

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with
MARY "MARIA" E. HANSON-BAILEY
Traffic Management Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, US Army
2018

OH
2133

**OH
2133**

Hanson-Bailey, Mary “Maria” E., (1968–). Oral History Interview, 2018.

Approximate length: 1 hours 24 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Summary:

In this oral history interview, Mary "Maria" E. Hanson-Bailey discusses her service in the United States Army with the HHC, 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency in Oberursel, Germany. Hanson explains in detail what it was like for gay and lesbian service members in the late 1980s and being discharged from the military because of her sexual orientation.

Hanson-Bailey grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and discusses living in Cabrini-Green, being sent to Juvenile Detention in Cook County, and then moving to Richland Center, Wisconsin. When she was still a teenager, she ventured to New Orleans, Louisiana, before returning to Milwaukee and working as a waitress. Hanson-Bailey joined the Army on June 18, 1985. She states that her father, a veteran of the Korean War and the Vietnam War, happily signed the waiver for her to join.

Hanson-Bailey attended basic training in Fort Dix, New Jersey. Hanson enjoyed physical training, taking on leadership roles, and learning how to fire a weapon. Next, she attended Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as a traffic management coordinator in Fort Eustis, Virginia. She was one of the few women in her training unit and states that overall, it was a good experience. During a training exercise, one of her drill instructors tried to sexually assault her. She explains that even though the incident was not formally reported she was satisfied with the way her unit handled the situation.

After AIT, Hanson-Bailey was assigned to HHC, 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency, United States Army Europe (USAREUR) at Camp King in Oberursel, Germany. She describes being introduced to the gay night life and meeting other gay and lesbian soldiers stationed throughout Germany. At Camp King, Hanson-Bailey worked as an administrative assistant for her company commander and occupied a sergeant's level staff position. Her commander awarded her the Army Achievement Medal (AAM) recognizing her exemplary work managing the company office. Subsequently, a colonel selected her to be his administrative assistant. She toured with him through Europe, preparing and giving presentations for Exercise REFORGER. Hanson-Bailey describes a few of her memorable experiences in Holland, France, and Russia.

In Germany, Hanson-Bailey found herself making friends with gay soldiers but had not recognized herself as a lesbian. She recalls one of her friends prompting her to go to a lesbian bar and describes the euphoria she felt when she was there. She established a group of gay and lesbian friends who were in the military and describes going out to bars and feeling a sense of community. Hanson-Bailey outlines how gay and lesbian service members covertly found each other and the stress associated with keeping a low profile.

Hanson-Bailey discusses the mounting tensions between United States service members and the German youths and radical organizations. She explains that there were multiple bombings and terrorist attacks in Western Germany in the late 1980s and that Middle Eastern groups were starting to become more active. She states that because of these experiences she was not surprised by the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the wars that followed.

Hanson-Bailey discusses the military's changing positions on homosexual service members and how it related to her discharge. Hanson-Bailey was told by a friend in the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) that an investigation, a witch-hunt, was beginning and she was at the center of it. When she went to her commander for protection, he told her that he had no choice but to discharge her. Hanson-Bailey safeguarded her friends from the investigation by cutting off ties with them as her discharge was processed. During this time, her alcoholism became severe as she mourned the loss of her military career in isolation. Hanson-Bailey was honorably discharged from the Army in January 24, 1989.

Hanson-Bailey returned to Wisconsin and settled in Madison. She discusses working fast food jobs for a few years before earning her associate's degree from Madison Area Technical College (MATC). During this time, she became an advocate for gay rights, victims of domestic abuse, and mental illness. For many years, Hanson-Bailey worked with OutReach and other local LGBTQ+ community groups. She was an organizer for local gay pride parades and even won the Lesbian of the Year award for her work. Hanson reflects on the experiences of gay and lesbian service members, the ways that the military has changed for the LGBTQ+ community, and work that still needs to be done.

Biographical Sketch:

Mary "Maria" E. Hanson-Bailey served as a Traffic Management Coordinator in the United States Army from 1985 to 1989 with the HHC, 1st Transportation Movement Control Agency, USAREUR at Camp King in Oberursel, Germany. Hanson-Bailey grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and Richland Center, Wisconsin. She joined the United States Army on June 18, 1986. She attended basic training in Fort Dix, New Jersey, and advanced individual training as a traffic coordinator at Fort Eustis, Virginia. She was assigned to Camp King, Germany and worked as an administrative assistant. She was honorably discharged from the military in 1989 and moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where she has earned her associate's degree. Hanson-Bailey works with various advocacy groups for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community, domestic violence victims, and mental illness awareness.

Archivist's notes:

Transcriptions are a reflection of the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. It is strongly suggested that researchers directly engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript.

Interviewed by Rachelle Halaska, 2018.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2019.

Reviewed by Luke Sprague, 2020.

Abstract written by Rachelle Halaska, 2020.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of OH2133.Hanson-Bailey_access.mp3]

Halaska: All right, today is November 6, 2018. This is an interview with Mary E. Hanson-Bailey who served with the U.S. Army HHC [Headquarters and Headquarters Company] First Transportation Command USA-European Theater during, or from, June 18, 1986 through June 24, 1989. This interview is being conducted at her home. The interviewer is Rachelle Halaska. And this interview is being recorded for the Wisconsin Veteran Museum Oral History Program. Thank you very much for meeting with me. And just for clarification for the interview, you go Maria, correct?

Hanson-Bailey: Yes.

Halaska: Okay. So, we will use the name Maria for the rest of this interview. All right, Maria. So, why don't you tell me when and where you were born?

Hanson-Bailey: I was born in Chicago, Illinois back in 1968—September 25, 1968. I was born right in the city of Chicago on Cicero Avenue in a small Jewish community. So, I kind of grew up there. I kind of had an interesting life, my mother and grandmother—my father was serving in Vietnam when I was born, so that was kind of—he wasn't around when I was born. And I was raised my grandmother—mainly by my oldest sister. They kind of took care—my oldest sister took care of me because my grandmother and mother really didn't want me cause I looked like my father who was not Jewish. So, my oldest sister raised me. My grandmother and mother kind of considered my devil spawn. Didn't want anything to do with me. And so, from the age of zero to six, I sort of lived as sort of a non-wanted entity in the house. At six years old my grandmother decided she had enough of me. And she talked my mother into disposing of me. And I was abandoned in Chicago, on the streets of Chicago. And my mother kind of as a last minute sort of—sort of attempt to sort of save me, cause she was feeling bad about the situation, called a friend of hers that she worked with in a pizzeria in Chicago. And so, she came and got me.

And so, I ended up being raised in a kind of interesting way. I was raised in an all-black community in Chicago in Cabrini Green. A lot of people know Cabrini Green, it was the projects of Chicago. And so, I was raised there by Sal, a friend of my mothers. And I grew up there from the age of six until the age of ten, and lived there, and grew up there with Sal. She was a very loving woman. She was only sixteen when she picked me up, so she was very young. She grew—she kind of raised me between hooker's wages, and working at restaurants waitressing and bussing tables. We were very poor. We grew up, you know, eating lots of grits. I learned to hate grits. [Laughs] We had a really tough life. It was a really hard life. But we kind of just managed and grew up together. We—there was a lot of drugs,

a lot of sexual abuse, a lot of hardship, a lot of just hard times. But there was a lot of love in that community. I grew up with the Baptist Church in that community, instead of the Jewish faith. Even though Sal tried to keep my Jewish faith alive as best she could with what little knowledge she had of it. She forced me not to eat pork, which is a really hard thing to do in an all-black community. I really wanted to have the pork in the all-black community, but was not allowed to imbibe any of it. But I sort of grew up in the community sort of protected, and loved by the older women in that community.

