Oh yeah. That's every morning. Every morning you do calisthenics and running.

Halaska: Was that mixed as well? Or did they separate the men and the women for physical training?

Patino: No, that was separate.

Halaska: Separate, okay.

Patino: That was separate, yeah.

Halaska: You have any stories from training that you want to share about things that happened? Fun people, funny things that happened?

Patino: Well, during training I remember we had KP duty. And we had—I liked the religious training 'cause we used to do that once a week on Wednesday nights. Everybody would go in and we'd have different groups that would come in and sing Christian songs, and stuff like that. And then we'd have training for religious training and stuff afterwards. That was fun.

Halaska: What kind of religious training? What were you learning?

Patino: Well, we were just learning some of the basic things of Christianity. Different books from the Bible, stuff like that.

Halaska: Excellent. Was there anything in particular that stuck out to you that you learned during that time?

Patino: Not at this point. It's been so long ago I don't remember. [Laughs]

Halaska: Okay. All right, so where, where did you go after Wichita Falls?

Patino: After Wichita Falls I got a thirty-day leave to go home. And then I went to Lackland Air Force base for my first station.

Halaska: What was it like going home?

[00:25:05]

Patino: Well, you had to wear a uniform on the plane. You got a free flight.

Halaska: What was it like wearing your uniform like on a plane in public?

Patino: I don't know. It was kind of neat. [Laughs] It was kind of neat.

Halaska: Do you remember people looking at you?

Patino: Oh yeah.

Halaska: Yeah?

Patino: By that point I got my first stripe. Of course back then the military wasn't—during the Vietnam War there was mixed conflict about the military, so.

Halaska: How did you—because you went, you went into the military, were you concerned about that at all?

Patino: Not at the time, no. Not when I went in.

Halaska: Okay. How was it seeing your family again, and your sisters and brothers after being through training?

Patino: It was nice. I had gained weight after basic. I had to gain weight to get into the service 'cause I didn't weigh enough to begin with. And then after I got in I gained more weight. And I just kept going from there. [Laughter]

Halaska: That's good. Were you able to talk to your sisters who were in the Air Force at that time?

Patino: She at that point, after I finished basic training, she had been married already and moved to Georgia. So, she wasn't around when I got out of basic. She was married with her husband and they lived in Georgia at that point. She was out of the service already.

Halaska: Okay. Did you write letters to your family?

Patino: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Halaska: Did you write letters to your sister?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: And she asked you how things were going and everything?

Patino: Yeah. [Laughs]

Halaska: That's good. Did she advise you in any way into going into the Air Force?

Patino: Not really. Because I had wanted to go into the Air Force before she did. And I was, I was quite a bit younger than her too, so.

Halaska: Do you remember why you wanted to go into the Air Force?

Patino: Because I wanted to get out of the house, get out of the house and get away.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay. Any specific reason why or?

Patino: Well, my dad was an alcoholic. And I just, I don't know. Life wasn't all that great at home at times with him drinking all the time. So, I wanted to get out. That was a safe way to get out.

Halaska: Yep. All right. Was your, like your mom and your dad pretty proud of you?

Patino: Oh yeah. Actually, my dad didn't want me to go in. Him and my dad went into the bedroom and talked for a good while before they came out and said, okay, you can go in. [Laughs] I was already eighteen, but still, you know, I was still living at home at the time.

Halaska: Did your mom want you to go in?

Patino: No, my mom wanted me to do what I wanted to do.

Halaska: Excellent. Okay. So, after, after you went home you went—where was your first duty station again?

Patino: Texas. Lackland.

Halaska: Okay. You went back to Lackland.

Patino: Back to basic training building. Same base.

Halaska: Okay. Where were you living then? On base.

Patino: Oh yeah, on base in the barracks.

Halaska: What was the—what were the barracks like?

Patino: The barracks were not much different than basic training. Got a full room this time instead of just a small cubbyhole spot. Got a full room, and got a roommate. So, and then you had, what do you call it, like a person in charge of the wing of the hallway of that—all the rooms on that end of the building. And she pretty much was like a mentor. If you needed any help about anything, or things of that sort. So, she was there to help you if you needed any help.

Halaska: What kind of work were you doing?

Patino: Well, I started off working the information desk at the hospital, Wilford Hall Medical Center in Lackland. It's a two-thousand-bed hospital. And I was working the information desk and admissions.

[00:30:17]

Halaska: Okay.

Patino: So, I helped sign patients in, and get all the paperwork ready for them to take up to the ward, and stuff like that. And I answered the desk at the main entryway as well.

Halaska: Mm-hm. What was a regular day like for you then at that time?