I really grew up with a deep love for the black culture, because it was very much the loving culture which I was given compared to the Jewish culture that I had been born into. And so I really, really had a deep love. And that's kind of why I live where I live now. Now I live—right now I love where we are right now is at. I live in a diverse culture, a diverse living—kind of mainly live in a black community because I chose to live in a black community to come back kind of to my roots. And that's kind of where I choose to live is in a black community because of that. But growing up there, I lived there from six to ten. When I was ten years old there was a—what they called a sort of a police kind of did a search of the area for hookers, and I was delivering some drugs to Sal. And I got busted. And I ended up in juvenile—in a juvenile detention facility in Cook County.

[00:05:18]

I was there until I turned twelve. A social worker took an interest in me at that time because I was white. And it was mainly cause I was white that she took an interest in me. She kind of felt like I was sort of like didn't fit in with the black kids. I was—she decided to search out my family. And so, she did a lot of searching, and she found out that there was a missing report, a missing child report, that my grandmother had filed surprisingly. I think she filed it because my grandfather put up a fuss, cause my grandfather had really cared about me at the time. Even though he was kind of weak, and he didn't have a lot of say in the family. But he had somehow gotten my grandmother to file a missing child report. They had probably told some story that they lost me at the mall or something. I don't know exactly what the tale was that they told. But my grandmother—or my father was identified. And they sent a letter home to my family that was now living in Richland Center, Wisconsin. And my sister, my oldest sister, who was home on leave from the Marine Corps, found the letter in my mother's drawer. And she gave it to my father. My father was quite a bit surprised since he had no idea I existed. And he was pretty much not—wasn't even sure I was his daughter. You know, he figured my mom—my mom had a habit of sleeping around. So, he was pretty much convinced that this kid, whoever it was, was probably not even his.

But he kind of took an interest, kind of wondered, a little curiosity. And he came to the juvenile hall. And he saw me, and if you ever see a picture of my father, who's a man in a picture over there, he looks just like me. And he walks just like

me, and he talks just like me. And the minute we saw each other it was like well, dang, it's a little hard to throw that idea that we're not related. And so, my grandmother and mother were very right in saying that my father was just like me, because we looked exactly alike. So, my father had to admit I was his daughter, and he took me home. So, I ended up at the house. My mother was not pleased to see me again. She refused to talk to me. She basically acted like I didn't exist. She just gave me the cold shoulder the whole time was there.

So, from the age of twelve until the age of fifteen, well fourteen, she gave me the cold shoulder. She just acted like I didn't exist. My father was pretty much treated me like I was a possession. He told me that if I behaved myself I'd get fed, I'd get clothed, I'd have a place to stay, and I could go to school, and my life would be better than Cabrini Green. And it was. The food was good, the housing was good, and I was a very practical kid. I mean, when you grow up in Cabrini Green, if you get good food and you get good housing, you accept that life is good, and I did. I mean, the house was nice, the food was really good, things were better than being poor, and you know, being on the streets a lot. There was no—there was sexual abuse. My father was sexually abusive, and so, there was a lot of trauma there. But I had the attitude of well, you sleep with your old man, you get a good meal, you know? That was the life you lived. And so, I kind of just accepted the sort of abuse, and accepted that this was the price you paid to have a nice roof over your head and a good meal. And so, I lived with what I had. The schooling was better. Life was a little bit better, and so, I accepted sort of the price of the situation.

I did that until I was fifteen, and then I got sick and tired of it. And I kind of stretched out on my own. I went down to New Orleans when I was fifteen. I was a singer, I had a pretty good voice, and so, I had hooked up with this guy who had come up to Boaz, Wisconsin. Which is a small—I mean, Boaz, Wisconsin is so small either the bars don't fit in it. It's a small town outside of Richland Center. I think they have like two bars, and one church. And that's the size of the town.

[00:10:02]

But this Cajun guy, whose mother was from Boaz, came up there one day and was just hanging out there. And he goes, "You got a dang good voice." And I said, "Well, thank you." And he said, "Well, how do you feel about coming down to New Orleans?" And I was like yeah, sounds good to me, tell me when to come, packing my bags. Every kid's dream to go down to New Orleans and sing. And I had gone on vacation when I was fourteen with my dad down to New Orleans—with my mom and dad down to New Orleans. And I thought what a chance, you know, go to New Orleans, sing. I mean, that was like kid's dream.

So, I went down there with Phillippe. We headed down there. And we had a great time. That summer was singing, and drinking, and carousing, and having fun, and doing drugs. It was a wild time. And I met my first husband. He was charming, and handsome, and Greek. And he was every woman's dream. He was dashing,

and he had curly black hair, and well-muscled, and a swimmer's body. And he was absolutely adorable. And he just had this charming way about him. So charming that I think he charmed about three other women, and probably got another couple of women pregnant along with me that summer. So, yeah, it was a lovely time.

So, I ended up coming back to Richland Center. And I luckily was pretty smart, so I had already gotten most of my credits for high school by that time, and was able to go to Milwaukee cause I was pregnant, and my father had said if I ever get pregnant he was going to have nothing to do with me. And so, I went to Milwaukee pregnant, and got a job waitressing. And had my son. I was fifteen at the time, turning sixteen, and I didn't have much going for me. I thought, "Well, what do I do now?" I don't want to spend the rest of my life waitressing. And I had always thought about joining the Army. I had always figured that's where I would go. My dad had been Army, my other sister was a Marine, my other sister was in the Air Force. It was kind of the—we joked that it was the Hanson girl finishing school. That's what Hanson girls did. You know, you joined the military.

So, I decided to join the military. And my husband showed up about—right before I joined, and he said, "Will you marry me?" And I thought well, I'll marry him because he was rich, and he had, you know, he lived in Greece. And so, I went to Greece, but I quickly found out that he was abusive and brutal. So, I thought, I'm going to join the Army as a sort of a backup, cause I want to have something in my pocket. He did not appreciate that. He did not like the idea of his wife—he wanted a nice little submissive wife. He did not like the idea of his wife joining the Army. That was a little too strong willed for him. But he kind of—he didn't appreciate it, but he let me join. So, I went to boot camp, and I went to AIT [Advanced Individual Training], and joined the Army. And he kind of let me do that. So, yeah, that's kind of where my Army career started.

Halaska: Okay. Can you tell me about signing up for the Army? And what profession you chose? And then start telling me about basic training.

Hanson-Bailey: Well. Signing up the Army—I signed up for the Army when I was seventeen years old. So, I was seventeen when I signed up for the Army. I got my dad to sign the paperwork. He was more than willing to. I just sent him the paperwork from Greece, and said, "Dad, I'm joining the Army." He was like, okay, fine, join the Army, here's your paperwork, signed it all up. And the recruiter was more than—I came back to Milwaukee and got the recruiter, and went to the recruiter, and dad signed the paperwork easy as pie. And that was like easy—my dad was perfectly happy to do that. I joined—I basically took whatever career was available. I just wanted in cause I was kind of in desperation cause my husband was abusive, and I wanted to have something in my pocket. So, they had a—my ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] scores were really high. If I would have been smart, I would have waited, and probably chosen a

better career. But the thing that was available was traffic management coordination school, and so, I took that. And, so, I became a traffic management coordinator. Basically it's—the career is coordinating everything from trains, planes, buses, basically it's transporting everything and anything in the military. It's managing transportation of semis and railroad, railways, and airplanes, cargo. It's transporting anything for the military. It's managing transportation. That was the main thing we did.

[00:15:05]

And I went to school for—yeah, it as a six week school down in Fort Eustis, Virginia was the transportation school. I went to basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. And that had just turned into a ten week training. In fact, I was there for eight weeks, and the seventh week they said, “Oh, we've extended it to ten weeks.” And you can imagine how pleased those of us in basic training were by that little thing. We were not too happy to have basic training extended by two weeks, but that was right when they extended basic training to ten weeks from eight weeks. Yeah, that was not very pleasing to us who were in basic training. But, yeah, we did ten weeks of basic training. And six weeks of AIT.

Halaska: Can you tell me a little bit about what you learned in basic training, what kind of training did you do?

Hanson-Bailey: Well, basic training for women back then hadn't gotten to hand-to-hand combat. So, we didn't have the combat training that women have who have it now. Basic training was—we were trained on firearms, and we were trained on most of the MOS [Military Occupational Specialty], like, you know, we were trained on—I'm trying to remember all of the things we were trained on. We were trained on how to set up firing holes, we were trained on M16, we were trained on hand grenades, we were trained on MOPP [Mission Oriented Protective Posture] gear, nuclear, biological, firefighting. We were trained on, you know, how to pull apart your weapon, how to put it back together again. We were trained on grenade launchers. We were trained on all the basic things of military fire. So, we were trained on some combat stuff. I mean, it wasn't like we weren't trained on—but like, hand-to-hand combat women weren't trained on yet. That hadn't come to be in the military yet for women. But we were trained some—we were trained at least to be combat ready as women for weapon control and stuff like that. And then, you know, a variety of other stuff on basic stuff. Running, you know, you had to run a lot, and you had to go through Paragon Trail, which was the end class where you had to go under the wires, and go get shot at, and get gas thrown at you. And that was always a fun time.

I know for me basic training was—I just—military was like manna to me. I felt more at home in the military than anyone could ever imagine. I loved the military. It was—it fit me like a glove. I had always been athletic as a child, I had always been, yeah, I had been a gymnast, I had been a cheerleader, I had been very

athletic, very fit. I did more—I made the mistake of doing more push-ups than my drill sergeant, which did not go over well with my drill sergeant. She pretty much hated me from that moment forward, which was not a cool thing. But I loved the military. I was physically fit, so the physical aspects of the boot camp were like no problem for me. Mentally I was smart, and so I was able to get all the mental challenges in the military were easy for me. Everything about boot camp was easy for me. I was, you know, I was sergeant—I was given sergeant stripes in boot camp. I ended up getting PFC [Private First Class] stripes right in boot camp. I got my rank really fast cause I was so good at what I did.

I think one of the examples, one of my sergeants said, you know, when we did the run I did the run so fast that I was ahead of everybody else. Then I came back around and prodded everyone else to keep running faster and faster saying, “You’re not going to let some short shit beat you.” And so, he immediately—the drill sergeant said, “You’re a born leader. You’re born to lead. You just immediately prod other people on to be better. It’s just what you do.” And it’s what I had done in high school as a gymnast. I’d always motivated people to be better. The military and I fit like a glove. It’s what I like to do, being a leader was something I was good at, and I enjoyed the physical aspects of boot camp. And AIT, we still had drill sergeants in AIT. I don’t think they have that anymore now, they don’t have drill sergeants in AIT. But I was Platoon Sergeant in AIT also, and I loved the physical aspects. I was one of the only women in my transportation class. And my captain said, “Well, I’m not going to send you out to the field maneuvers cause I don’t feel safe having a woman go on the field maneuver alone.” And I begged her to let me go because I really trusted my guys, which probably wasn’t the smartest move because one of the drill sergeants tried to rape me during the AIT maneuver. But luckily one of my guys came into help me as I yelled out. And I took an entrenching tool and almost took of the drill sergeant’s hand. And luckily medics showed up and helped him. Or unluckily. [Laughter]

[00:20:13]

But I ended up getting a letter of recommendation from one of the other drill sergeants for handling the situation so well. But yeah. And it just—I was good at what I did. I was a good soldier. I was good at it.

Halaska: Was your basic training co-ed?

Hanson-Bailey: Basic training wasn’t co-ed. We were the class before co-ed. It went ten weeks, and then right after that it went co-ed. But the class I was in men and women were still separate.

Halaska: And then, can you just tell me, besides what you’ve already told me, kind of some of the training that you got in the AIT? What were you learning? And yeah, that whole process.

Hanson-Bailey: Well, training for traffic management coordination we learned how to count out equipment, we learned how to—god, I can't even remember after thirty years what it was that we did. [Laughs] Basically, we learned how to manage transportation of supplies, and how to stockpile it, and keep it measured out, and how to coordinate on computer systems, how to coordinate the computer systems that are set up through the military, the various computer systems that kept track of supplies that were going through the military. We learned how to do plans and preparation for exercises, how to handle shipment of troops, and supplies, so that we could coordinate troops and supply movement. We learned how to work on airplanes, and trains, and buses, and railroads. We learned how to manage weights, and size of equipment being traveled for. We had to measure for like the size of a chinook, or the size of a truckload, or the size of a planeload. Weights so that everything could be weighted out. It was like a lot of different stuff as far as transportation goes. I don't remember all the details after all these years. But basically it was like just learning how to transport items, and how to stockpile them properly.

Halaska: And with the attempted assault from your drill sergeant, was there—was it reported? And did anything kind of go through?

Hanson-Bailey: I think he was pushed out of the military at that time. He was asked to retire. Yeah. I didn't press any charges. It wasn't cool for a woman to press charges at that time. You didn't press charges. You lost your rank if you pressed charges, or you lost your chance at promotion if you pressed charges. So, you kept quiet. I was told that quite clearly by my captain. She said if you press charges you will probably lose your chance of getting rank in the future. Best to keep quiet, we'll take care of it, she said. And they did. They got rid of him. And I was completely happy with that at the time. I didn't know that there would be other assaults, and that was just going to be a part of being a soldier as a woman. Yeah, it's something you lived with as a woman in the military back then. And you learned to build—you learned to take it into your own hands, and do what you needed to do to take care of the matter.

Halaska: Can you tell me about after AIT where you were assigned, and getting your first orders?

Hanson-Bailey: Well, I went to 1st TMCA [Transportation Movement Control Agency], which was out of Oberursel, Germany. And that was great. Oberursel, Germany was wonderful. In fact, if Oberursel, 1st TMCA, and 4th Trans-Com [4th Transportation Command] were the—were located right out of Frankfurt, Germany, and it was the camp that Stalag 13 [Stalag XIII-D] and Hogan's Heroes is based on. The movie Hogan's Heroes is based on, and the movie Stalag 13. It was a Royal Air Force prison camp during WWII. Like we used to have Royal Air Force individuals come back to the camp, and visit, and be shown around by the NCO [Non-commissioned Officer] and often I would have to do that. I would

be asked to show around—and get to hear the most amazing stories from them. And so, in fact, the plan and prep—plan and exercise section, was part of the prison camp because it was buried in the plan and prep's portion of the Plan and Preparation Exercise Division, which I worked in partially for part of the time, was done in the locked area down in cellars cause a lot of it was top secret materials, and so we had it down in the cellars. And the Royal Air Force people used to go in there and tell us about how they were locked down there when they were prisoners. So, that's kind of interesting.