Patino: Well, at that time we worked twelve-hour shifts. So, it was twelve hours on, and twelve hours off. And then once a week you worked twenty-four hour-shift. And then you'd end up taking—working twenty-four-hour shift, and you get two days off, and come back the third day. So, you were never off the same day. I started off working twelve hours, and then when we lost one of the airmen from the flight they got re-stationed, they put us on twenty-four-hour shifts. And then—so you never had the same day off. [Laughs]

Halaska: So, you would get like one day off every few days?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Okay. Were you working mostly day shift at first? Or it rotated?

Patino: It was mostly days. I didn't work nights. I didn't work nights initially cause they had the other two guys working nights. And they went to school during the day, so they worked night shift. But, I mean, some went to school that's why—as well as serving their time. But we had, we had twelve-hour shifts on, and then twelve hours off, twelve on, twelve off, like that. Because we were short the amount of people that we needed to do the rotation.

Halaska: What kind of patients were you seeing who were coming in?

Patino: Well, we got flights of a hundred at a time, patients coming from Vietnam. And they would come in on the planes, and they'd bring them on the bus. They'd bring, I don't know, fifty, a hundred at a time, and they'd have 'em all lined up down the halls and stuff until we got 'em admitted, got all the paperwork on 'em and stuff, and sent 'em up to the wards. Or the wards would come down to get 'em.

Halaska: What kind of condition were the guys in?

Patino: Various conditions. Some missing limbs, some with halos on them.

Halaska: What's a halo?

Patino: A metal bracket around their head with pins going in. Back injuries, stuff like that.

Halaska: Do you remember when, like, the first flight came in that—of like fifty to a hundred guys that you saw?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: What'd you think?

Patino: Wow. [Laughs] Yeah, it was a lot. And you worked straight through. If your twelve hours were up, that was too bad, you'd keep working till they were all out, till they were all up to the base, to the floors that they belong.

Halaska: What were the different floors that they were going to?

Patino: Orthopedics, neurology, urology, mostly orthopedics, a lot of them.

Halaska: Do you know what kind of treatment they were getting in orthopedics?

Patino: No.

Halaska: Okay.

Patino: No.

Halaska: And how long did you work in that job?

Patino: Two years.

Halaska: Two years?

Patino: Two years.

Halaska: Was it twelve on, twelve off, kind of that schedule the entire time that you were there?

Patino: No. No, we worked twenty-four-hour shifts for a while too.

Halaska: Oh yeah. Were you tired?

Patino: One on, two off, one on, two off, like that. So, you'd get—you could never really plan to do anything or go anywhere because the first day you were off you'd sleep anyway. And then they gave you one day off, and then a third day you'd be back in workin' again. So, didn't do too much.

Halaska: Do you remember kind of any particular instances or things that happen during that time that kind of stick out to you?

Patino: Yeah, when the generals, or the colonels would come through. They weren't injured, they were just coming in for their regular check-ups and stuff, and they'd have a fit because they'd want to go in and be admitted first before all these other patients. Used to get us mad 'cause there was nothing wrong with them, it was, you know, we wanted to get the patients that were hurt first. And we'd have to stop and take care of these generals, or colonels, or whatnot, and get them up to the ward first because of their rank.

[00:35:32]

Halaska: Did you have a supervisor that told you to take care of them first?

Patino: Yep. We also had civilian workers with us working on admissions there.

Halaska: What was it like working with civilians too?

Patino: You got used to it. They were part of the workers. That was nothing unusual really.

Halaska: Were you also required to do physical training at this time?

Patino: What do you mean? Exercise? Calisthenics and all that?

Halaska: Calisthenics.

Patino: No.

Halaska: No?

Patino: No, we didn't do any of that stuff. No. We had a weigh-in once a year, we had to run a certain mile, so many miles or whatnot during the one-year check-up. But that was it as far as exercising and that. We didn't have to do any of that stuff.
[Laughs]

Halaska: Okay. You were work'. All right, so you did the administration there. So, you said you didn't get to go out very much, but did you get to get out and see San Antonio?

Patino: Yeah, I got to see the Alamo. Everybody goes to the Alamo. The River Walk, went down to see that. I remember one time we missed the bus coming to base, we had to walk back to the base. And that was a long walk all night long to get back to the base.

Halaska: Were you in uniform?

Patino: No. No. Weekends are yours. [Laughs]

Halaska: That's good. Did you make any good friends during that time?

Patino: During basic? Yeah.

Halaska: Or during while you were working?

Patino: Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah, I had one friend, her husband was in Vietnam, and she was—had a home and everything. And we used to go to her house and have barbeques. And she had a dog, we used to play with the dog. She had a car, so we got to go in different places, go to different beaches and stuff like that.

Halaska: That sounds like fun.

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Okay. Were you mostly working with other women, or were you also working with men?

Patino: Women and men. Yeah, we were mixed.

Halaska: How was that?

Patino: It was okay. I met my husband there.

Halaska: Well, that's nice.

Patino: [Laughs] At that, at that base during my first base—my first base assignment. I met my husband there. He came in like about almost a year, give or take a year, after I was there. He had more rank than me, but I knew more than he did. So, I was still his boss. He didn't like that. [Laughs] But we used to—we used to do a lot of things on base. I remember going to the photo—the photo gallery and learned to take pictures, and develop pictures, and stuff like that. The hobby shop. And did that for a while. I did making rings, jewelry and stuff. I went there to the hobby shop, learned stuff like that.

Halaska: That's cool. Was that through MWR [Morale, Welfare and Recreation]? Or it's just the hobby shop on base?

Patino: Yeah, it's just the hobby shop on base, yeah.

Halaska: Oh cool. When did you get married?

Patino: Before I—just before I went to the Philippines. That was about, what, three months, two months? Three months, something like that, before I left to go to the Philippines after my two-year tour at Lackland there, toward the end there.

Halaska: Okay. Did you know that you would be going to the Philippines? Or did you know that you were just going to be assigned somewhere else?

Patino: No, I got my orders for the Philippines.

Halaska: Okay. How did you feel about that?

[00:40:02]

Patino: Kind of excited and kind of scared. Didn't know what to expect going overseas, you know?

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay, so what year did you leave to go to the Philippines?

Patino: In '72, in November, December, something like that.

Halaska: Okay, so you got your orders to go to the Philippines, and you were married. Did your—was your husband also going to the Philippines?

Patino: He was also a medical administration, so if they could use one, they could use two. So, it was easy enough for us to get our orders to go together.

Halaska: Okay, did you get your orders first for it?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Okay.

Patino: Yeah, I got orders first.

Halaska: And then you told him that he was coming with.

Patino: Right, pretty much. [Laughter]

Halaska: Did—once you were married, were you able to live off post?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Okay. Or on-post housing?

Patino: No, we lived in town.

Halaska: In town, okay.

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: So, tell me about going to the Philippines.

Patino: It was different. We flew, let's see, we flew to the base itself. It was Clark Air Base, which is now under ash. It's no longer there anymore. But at the time, it had an airstrip there on the base, which is where we landed, right on the base. And you had to go through customs, and you had to go through to tell you about the—at the time there was curfew in the land, in the country, that at midnight where we were at you had to stay, you couldn't be out in the streets after midnight. So, we [laughs], when we first got there we didn't know any better. We ended up taking a jeep to go into town, and we ended up staying at this hotel at the very end of town cause that's where the Jeep took us, we didn't know any better. Kinda find out that's where a brothel was. [Laughs] We were in one of the hotels that had ladies of the night. [Laughter] And we found that out when we came into the base the next morning, we came in for our orientation.

Halaska: Did they ask you where did you stay last night?

Patino: Right. We had to get out of there. We didn't stay there very long. One night. [Laughter]

Halaska: That's good. Okay, so you lived—in the Philippines did you live on post or in town?

Patino: We lived in town.

Halaska: In town. Okay, so you found a place to live that was not near the brothel.

Patino: Right.

Halaska: What was, what was your home like there?

Patino: We stayed—it was a security, when you first come into the entryway to the—to the houses there. You had to go through security. And then each house had a big fence with like glass cut across the top. It's for security. Because over there, either you have money, or you have none. There's not much in between. And over there a GI is considered rich, so you have to watch what you have. I had a house girl and a yard boy. The house girl was for twenty-five dollars a month, and so, I had two house girls, an aunt, and a niece, so that they'd have time off too. They would rotate. And my yard boy, he had a wife and a kid, and he lived with us. So, he did the yard work and stuff like that. And we lived next door to a lawyer, I remember that. He was Filipino, so—but at the entryway to the—to where all the houses were at was all security. Security guards with machine guns and stuff. They had real guns. [Laughs]

Halaska: Was it US forces? Or was it—

Patino: No. No, locals.

Halaska: Locals, okay.

Patino: Locals, yeah.

Halaska: Did you feel secure most of the time?

Patino: Yeah. When we were at the hotel, the reg—the regular hotel, not the brothel, we were at the hotel, they had security guards out front there with machine guns too. And I remember, this is after we first got there, there was one time where I ended up, I walked over to the bakery which was just across the way from where the security guards were, and as I walked out of the bakery all I hear was pop, pop, pop, pop, the guns, you know, and bam, you hit the ground, you know? They were chasing somebody that had robbed one of the stores nearby. So, you don't ask questions, you just get down. [Laughs] That was scary.

[00:45:40]

Halaska: Yeah. So, crime was definitely an issue over there.

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Okay. So, you lived off—how did you get to work each day?

Patino: Jeeps.

Halaska: Jeeps?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Did you drive?