[00:25:07]

But, Oberursel was great. It was a beautiful camp. It had these huge building where they had the Royal Air Force—the huge building where they had the German officer's club used to be. It was a beautiful camp. It was—and we had—it was mainly we had a lot of officers at our camp because it was a headquarters camp, and so there was about 60 to 70 percent officers, and the rest of us enlisted. And so, it was a really casual camp. You know, the officers kind of like gave these half-hearted salutes like, and everybody started half-hearted saluting the officers cause you had to salute all the time otherwise. So, everybody was kind of another salute. So, the officers really treated everybody like—only when we had a butter bar, you know, somebody who was brand new, a first lieutenant—or second lieutenant who just brand new came in, who wanted the sharp salute, and everybody's like oh god, we've got to give this guy a real salute, okay. He'll get over it in a little while.

But we had this really casual atmosphere. And the officers were really fun and playful. And often the officers would invite us to the officer club. Even a private they'd invite to the officer's club. And half the time we were mixing between officers and NCOs all the time. It was a really casual camp, and we always had lots of fun. And yeah. Oberursel was the best. It was called Camp King, and it was the most fun. And everybody got along. Except for the MPs [Military Police] and everybody else. The MPs on rail guard were very uptight, and thought they were the best thing that walked the face of the earth. And everybody just kind of ignored them like okay, it's just the MPs. Just put up with them. We did have one MP who was a lesbian, who we allowed to hang out with us. She was fairly cool, and we allowed her to hang out with us. But Lisa was the only person we tolerated from the MP Division. She was the only one allowed to hang out with us. Everyone else on the MP division we're all like—they drank Budweiser, which none of us understand. We were like in Germany surrounding by excellent beer, and they were drinking Budweiser. We were like what are you people doing. So, yeah, that just explains how bad the MPs were. They were drinking Budweiser in Germany.

And they went to this one club where all of the Americans went. And we were like you're surrounded by good beer and good bars, why do you drink Budweiser and go to American bars. So, yeah, we didn't get the MPs. But Camp King was

beautiful. We were the funnest group, we had the most fun. We were all very close. We all loved each other. And it was very friendly. Like my colonel knew I was gay. And he even wanted me to date his daughter. You know, he was like can you date my daughter, she's gay, and she's really artistic. And I need somebody who's like a little more military to date her. I had to get his daughter to say she wouldn't date me so I wouldn't be the one to say no. Cause you're not going to tell your colonel that you don't want to date his daughter.

Halaska: Can you tell me about what the policies were surrounding gay and lesbian soldiers at the time? And kind of what you knew about it going into the Army?

Hanson-Bailey: When I went into the Army I thought I was completely straight. I had no idea I was gay. Well, I had had gay experiences in juvenile hall. But that was mainly self-perseveration. That was Moose was going to save my ass from getting screwed over by a bunch of other bigger people. So, Moose was somebody I knew in juvenile hall who was a protector. And so, I hung out with her, and she kept me safe, and I let her sleep with me. So, it was all self-preservation. But when I got out I ended up going with boyfriends. I had boyfriends. I acted straight. I thought I was straight. I didn't think anything of it. But when I joined the Army, and when I got married to my first husband I thought I was straight. When I divorced him I still thought I was straight. You know, I was in the Army, I thought I was straight. Up until the point where I was hanging out with a lot of gays in the military, a lot of gay men. And I knew they were gay. And I thought that's cool, I'm just hanging out with them, they're the fun guys. They went to the best bars. They had the best bars, they had the best dance clubs. So, I was like oh, I'm going to the best dance clubs, you know? And I got to go to this one dance club where they usually didn't let women in. And it was a very, very cool club. It was called C4 or something. And it was the coolest dance club. It was the best dance club. And normally they didn't let women in, but the one owner liked me, and he would let me come in. And he goes, "As long as you're not a lesbian. Lesbians fight. I don't let lesbians in. Cause lesbians always fight." And I'm like I'm not a lesbian, I won't fight, don't worry, I'm not a lesbian. So, I was allowed to go into this bar, and I had the most fun. I remember there was this guy named Tiko and I used to dance with him, and he was the most marvelous dancer, I just loved it.

[00:30:01]

And we would dance and dance all night long, it was the most fun. And there was this place called Manhattans that we used to go to ahead of time. Which is where we'd go have cocktails beforehand, and we'd all hang out at Manhattans, and then we'd go to the C4 Club and we'd dance all night long. It was the most fun, we had the most fun time. Well the gay guys all knew I was a lesbian. They all knew. And they were keeping it a secret from me. [Laughs] But finally Brian, who was my dearest friend. Brian was a sweetheart. He finally was like, "Maria, we've got to do something about this." So, he said, "I'm going to take you to Blue Moon." And I'm like, "Blue Moon's a lesbian bar. I can't go there." He goes, "Come on,

Maria. We're going to take you to Blue Moon." And I remember it was January 23rd—no, it was January 1st, 1986. January 1, 1986. I remember it was New Year's Eve. It was January 1, 1986. Yeah.

And he took me there, and I went to the bar. He pushed me in the door, and he pushed me towards the door at Blue Moon. No men could go into Blue Moon. No women could go into C4, and no men could go into Blue Moon. And he pushed me through the door, and the woman pushed open the door, and pushed up open the window ledge, and she goes, "Who is it?" And Brian goes, "It's one of yours." And I'm like freaking out. And I'm like, "Hi." And she looks out the window and she goes, "Oh, you're kind of cute." In this deep German voice. And she opens up the door and pulls me in. And I walk in the door and I see all these beautiful women, and I'm like manna. I'm thinking this is manna. And I'm like this is my place. This is my home.

And I cruise in, and I immediately, you know, I'm young, I'm muscular, I was a body builder at the time, I'm looking really good. And this table over to the left of German women, there was always—I was to find out that at this bar there was always this table of German women who like sort of owned the bar. And they kind of looked over at me, and they said, "You, come here." And I'm like what? Scared out of my mind, these are big butch women. They go, "You, baby dyke, come here." And I sat down with them and they said, "Where are you from?" "I'm from Camp King." And they went, "Oh, you're a military girl. Come here." And they start feeding me drinks, and they're laughing, and we're having a great time, and I had a wonderful time with them. And then about—it's early in the evening about six, and about eight o'clock all the Army women start roaring in. All the Army women—and they say, "Okay, here's your women. You sit with them now." And they send me over to the Army women. And I'm like I couldn't believe all of the Army women. And it was just—it was like manna. There was like Army women all over the place. We were having fun, we were dancing, we were laughing, we were having a grand time. And I just got to have the most wonderful time. And it was just like I couldn't believe the amazing experience of meeting my own, and being around all the women that were just like me. And it was—we had the most fun.

And they were from Frankfurt, they were from Heidelberg, they were from all over Germany. Well, that part of Germany. Central Germany. And we just—we had the most wonderful time. And from then on every weekend it was meeting all the guys at Manhattans, and all the lesbians and guys would meet at Manhattans and drink, and then we'd split off, the guys would go to C4, the women would go to Blue Moon, or to No Name, which was the other bar that we would hang out at. And we would all just dance, and have fun. And that's how I met Robin and Kimmy, you know, they came out the Manhattans that night. And Robin, Kimmy, and I became inseparable. They were stationed at Oberursel with me, and we became inseparable. The dynamic trio they used to call us. We were never apart after that. Robin, Kimmy, and I were never apart. We did everything together.

I remember one time we were at the base, and we would always—before Manhattans we'd order a twenty-four-case of beer, and we'd sit as soon as work got over on Friday night at four, we'd grab the beer and start drinking. And I remember one time we got Desert Heart. The movie Desert Heart. I don't know if you even know that. You're so young. The movie Desert Heart was this old lesbian film about two lesbian lovers in Las Vegas. It's about two lesbians in Las Vegas—or Reno, who fall in love. It's an old, old lesbian film. And we got a hold of it. And so, we were watching it. And we put a towel underneath the door so nobody could hear the sound of two women making love. And so, we like put a towel under the door, and we're all sitting there in the quiet. And I remember Jose and Brian are there, and Jose was straight, and Brian was gay, and Robin, Kimmy, and I were in there, and Lisa was in there from the MP station, who was our other friend who was gay, and we're all sitting there watching this movie quietly watching. Just amazed to see lesbians on our movie screen, because we had never seen lesbians on a movie screen. And we're just amazed by it. And we were just watching it with this absolute thrall. And it was so cool to see lesbians on our screen, and we were just watching it just amazed. And that was an amazing moment watching Desert Hearts. That was just a moment.