Patino: No. No, they have jeeps that come to the main gate all the time. They ride back and forth from the main gate into town and stuff, and they just catch—put your hand out and the jeeps stop, pick you up, and take you to the main gate.

Halaska: Was it like a taxi?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Oh okay. Mm-hm.

Patino: Jeep-neys they call them. [Laughter] They'll take you to the main gate. And at that point they didn't have the sewers, the water pipelines and stuff in there, so the main gate and the side gates would all get flooded from time to time during the rainy season. 'Cause it rained for six months out of the year. And six months out of the year it didn't rain. It got real dry. But you'd ride the jeep to the main gate to get there, and then other times you'd have to take a boat to get to the main gate just to get onto the base. Because they didn't have any drainage systems. They were just puttin' them in when we first got there.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Wow. So, you had to take a boat to get to work.

Patino: Mm-hm. [Laughter]

Halaska: That's an adventure. What kind of work were you doing there?

Patino: In the hospital. There I worked several different jobs.

Halaska: Do you remember what hospital it was?

Patino: Clark Air Base.

Halaska: Clark Air Base Hospital? Okay. And what were the several jobs that you were doing?

Patino: I worked admissions, I worked information desk, I worked records, I worked—I had to redo a whole stockroom with the hospital forms. They gave me a room, and they gave me shelves, and then they gave me boxes on top of boxes of different rules and regs for the hospital. And they gave me boxes on top of boxes full of medical forms. And I had to take ‘em all out of the boxes and organize them on the shelves so when they needed the different form they’d know where to go to get it and stuff. Well, I had to do that, it took me a year to get that all in order.

Halaska: Wow.

Patino: [Laughs] And then I worked with the locals doing supply, all the different supplies that the janitors needed, I issued the different supplies there. I did that too. And then I also worked with what’s called Golden Flow drug testing. [Laughs]

Halaska: Who were you drug testing?

Patino: Military people, as well as civilian youth. That was an interesting job.

Halaska: Want to tell me a little bit about that?

Patino: Uh-huh. That was urinalysis testing. And you bring ‘em in, and you have them go into the bathroom, and all the bathroom doors are gone. They have to pee in the open so you make sure it’s their pee, and not somebody else’s pee. Embarrassing, but that’s what it was. [Laughs]

Halaska: Did you have to, I guess, administer the test? Like give people the cup and make them go pee in the room, or did you just receive?

Patino: No, I’d give them the cup, and then take it back and test it on the spot, make sure it was good enough urine for testing, and not just water.

Halaska: Oh, okay, yeah, that makes sense. Are there any funny stories with that?

[00:50:00]

Patino: Yeah, but I’d rather not say. [Laughs]

Halaska: Sounds good. What kind of work was your husband doing at the time, too?

Patino: He was working in the hospital. Admissions again. He worked pretty much admissions. At that time, for a while there while I was out with the Golden Flow,

if you worked in admissions or in the hospital you were allowed to go in the hospital, but if you didn't, you weren't allowed to go in the hospital.

Halaska: Okay. Were you on the same schedule?

Patino: Pretty much, yeah. Days. Yeah, we both worked days at—I worked in the building outside of the hospital, so I wasn't allowed in the hospital at all. At that time the POWs [Prisoners of War] were coming through, so only certain people were allowed to go in, you had patients, families, workers.

Halaska: The American POWs—

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: —were coming through?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Do you remember seeing any of them?

Patino: Yeah, they came in on the busloads of them.

Halaska: What was that like?

Patino: That was something else to watch 'cause I remember they went to the PX [Post Exchange] on base, they closed the PX down completely and let them go in there and pick whatever they wanted by the busloads, and they'd pack up the bus full of all the things they wanted and stuff. And then they'd come out, and take them back to wherever they were—until they got back to the States.

Halaska: What did you—so, the Vietnam War was kind of starting to wind down a bit?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Do you remember what your thoughts about that were?

Patino: I was glad it was over, or getting close to being over. All the patients that we had seen. I was too much.

Halaska: Did you—so with all the patients that you did see, and kind of the opposition to the war, how people protested and that, did you ever think that people maybe didn't understand the war, you know, as they didn't see the injured kind of people in the same way that you did?

Patino: I don't know. I didn't see the side where the war was actually going on, I saw the outcome from the war, you know, the patients and stuff. So, I don't know, it was just sad to see some of that stuff.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay. How long were you in the Philippines?

Patino: Three and a half years. Long time. Yeah. I lived nice over there 'cause, like I said, I had a house girl, yard boy, and everything. And the niece was a seamstress, so I had a lot of my clothes handmade. I'd go into town, pick out the outfit that I liked, tell her what I wanted, pick the material, and then go home, and she'd sew it up for me. So, I lived nice. Comfortable. [Laughs]

Halaska: Did, did they cook for you as well?

Patino: Mm-hm. I had my daughter while I was over there.

Halaska: Oh. Okay. Excellent.

Patino: She was about nine months by the time we came back to the States. So, they took care of her while we worked.

Halaska: During your pregnancy, did you work all the way through your pregnancy?

Patino: All of the way up until about a month before I had her. And I got to wear civilian clothes and work for a while, 'cause obviously I didn't fit in the uniform. [Laughs]

Halaska: Okay. They didn't have a maternity outfit?

Patino: No.

Halaska: Okay. All right. Did you tell your bosses right away everything? In some cases, some military members maybe didn't tell their bosses about—because they were afraid of being put on a different duty or something. Did you have any concerns about that?

Patino: No.

Halaska: That's good.

Patino: No, I didn't have any problems with that.

Halaska: Okay. Good.

Patino: You could get pregnant back then when I was in the service and still be in the service.

Halaska: Was that a new rule? Or had that changed recently?

Patino: That changed while I was in. While I was in they changed that you could get pregnant and have kids.

[00:55:05]

Halaska: Okay. What was it before then?

Patino: Before you couldn't get preg—when my sister was in you couldn't get pregnant.

Halaska: Okay. Would they just kick you out then?

Patino: Mm-hm. That's what happened with her.

Halaska: Okay. All right. What was it—so you had your daughter in the Clark—

Patino: Clark Air Base, yeah.

Halaska: Clark Air Base Hospital?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Was that good?

Patino: Well, my husband was in Japan at the time going to training, 'cause he was with a MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] unit. So, he got sent different places from time to time. He had to go training for that. And he was in Japan while I had my daughter at Clark. So, he was there when she was born. He came about a week or two afterwards. So, it was different. I remember the nurse telling me, "You've got to behave. You've got to listen to me. You've got to listen to me," during the labor and stuff, you know? And I had her within five hours. So, it wasn't that long of a labor.

Halaska: That's pretty fast. After you had your daughter, did your house girl, and her niece, did they help you with your daughter?

Patino: Uh-huh. Oh yeah.

Halaska: They babysat and that kind of thing too as well, or?

Patino: Well, they lived with me. Then they'd rotate going home, you know. They'd pick their own time off between the two of them. That's why I had two of them so they could each have some time off as well. They'd just rotate whatever times they wanted off.

Halaska: Okay. Did you have any other Air Force or military friends while you were there?

Patino: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. We used to play softball. And I remember that. And we had different games we'd go to, the guys would play a game, and the gals would play games. And I had fun.

Halaska: Were there any—tell me about the food, how was the food?

Patino: Filling. Very filling. Very—we had these—we had these cooks, we had this cook in the hospital, they were the better cooks actually because they'd pick different days of the week for different nationality foods, stuff like that. They'd compete with the other kitchens to see who had the better meals. [Laughs] That's when I first got introduced to the Reuben sandwich. I had never seen that before. I got introduced to a lot of different meals that I had never eaten before.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Excellent. Are there any other stories that you want to tell from your time in the Philippines?

Patino: Well, just the patients from the hospital coming in at Clark Air Base, they came, they came in too. And I didn't get to go in the hospital for a time there while I was working at Golden Flow 'cause I did the drug testing. And, like I said, I did several different jobs, I lose track. [Laughs]

Halaska: Were there any memorable patients that were coming through while you were there that you remember?

Patino: I remember seeing guys come in without limbs, and then they'd walk out with prosthetics. That was good to see. And the guys used to flirt with the nurses all the time. [Laughs] Especially the orthopedic guys in the basement. They used to come out with their wheelchairs scooting down the hallways and stuff, racing and stuff. You'd have to holler at 'em for doing that. It's like they had no limits with them. You know? They were wild.

[01:00:06]

Halaska: That's fun. Okay. All right. Is there anything else that you want to say about the Philippines? About the weather there, or about the people that you met there, or anything like that?

Patino: Well, the money transfer. It was twenty-four to one. One dollar was worth twenty-four pesos there. So, we'd always—and then you had rations on cigarettes, and liquor, and a lot of GIs would sell that. Sell it to different GIs, you know, and make money off that. Because each, each GI was allowed so many packs of cigarettes a month, and so many bottles of booze a month. So, if you didn't use it up, you'd lose it. If you sold it you'd make money at least, if you sell it to

somebody else, you know? A lot of that was going on, a lot of black market. Yeah.

Halaska: Did anyone get in trouble for that?

Patino: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. [Laughs] Mm-hm. My husband used to smoke all his cigarettes and mine too. I didn't smoke, that's why. He smoked like a chimney. Three packs a day. He smoked a lot, so.

Halaska: What was your husband's name?

Patino: David.

Halaska: David.

Patino: David Quesala [??]

Halaska: And what was your daughter's—what is your daughter's name?