[00:35:20]

Claire of the Moon came out much later. But yeah, Desert Heart was amazing. And that was our moment. But we had a lot of moments like that. We always sat around and—we were an inseparable gang. Kimmy, Robin, and Lisa, and I were always together. But yeah, those were the days. And we would always hang out and go to Manhattans. And there were drag queen shows, so we hung out—Isaac was the owner of Manhattans, and we used to go and watch drag shows with Isaac. Isaac loved me. For some reason he thought I was the cutest. Because I was another Jew. Isaac was a Jewish man who married a German women to escape Israel as a Jewish man—as a gay man. He just adored me. He thought I was the cutest thing on the face of the earth. He always loved me. So, yeah, we had a lot of fun.

Halaska: So, at the time what were the military's—

Hanson-Bailey: Oh, I forgot to answer that question.

Halaska: Oh, it's okay.

Hanson-Bailey: That's all right. Well, the military's policy at the time I thought, my mistake, I thought the military's policy was the same as it had been pre-Reagan. I didn't realize that the policy had changed with Reagan. I thought at the time the policy was commander's discretion, which it had been during the Eisenhower time. So, I thought it had still remained the same. But I was unlucky to find out it had not. Reagan had changed the policy to be that you got kicked out at any

admission of homosexuality. So, when the time came, I had been—I had just gone to NCO academy. I had been in—like I said every—at Camp King it was pretty much accepted that Kimmy, and Robin, and I were gay by many of the people who knew us closely. We didn't talk about it. You still had to be careful. I remember when Lisa, like I told you, Lisa was our friend. And Lisa was the only person I ever asked if she was gay. You didn't ask people if they were gay. You know, you didn't walk up to somebody and say, by the way, are you gay. [Laughs] You didn't do that. You said things like, "Are you Dorothy's particular friend?" You know? And that might let you know if someone is gay if they knew that that meant you were gay.

We had an underground newspaper called Dorothy's Particular Friends that we stuck in the Stars and Stripes. I was the editor of that. And we stuck that into the Stars and Stripes at some point during my career. We did that once or—two times. We did that throughout Frankfurt. We did some underground stuff. That was the beginning of my advocacy years. It was very discreet. I remember losing a friend—a lover of mine. They were hard—yeah, we had fun, but it was also hard times. I remember losing a sergeant friend of mine who was my lover. She ended up shooting herself and her daughter because she was so scared of losing her career. And she just lost it. And she shot herself and her daughter because of her fear of losing her entire career. She was a sergeant first class in biological warfare. And she just lost it, and she shot herself and her daughter. So, I mean, it was—you know, you had wonderful fun times, you had these amazing friends, you were out to your small group of people that understood you, and got along with you. Cautiously you told people you knew.

My colonel knew. My colonel accepted me. But you didn't tell everybody. And you kept it secret from many people. My captain didn't know. Other people didn't know. But we all—we all thought it would be fine if we just stayed low profile. And we all kind of were under the impression that, you know, it would be up to our commander to decide if we got kicked out. But unluckily what had happened to me was there was this general, who at one point when I was in plan and prep division under my colonel, I had not allowed to come into a closed off area without a password. Which was completely legitimate. He should not have been allowed in without a password. But he was a general and he was pissed that I just didn't let him in. Because he was a general. And he got real pissed. And I kept saying to him, "You just need to go ask the colonel for the password, and you'd be allowed in easily, Sir, just go ask the colonel for the password and he'll let you in. It's that easy. I'm sure he'll give you the password. [Laughs] You're a general, he'll give you the password." But he was very blatant, he was just an asshole. And he was like, "Let me in." And I'm like, "I can't without the password. It would be—it's illegal for me to allow you into a top security area. This is NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] secret. I can't let you in. This is above top secret. This is NATO secret. This is plan and prep for Reforger." And he was pissed as all hell.

[00:40:20]

And so, he had a grudge against me. And I was about to get my sergeant stripes, I had just attended an NCO academy. And there was a witch hunt. That's what they called gay—nets for gays. And I was—I found out from one of my friends, who was Auntie—that was his nickname, Auntie, he was in CID at the time. I can't even remember what CID [Criminal Investigation Division] stands for. I'm trying to think, counter—it was the investigative arm of the military. I can't remember what CID stands for, but it was the investigative arm of the military. He was in CID. And he called me up and he said, "Maria, you're part of the witch hunt. They've got pictures of you with another lieutenant." And we were joking at the time, but I had put my hand over her mouth and kissed her over a fountain. She was straight. Completely innocent. She was just on vacation with us, and we were joking around. She ended up getting kicked out too, as like a lesbian. Yeah. No innocent till proven guilty, huh? But we all got pulled into the web.

And so, I was afraid that Robin and Kimmy might get affected by it too. So, I decided to go to my commander at the time and just tell him. My captain. He was a decent guy, and he respected me. I had worked for him under him directly and we had a good relationship. And I thought he'll save me. He won't—he'll protect me. So, I went to him and I said, "Colonel Caldwell [sp??] I'm gay." And I said, "I've been a good soldier. I've won soldier of the year, I've been one of the youngest specialists you've ever had. I gained ranked quickly. I've got an Army accommodation medal, an Army achievement medal, PLDC ribbons [non-commissioned officer professional development ribbon]." I said, "I've done well by you." And he said, "Maria, step out the door, think about what you're about to say, and come back in and rethink it." What do you mean? You can protect me. So, I came back in and said it again. I said, "Honestly Sir, I'm gay." And he says, "I have to kick you out." And I thought fuck. Cause Reagan changed the rules and made it so that everyone who comes out has to be removed from service immediately. He goes, "I can give you—I will do my best to get you an honorable discharge. You at least deserve that." And I was devastated. Cause I had thought I was going to spend the rest of my life in the military. I had planned twenty years in the field. I was already planning—I had already gotten a letter to go to airborne school. I had a full future ahead of me, I was planning to go to West Point. You know, everything was bright and bushy tailed. I was good to go. So, yeah. Yeah, so, it was—it was devastating.

[00:43:15]

Halaska: I just want to go back, and to just discuss before we go on to you getting removed from service, just your day to day work. What did you do, and what were your relationships like at work?

Hanson-Bailey: Basically I didn't do transport—I ended up not doing much transportation work. That kind of wasn't my thing. I ended up becoming the Colonel's

administrative assistant. When I first got to—the very first day I got to camp, Colonel Caldwell saw me and he goes, “Can you type?” And I was like, “Yeah, I can type. I went to typing school.” He goes, “Well, I need somebody who can type.” And so, I ended up at Colonel Caldwell’s office. And I ended up becoming the administrative assistant for Colonel Caldwell. Or Captain Caldwell. And so, I did that for the first about year—no, nine months that I was there. And I ended up becoming in charge of his office. I ended up becoming the non-com in charge of that office. Even though I wasn’t a non-com at the time, I ended up becoming the non-com in charge of that office. And that’s where I received my first Army achievement medal for my service there. I daily basically took care of all of the administrative stuff for the captain’s office. And handled all of the administrative stuff, giving out awards, taking care of all of the daily administrative needs for the commander’s office. Taking care of all the daily administrative needs for commander’s office. And that’s basically what I did the first nine months. Then the colonel liked my work so much, and his secretary, his civilian secretary was gone for about three months, that I ended up working under the colonel.

[00:45:05]

Then I traveled with him. We did—for three months I traveled with him. And as the headquarters USAREUR—USA/European theater, we traveled a lot and gave presentations in Russia, in England, in Paris, in Yugoslavia, and we traveled all over Europe giving presentations on various transportation styles and skills and concepts throughout Europe. Which he gave different, sort of, transportation guidelines for the European theater. And I would assist him. Put together his Power—well, they weren’t Power Points back then, back then they were transparency slides. Basically keeping in order his transparency slides. And you remember those old—what did they call them? I’m forgetting now. Oh god. Slide shows. And make sure his slide shows were all in perfect order. And then creating new ones for him. And on occasion when he got too drunk, presenting them. Cause he did have a drinking problem. And so, on a rare occasion I had to present them too. And that’s when I became really good at presenting slide shows, which would later pay off for me. Cause now I’m a presenter myself. So, I learned to get over my stage fright. Which was really helpful for me as a presenter. I ended up becoming a very good presenter because of him. So, he got—he helped me become a much better presenter.

But we traveled together, and I basically took care of all of his hotel arrangements, all of his—which helped me become a much better coordinator for the work I did later in my life. So, hotel arrangements, airplane flights, you know, coordinating all of his transportation, any trains we were taking, any transportation needs. And so, I made sure I managed all of his transportation needs. So, I did that for about three to four months, and we traveled all over the place doing that. And then, Colonel Wells, who was the transportation—or the colonel for Plans and Prep Division really wanted to have me, because he had heard about all of my work. So, he got me to come over to transportation—or

Plans and Preps Division, so that I could do Reforger with him. Reforger was the largest—it was the largest overseas exercise that brought over the largest group of Reserve and National Guard soldiers from—over to European theater. Every—I don't think they do it anymore, but I think they—now that we have a war going on full-time there's no sense in bringing over people because we bring over so many for war. But at that time there was no war going on, so they would have an exercise called Reforger every year. And they bring over people from National Guard and Reserves over to European Germany Sector. And transportation was necessary for that to bring over all the equipment, all the needs. And so, Plan and Exercise Division in Germany would handle all the transportation needs. And so, I worked with Colonel Wells to help organize the number of staff that we needed to plan that. And so, I did that for Colonel Wells. I was his administrator for that. So, I worked directly with him. My job was to basically administer the personnel needed to do that, to plan the administrative needs for that. I worked with him on that. Yeah, so I worked with a lot of colonels.

That was kind of my thing. I did a lot of administrative—so I was an administrator basically. And I did a lot of NCO stuff. Luckily—I was about to get my NCO stripes before I got kicked out. So, they liked me a lot. Colonels fought over me.

Halaska: Yeah, right? Can you tell me all the places that you traveled in Europe? Were there any places that—can you tell me any stories about that, or any places that you liked in particular?

Hanson-Bailey: Well, I had—yeah. There were so many. [Laughs] I loved them all. I loved them all. Yugoslavia was wonderful. Let me think. Nijmegen, Holland was my favorite place to go. Nijmegen, Holland was beautiful. There was this Duchess that was there. I remember I was sitting in Nijmegen, Holland, there was a—every place—I think every town in Europe has this. They have this like—not every town. But so many of them had these town squares in Europe. Where you sit out in it, and like people will bring cheese, and beer, and like food, and pass it around, and you can eat for free, and drink all day for free almost. But, you know, we're sitting out there, and there's a couple of us. There was like three or four of us sitting there. And we're drinking, and we're all sitting there. And, you know, we're so young, and we were so beautiful back then. [Laughs] We were just so good back then.

[00:50:03]

But we were sitting there and this beautiful woman comes up. And she comes over to us and goes, "I'm a Duchess." And we laughed like all right, really? Like really, you're a Duchess. And she's like, "Really, I am." And we're like, "Come on, really?" And she's like, "Really I am." And we're like, "Okay. Sure, you're a Duchess. Where's your castle?" And she goes, "Come with me." And she takes us to her castle. [Laughs] And she goes, "This is my family home." And it wasn't

quite a castle, but it was close. It was kind of this really, really nice mansion. And so, we ended up becoming really close friends with her. And we ended up going there all the time to Nijmegen, Germany and hanging out with her in her house. And having these wonderful times. And we'd have these parties in her house. And we had these wonderful times hanging out with her.

But the thing is, we had to keep it secret because her mother didn't know she was gay. And so, we would go visit whenever her mom was on trips. She would call us up and say, "My mom's off on a trip." And we'd come and party at her house. And have these lovely decadent gay parties. And then, you know, when her mom wasn't there we'd hang out and have parties, and we'd do these great things. So, that was just one of the funner things. And then we—and then another friend of mine lived in Paris and we ended up—got hooked up with the S&M [Sodomasochism] world. Which is kind of an interesting world. That was kind of weird and wild. Got hooked up with that a little bit. That got a little scary. But that was an interesting world. My colonel got me out of that. I almost got in trouble at some point, and my colonel saved my ass on that one. I hadn't gotten like—I had got—I went to this bar where this woman called Alexa was in charge. And I was in this bar—

Alexa: Having trouble connecting to the internet. Take a look at the help section in your Alexa app.

Hanson-Bailey: Forgot that name is the same. [Laughs] But I got into this bar—I won't use that name again. So, I got into the bar, and I got myself in trouble. And I didn't know how to get out of it. And it was kind of, you know, it was getting kind of tough. And so, luckily there was a phone on the wall, and so I called my colonel, and I said, "Sir, you need to get me out of here." And so, luckily he had a French—the French police. He had them raid the bar. Cause he was a colonel, so he could get a raid on the bar. And they got me out of there. And so, that was a fun story that the French police saved my ass. But then the French jokingly said I had to leave the country. Jokingly said I have to leave the country. But that was an amazing experience. And my colonel was like, "You need to stay away from those kind of troubles, Maria." So, he told me never to mess with S&M again. But, yeah, that was my colonel saved me from that troublesome thing. And I'm grateful for that. That was my experience in France, in Paris, France.

A fun story. One time I was in Russia. And Russia, when you're in—back when it was an Eastern bloc country, you always had to wear your uniform whenever you were in an Eastern bloc country. You couldn't be in an Eastern bloc country out of military uniform. So, we had just started going in Eastern bloc countries. It was just cool—the Cold War was just starting to warm up a little bit. And so, we had been invited to Russia to show some of our transportation program to Russia. I went there with my colonel. Without my colonel's permission, I decided to use my Israel—my husband was a—I never said this, my second husband was an Israeli—was originally born an Israeli citizen. So, I had a secondary passport,

which was Israeli. And so, I used my secondary passport, and I put it on my, and I dressed in civilian clothes, and went out on the Russian thing thinking I could hang out. I'm an alcoholic, so I wanted to drink with the Russians thinking that would be cool. I'm a little bit of a wildcat. So, I go out, and I start drinking in a bar. And all of the sudden, an entire group of Navy Russian sailors comes cruising into the bar. And I'm like oh shit, I'm in trouble now. So, I'm quietly sitting at the bar, trying to mind my own business, and trying to figure out how I'm going to get out of this bar without them noticing. Well, they immediately see a young, cute woman, and they're a bunch of Navy sailors. They're not going to let me get out of this bar unscathed. So, they come over to me, and they're starting to talk to me. And I'm trying to figure out what accent I'm going to use other than an American accent. Which I'm not really good at doing accents. So, I'm trying to figure out what to do. And finally, I'm just like, "I'm an American. Help."