Patino: Terry Ann.

Halaska: Terry Ann? Okay.

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: All right. And then you—from the Philippines you went back to the United States?

Patino: Right.

Halaska: Okay.

Patino: We went to South Dakota. Offutt Air Force Base. [correction: Patino was stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota.]

Halaska: What base were you working at in South Dakota?

Patino: Offutt.

Halaska: Off of it?

Patino: Offutt.

Halaska: Offutt, I am sorry. Oh, okay. Do you know how that's spelled?

Patino: If I remember O-F-F-I-U-T, or U-I-T, or something like that.

Halaska: Okay. Tell me about that base.

Patino: Let's see. There I ended up working in records. Yeah. I did copies of records, I did manuals, different rules and regulations of the hospital, keeping that up to date all the time 'cause there was constantly changes going on in the hospital.

Halaska: Updating manuals?

Patino: Manuals, right. I did that. And I worked records for a while there too. And at that point they were starting to check everybody for being overweight and stuff. I wasn't overweight, but I knew quite a few GIs that were overweight and had to go in the hospital to try to lose the weight in order to stay in.

Halaska: What do you mean go into the hospital to try to lose weight?

Patino: They'd admit them in the hospital, and then put them on a diet plan.

Halaska: Oh wow.

Patino: To try to lose the weight so they could stay in. Otherwise they'd be discharged. 'Cause they were leaning heavy on overweight people at that point. That was a big thing.

Halaska: Okay. Did you know anyone who was put on that diet plan?

Patino: Uh-huh. Several. Guys. [Laughter]

Halaska: What was the diet? Do you remember them telling you what the diet plan was? And what that entailed?

Patino: It varied according to the individual. I know one guy he had a lot of lettuce and very little meat. He had to do different calisthenics and stuff like that on a daily basis. They'd take them out in groups for the diet plan and stuff.

Halaska: Okay. [Patino laughs] So, records, and manuals, that's what you were working at. Where were you living at the time?

Patino: We were living in town about forty-five minutes away, in Rapid City.

[01:05:00]

Halaska: And how was that?

Patino: It was nice 'cause we lived with an older couple, and the lady would babysit my daughter, and at that time I got pregnant with my son. I had him. So, she took care

of the kids while we were at work. We lived in the basement, and they lived upstairs. It was regular apartment down there, so it was nice.

Halaska: Excellent. Did you miss having a seamstress living in the house?

Patino: Oh yeah. [Laughs] Oh yeah. I was spoiled in the Philippines. [Laughs]

Halaska: Do you remember was there a particular piece of clothing that you really liked that she made for you?

Patino: Yeah, the jumpsuits. She made several different types of jumpsuits.

Halaska: What were—what were their names? I'm sorry.

Patino: The house girl?

Halaska: Yeah, yeah.

Patino: Let's see now. That's a good question. [Laughs] If I could remember their names now. I don't remember their names. Too many years ago. I don't remember anymore.

Halaska: That's okay. So, we're in South Dakota. How is the weather change from the Philippines?

Patino: We're talking subzero weather in the winter. They issued parkas for us to wear because it was so cold, to help keep us warm. And you'd have to get chains on your wheels because the snow would get so deep. In the summer it was nice. It was nice in the summertime. But the winters were really cold. It'd get way down below zero.

Halaska: And there was a hospital on base?

Patino: Yeah. Limited. Limited services though.

Halaska: Where did you have your son?

Patino: Right there at Offutt. Yeah. [correction: Ellsworth Air Force Base]

Halaska: They did offer that service?

Patino: Yeah. [Laughs]

Halaska: Was your husband there for your son?

Patino: No, he was in Japan again.

Halaska: So, he was still with the MASH unit?

Patino: Yeah, he was still assigned to the MASH unit.

Halaska: Okay. And what did he do with them? Do you remember?

Patino: He was the company clerk.

Halaska: Oh, okay.

Patino: He was in administration also.

Halaska: Do you remember him telling you about that unit and the work that he did with them?

Patino: Well, he did—he worked—when we were in the Philippines, before we left, he was assigned to Guam, which is when, not the POWs, but the what do you call them, the refugees when they came back at the end of the war, how they were getting the rest of the people out of the Philippines, and they sent them to Guam there to go through screening and whatnot to see which ones would be sent back to the States and stuff. He was stationed at a unit there for a MASH unit at Guam. And he came back, what, three days before we left the Philippines. [Laughs]

Halaska: Okay. So, you had to get everything packed up and ready to go yourself there.

Patino: Right, right.

Halaska: That's a lot of work.

Patino: Yeah, but the military pretty well does it all. They just come and pack you up.

Halaska: Oh nice. [Laughter]

Patino: You don't worry about any of that. You just have to be there for them to know what to do when they get there.

Halaska: Okay, so how long were you in South Dakota?

Patino: I was there about fifteen months when I got retired. When I—not retired, but I got out. At the time I didn't want to work anymore and raise two kids at the same time. Which is not what happened, I ended up working anyway. [Laughs]

[01:10:13]

Halaska: Okay, so you made the decision to get out.

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: And did you stay in South Dakota then?

Patino: Yeah, we stayed there for two years—just short of two years, and then we went to Greece. That’s where he was stationed, his last station.

Halaska: How long did you live in Greece?

Patino: We were there—I was there a little over a year. And then I came back to the States.

Halaska: So, did you, your husband, and the kids, you all flew over to Greece. How was that?

Patino: Very different. They didn’t speak English over there. We got there, my son was like, what, three days, four days old at the time when we got—when we left the States and we came to Greece. And I had to get distilled water because he was so tiny. And we had a hard time at the airport because nobody spoke English. And here you are in uniform and everything and they just—they weren’t all that friendly in Greece. Not like the Philippines. I really didn’t care for the Greeks that well, that much, I didn’t care for it much. [Laughs] ‘Cause they watched every little thing you did. You go in the store and look around, and they’d be right behind you, you know, watching your every move like they didn’t trust you or something, you know, I don’t know. It was different. I wasn’t used to that.

Halaska: Okay. Okay, so what—were you living, like, in town again when you were in Greece?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: What was your house like there?

Patino: It was right on the shoreline, and it was a four-story high building, and it was all GIs in there. The base would take you—they would take you from the base in town to look for places to stay, places that were okay for GIs to stay. You could only move into those houses. You couldn’t go just anywhere. So, we stayed on the first floor. And I remember we didn’t have our beds, we didn’t have anything in the apartment yet, we just had boxes. So, I had a box with blankets and everything for the baby, and for my daughter we had a cot that we got from the base for her to sleep on. It was—it took a while before we got all our furniture. It takes thirty days for your furniture to move. So, you’re left without in the meantime. [Laughs]

Halaska: Yeah, that would have been difficult with a little guy. Okay, and then your—so, were you taking care of the kids at that time?

Patino: Yeah, I wasn't working anymore.

Halaska: Did—how old was your daughter at this time?

Patino: By this time she was going on two.

Halaska: Okay, still little guys.

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Okay. And then your husband was working on base?

Patino: Yeah, he was working in—actually our—well, by the time we got our house on base, all he had to do was jump the fence from our yard to the hospital to go to work. [Laughs]

Halaska: Well, that was pretty nice.

Patino: Instead of walking all the way around he'd just jump the fence and go to work there. It was much closer.

Halaska: Did you like getting to stay at home with your kids during that time?

Patino: It was difficult at first because when you're young, and you don't know what to do, and you don't know anybody, you know? You're surrounded with the kids 24/7. It was a lot.

Halaska: Did you write home at this time?

Patino: Mm-hm. Oh yeah.

Halaska: Who were you writing to?

Patino: My mom.

Halaska: Were you asking her advice?

Patino: Some, yeah. [Laughs]

Halaska: Mm-hm. What were favorite parts about living in Greece?

Patino: My favorite parts, that's a good question. I wasn't all that crazy over there. I didn't really—I wasn't crazy about Greece at all. I didn't like the way they treated the Americans.

[01:15:08]

Halaska: Okay. And you said you were only there for a year?

Patino: Yeah. We got a divorce and I came back to the States.

Halaska: Okay. Mm-hm. Where did you come back to in the States?

Patino: Wisconsin, Racine.

Halaska: Wisconsin, Racine? Okay. And with your children as well?

Patino: Yeah.

Halaska: Yeah? Okay. And then like just, was there—like did he get partial custody of the kids too? Or no?

Patino: No, he didn't do anything with the kids after that. After I left and came back to the States he barely wrote much less made any communication.

Halaska: Okay. What was it like coming back to Wisconsin?

Patino: I don't know. I kind of felt down about it. I wasn't too crazy about coming back, but what else was I going to do, you know? So, I would rather have gone elsewhere, but what are you going to do? [Laughs]

Halaska: Did you live near your parents?

Patino: I lived with my parents. By that time my parents were divorced, and my mother had the house. So, we stayed in the upstairs apartment, me and the kids. And I went to work.

Halaska: Okay. Did your mom watch the kids?

Patino: No, she worked.

Halaska: Oh, she worked too.

Patino: She was working the Head Start Program with the toddlers.

Halaska: Okay. What exactly is the Head Start Program?

Patino: It's three and four year olds, like pre-school, same thing.

Halaska: Okay.

Patino: So, I had them in daycare and I worked in a factory for a while.

Halaska: Which factory?

Patino: Jacobson, lawn mowers.

Halaska: What did you do?