[00:55:03]

And they're like, "An American! Wonderful!" And they start all talking English, and they're talking to me, they're chatting with me, they're having a fun time. We start singing songs, they're teaching me Navy sailor songs from Russia. We're having a great time. But it gets past curfew. And there's curfews in Russia. And nobody's allowed—except for the Navy—the sailors can be out past curfew. But I've got to get back to the Embassy. So, I'm scared shitless. The Navy sailors surround me. I'm four foot ten. They're surrounding me. Nobody can see me in the middle of the sailors. And so, the sailors take me to the Embassy, part ways, and I walk into the Embassy. The Marines at the Embassy are going, "What the hell are you doing?" I'm like, "Just let me in." [Laughs] Luckily these Marines are fairly decent. I mean, you can get some pretty hard ass Marines. Luckily they let me in, and I'm like, "Thank you god."

And I get into the embassy. But my colonel finds out about this. I end up almost Article 15. If my colonel did not love me, I would have easily been Article 15'ed, easily. He forgave me. I luckily got in without any charges. Cause—oh, that was a miracle. But I'll never forget my days with the Navy sailors. They were the fun—they were wild, they were wild. So, that was my experience in Russia that was pretty fun. Yeah, I had some wild times. I like my adventures. But yeah, I'm trying to think if there was any other adventures that I had that were—I enjoyed traveling. I did travel with my husband, my second husband, to Asia. Didn't like Asia as much. I found Asia to be most—other than Japan. Japan was immensely clean. But I didn't like Japan because of the ethnocentricity. They're very, very—they're as racist as we are here in America. They don't like a lot of different backgrounds. And then the rest of Asia was very dirty. My husband loved Asia. But I really loved Europe more. I loved traveling in Europe more. He loved traveling in Asia more. And so, he would mainly travel in Asia, I would mainly travel in Europe. Most of our vacations were separate. We got along better that way.

My husband and I were both—he was bi. I fell more on the lesbian sphere. Our marriage was convenience and love. It was an interesting marriage. We loved each other dearly, sexual we weren't that active together, but we both loved each other dearly. We often joked that our love was the deepest friendship we ever had. We were inseparable in many ways. We—but it was a marriage of convenience, but it was also a marriage of deep love. We did love each other dearly. He was a sweet man.

Halaska: Okay. Can you—is there anything else about your work that you did, or anything during that time period else that you would like to talk about before we start talking about when you were discharged?

Hanson-Bailey: Let me think. Not really. I think—yeah, I enjoyed the work I did with the—I think the work we did—it was interesting during that time period Frankfurt got bombed. That was when the mall got bombed. They were interesting times. It was a Cold War. The Germans did not like us—the young Germans did not like us there. There was a lot of tension. The Turkish—there was the beginnings—it was the very early signs of the kind of Turkish and Arabic anti-American feelings were just starting, just barely starting. Some of us who were in the know, cause I was with the colonels, and I started hearing stuff from them. Started hearing stuff that was happening, so there was some knowledge of that. It was interesting, when 9/11 happened, I wasn't at all surprised. Cause I had rumors. And so, I kind of knew—I knew that—I mean, when the terrorists happened at 9/11, my surprised wasn't that it happened, but it was how it happened. It's like, ah, that's interesting, I wouldn't have thought of that. And that was my reaction. It wasn't that it happened, it was how it happened. I knew something was going to happen. I knew sooner or later they were going to attack. And they were going to attack on American soil. It was just how they attacked that surprised me. And so, we—I knew the tensions were high. I knew that the Arabic nations were going to be our next enemy. I knew that from my travels, cause I had traveled in northern Africa, and I had seen the Arabic tensions.

[01:00:04]

I had done some traveling with my colonel in northern Africa, and Turkey a couple of times we had traveled for the transportation stuff. So, I had seen some of the tensions. There had been tensions with the Turkish government. And so, I knew that it was there. And so, yeah, it wasn't at all surprising to me.

Halaska: Could you describe for me a little bit more in detail about the bombing in Frankfurt?

Hanson-Bailey: Yeah, it's interesting cause I was downstairs when it happened. We were at the Frankfurt PX [Post Exchange], and that day we were all shopping—Kimmy, Robin, and I were shopping at the PX in Frankfurt, Germany. That's the large PX that's there. It's got most of the stuff. And I can't remember the exact

date. Surprisingly. You'd think that would be burnt in my memory, but I can't remember the exact date. But we were at the Frankfurt PX, and we were—Kimmy, Robin, and I went downstairs—the U-Bahn station was under the PX. And we went downstairs in U-Bahn, and all of the sudden we heard this shake, and this bang go shake the U-Bahn station. And dust coming down off the top. And we—we went back upstairs, and somebody said, “The PX has been bombed.” And we were like, “Is everybody okay?” And they said, “There's been some injuries, nobody died.” And we were like, shit. So, the MPs were already there saying, “Go back to your camp, go back to your camp, report back to your camp right away, report back to your camp.” And so, we went back—or report back to your base is what they said. “Report back to your base.” And we reported back to our camp. And we had heard that there was a couple of Turks that had gotten into the PX using American IDs, and had planted a bomb in the front of the PX, and it had gone off. And we were just—we were grateful that weren't at the PX at the time. And that there were only a few injuries, and that nobody had died. But, yeah.

And my sister, Jewel, had been—we knew it would—my sister Jewel had been at a—my sister Jewel had been in the Army about six years earlier—she had been in the Air Force six years earlier than me. And she had been in a disco when a bomb had gone off in I believe near Rhein-Main, which is not far from Frankfurt.

Halaska: What was that name again?

Hanson-Bailey: Rhein-Main. I believe it was Rhein-Main. It's not far from Frankfurt either, it's right near Frankfurt. She was—I think it was near—I think it was—I can't remember exactly where that was located. That's the airport. So, I think that's not it. But she had been in Germany too, and she had been in a German disco, and that bomb had gone off there too. You know, my family had been accustomed to being around that stuff. It just—there was a lot of hostile feelings towards the military. Especially from young Germans. The older Germans loved us. The older Germans loved us. I mean, they still had the whole WWII appreciation for us coming in and saving them from Hitler. But the young Germans had a lot of hostility towards—and the Turks really were out to get us. The Arabic nation was not happy to have us around.

Halaska: Okay. Is there any other details or stories you'd like to describe from that time?

Hanson-Bailey: No.

Halaska: Okay. So, where we kind of left off before was you came out to your captain. And he said he had to end your service. So, can you tell me about that process, and about that time?

Hanson-Bailey: That had to be the most devastating time of my life. Yeah, I told him probably in about November of '88. And then I was—my clearance was taken

away from me, and I was barely allowed to do any work. My commander—Colonel Wells felt horrible, so he tried to keep me busy, cause he knew me working was the only thing that would save my soul. So, he tried to keep me as busy as he could, even though I didn't have a clearance. But basically I would do my work, go back to my—I couldn't talk to anyone. I mean, I couldn't talk to Kimmy or Robin because I couldn't in any way have them be connected to me, so I had to drop my friendship completely with everybody that I was connected to, cause I didn't want anyone to look gay around me. So, everybody who was my friend had to be—I couldn't talk to anybody on base. Some of the guys would talk to me cause they felt—they were straight, and they felt safe enough. But all of my female friends wouldn't talk to me. Only on sergeant—the sergeant—or the NCO at—NCO at the barracks. Cause I moved back to the barracks cause I had to separate from my husband to save him. So, I acted like we were separating.