Patino: Assembly line. Well, when I first got back I tried getting in to see about hospital type work, but the more I checked into it I didn't care for the hours. I really didn't want to do that kind of work anymore.

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Patino: So, I ended up going into the factory and working there in the assembly line. I worked there for five years. Then they laid me off. So, I went back to school.

Halaska: What'd you go back to school for?

Patino: Human services.

Halaska: Did you use your—

Patino: GI bill.

Halaska: —GI bill? Okay, excellent. And where did you go to school?

Patino: Gateway right here in Racine.

Halaska: Gateway?

Patino: Mm-hm.

Halaska: Okay. What kind of work did you do after your graduated?

Patino: I went to work for Unified, Racine Unified School District, as a teacher assistant. Worked there for twenty years.

Halaska: And what did—what did you do as a teacher's assistant?

Patino: I did admin—attendance, keeping track of kids that didn't—I worked at a high school for two years, Park High School for two years, working with special ed

kids doing administrative type work, office work in that area. And then I went for two years to Case High School, and I worked in the Phys Ed department administration work there. And then I worked at what's called the Max Center. It's a school for delinquent kids, and I did administration work there too. I did, what do you call it, attendance, keeping track of kids that didn't come, kids that went, calling homes, finding out why they're not there, going to court from time to time for reporting on these kids that didn't go to school, stuff like that. I did that for fifteen years then.

Halaska: Okay. Did you enjoy that work?

Patino: That one I did, yeah. By the end I didn't care for it too much, 'cause by then they had junior high added to the high school kids. And junior high kids they're wild. [Laughs] They're wild, loud, and obnoxious and everything else. And my office was in the hallway, and they were right there. [Laughter]

[01:20:08]

Halaska: Excellent. Where did your kids go to school?

Patino: My kids went to Walden, the alternative school.

Halaska: Why did you choose to send them there?

Patino: Because I liked what they had. They had smaller classrooms, and more intense training subject areas and stuff. I liked the smaller size of the school. Not as many kids to deal with. Get more one-on-one help.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay. So, I want to ask, just looking back at your military service, I guess what surprised you about your time in the Air Force? What didn't you expect about your experience?

Patino: Well, I didn't expect to get sent overseas, but I did. [Laughs] I enjoyed my time in the Philippines, I really did. You know? Like I said, I was pampered quite well there. And I could get a lot more things—I remember one of the first years I was there I sent back home at Christmastime, I sent pictures of the different items I could get for them. And then they'd sent back and tell me which one they wanted, so I'd order that item. Different wood carvings, and lazy Susan's, name plates, wood carvings mostly, you know? So, I sent that kind of stuff back home my first year. So, everybody got something from my family for that. I enjoyed that. [Laughs] 'Cause it was quite cheap in comparison to what I would have paid if I was in the States, you know? And I had the money, so I enjoyed doing that.

Halaska: Excellent. Is there anything else that you wanted to add about your time in the Air Force, and kind of how it affected your life?

Patino: Well, I didn't expect as much camaraderie that I got. You know? I mean, you grow quite close to the different military people while you're in. It's like family, you know? You have barbeques and stuff together, neighbors, new neighbors. Like here you don't know your neighbors and stuff as well, it takes a little while before you get to know them. Over there everybody knows everybody. [Laughs] On the bases like that.

Halaska: Have you—are you involved with any veteran groups?

Patino: American Legion.

Halaska: American Legion, okay.

Patino: I was with, I forget where it's out of now, I have never done anything with them, but I just switched over to Portage, which is outside of Lake Tomahawk.

Halaska: Okay. Excellent. And, I'm sorry, have you done anything, like any activities with them? Or anything like that?

Patino: With the American Legion?

Halaska: Mm-hm.

Patino: No, not yet. Just pretty much keeping track with the newsletters and stuff like that. 'Cause it's so far away.

Halaska: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Patino: But I have gone with the—I got to the VA Hospital here in Milwaukee for all my medical coverage, and I did do horseback riding out of Illinois. And they pick us up at the house and take us out there to the stables to go horseback riding. I don't ride anymore. Nancy still does though.

Halaska: What program is that?

Patino: It's out of Hartford. We found out about that through the VA in Milwaukee that there was horseback riding opportunities and stuff. So, we started going—I went for about two years. I stopped 'cause I started having a lot of problems with my sciatica. And it hurt too much, so I just stopped going. She still goes. She goes once a week. They come pick her up and take her out there. We were driving, till I had a car accident, and that was the end of the driving.

[01:25:12]

Halaska: When did you have a car accident?

Patino: It's been about two years now. Yeah.

Halaska: Mm-hm. Okay. All right. Is there anything else that you wanted to add for us?

Patino: No.

Halaska: No? All right. Well, thank you for talking to me today. All right.

Patino: Thank you.

[End of OH2157.Patino access]

[End of interview]