[01:05:26]

She would be the only one who would talk to me cause she was married, and she felt safe talking to me. But everyone else had to stay as clear from me as possible. And so, I just drank. I drank myself silly. I think my alcoholism went to a high pitch. And I was lost, I was devastated. My whole career was gone. Everything I dreamed of was gone. I was completely lost. And I just drank myself silly. It was the worst time of my entire life. I didn't know what to do with myself, I didn't know what I would do. I had no idea what my future held. I really couldn't even imagine a future at that time. And I was completely lost and confused. Everything I believed in had been tossed aside. And between November and January and being kicked out, I just, you know, I realized I had lost everything I held most dear. I mean, Colonel Wells, and Captain Caldwell, they all tried their best. I mean, I know Captain Caldwell made sure I got the Army accommodation medal. They all tried to be as kind as they could. They got me an honorable discharge. They tried their best to make it as manageable as possible. But it was just the most devastating time in my life. And when I got out, I just continued to drink.

Halaska: What—did you have to go before anyone and make statements?

Hanson-Bailey: They asked me write a statement, and I wrote a statement. I wrote a very damning statement to the military. But I—Captain Caldwell got me out as quickly as possible so that I wouldn't have to—the general was trying to rush a CID investigation to pull me in to start a web, to make me have to do—to get everybody in my life pulled in. But Colonel Caldwell got me out as quickly as possible cause he knew—he didn't want people like Robin or Kimmy pulled in. And thank god he got me out as quickly as possible to get me out of there so that I wouldn't have to pull in my friends. The goal was to get me out as quickly as possible with an honorable discharge so I wouldn't have to speak up. And Captain Caldwell tried his best to do that. So, I didn't have to make any statement with my friends. The only statement I made was—I made a statement that the military was

losing the best damn soldier they ever could have had. And I made a very scathing statement to the military.

Halaska: Can you tell me what it was like coming home then?

Hanson-Bailey: I can only say—my father was an interesting man. When I called my father to tell him I was getting kicked out, my father, who had been a Vietnam, and Korean veteran said, “Maria, they’re losing one of the finest soldiers they could have ever had.” My father was very compassionate, he was very friendly. I would later find out that my father was gay. Which was an interesting thing to find out. And I found out that he had a lover, who was a general, who ended up becoming a dear friend of mine. And so, I would later find a lot about that. Years later. Many years later, that my father’s gay relationship that he had in the military. But at the time, when I told him, I didn’t know any of this. And I just knew that my father was very compassionate towards me, and very understanding towards me as a gay—as a lesbian. I still had to come home and be on my own. My dad didn’t take me in. He didn’t give me a place to stay or anything. He let me stay at the house for like two weeks, and then said, “Got to find a place to stay. You’re on your own. Suck it up.” So, I ended up moving to Madison, because it seemed like the most liberal place to move to. Ended up getting a job working in a fast food restaurant. And then slowly worked myself up to being a secretary again. My drinking got in the way of a lot of things. I had a hard time—I didn’t have a hard time holding a job cause I was good at work. But I just—and I think I always good—I was always a hard worker. So, that wasn’t really the hard part. I was always able to work my way—I mean, even drunk I was a better worker than most people are sober. So, that was always kind of like my thing. Even as a drunken slob I was a better worker than most people sober. So, I was able to get jobs and keep jobs pretty easily.

[01:10:12]

And then I went to get my associate degree at MATC [Milwaukee Area Technical College]. I got an associate’s degree in human service. Graduated at the top of my class. Still drinking, still drugging. And then I decided to get my internship at Outreach. All of this time I decided to sort of do battle. And I decided to fight ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] off campus. Did that for a few years and fought with that. We never did win that, but we did fight that for a lot of years.

Halaska: What was that?

Hanson-Bailey: ROTC off campus? It was a fight to get our ROTC—our ROTC—the officer’s club—the ROTC program off campus. To kick it off campus. It didn’t happen, but we also fought for gays in the military. We did that for years, and we continued that fight for many years. And I had a part in playing helping change the part of military, I mean, we fought that fight for many years. Ended up winning Lesbian of the Year for my work at the Gay Pride marches. I ran the Gay

Pride march for about six years. Ran a radio program, and gay/lesbian—gay magazine outreach on WORT. I was in gay—I worked for OutReach for about three years as an intern, and as a volunteer coordinator. Did a lot of stuff for gay movement. I became an advocate. For thirty years I was an—still am to this day. For thirty years I've been an advocate in gay rights, in domestic violence, and animal rights. I've done it all. When I left the military I put down the gun, and I took up the word of mouth, and became an advocate. I decided to fight battles with word of mouth instead of with a gun. I chose to fight for people's rights. Gays' rights at first, and then domestic violence, now mental health. I have chosen to be an advocate for all these years because I believe that the underdog deserves a voice. And I've made a point of doing that now. Now I work in the mental health field, cause I've struggled with mental health issues. And yeah. Still the fighter. Always will be. Can just—where it comes from.

Halaska: When you left the service you said you got an honorable discharge. Were you able to use any of your veteran benefits?

Hanson-Bailey: I never—I left—I was only in the military for enough time—they got me out of the military just in time to make it so that it was two days short of getting my student loan benefits, my student benefits. So, I was not able to get any of the student benefits, and I never used any of the other benefits. I never wanted anything from them. I've never taken out my VA [Veterans Administration] Loan benefits. I could if I wanted to. I have used the VA hospital benefits when I had no insurance, but after being raped at the VA hospital, I've chosen never to go back there again. Now it's a fairly good program. And I've seen women being treated fairly decently there, and so I've gone back to support women at the hospital. I'll probably never go back there again. But I've supported women there. They have a good program now.

Halaska: Would you like to tell me more about that incident?

Hanson-Bailey: Probably not, for the sake of the VA hospital. It's a good hospital program now. I'll give them a break on that one. There was—it was a time when they didn't have very good resources for women at that hospital, but now they do. They do. The VA hospital does a good job of supporting women at the VA hospital now. And so, it was a time when they did not have good resources for women, and the VA psych unit was not a good place for women because there was a lack of resources for women. But they really are trying their best right now, and so I'd like to give them a break and say they really are trying their best. You know?

Halaska: Did you get together with any veteran groups after your service?

Hanson-Bailey: No. I've really—I haven't really hung out—you know, the VFWs and the Legions, I think they're all—I think they've changed. I mean, they used to be drinking halls for veterans. So, for me being sober I haven't really wanted to hang

out in drinking places. But I think looking at the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars]—I mean, I have some friends of mine now who work at the American Legion, and work at the VFW. And I think the VFW and the Legions are doing some really good work. And they now have women leaders in those organizations. And I think they're doing really good. And I even thought more recently—I know now that I'm fifty I'm getting older. [Laughs] Older, not old, but older. I've thought about joining. I have a friend of mine who's like come on, join the Legion, we really need women like you. And I think they're really do some really great work for veterans. They have been doing some really great work in helping veterans get their benefits. And so, I really honor that.

[01:15:15]

But, you know, I just don't hang out with old veterans that much except down at the restaurant. And the whole, you know, hanging out talking about the old day of Vietnam veteran. I'm not a combat veteran, so it's like I don't really talk the talk, and I'm not that—and you know, straight veterans and gay veterans have a very different—very different look at their time in the service. And we don't talk the same language. And we don't—you know, I can only go so far in talking about my time in the military with a straight veteran in the long haul.

Halaska: Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Hanson-Bailey: Well, when I'm with a straight veteran I can talk about—we can talk about—we can joke around a bit about—I mean, we joke around about basic training, and boot camp, and what happened, and the grunting, and the groaning, and the oorah, oorah. But the fears, and the hiding, and the losses of like I can't talk about Sergeant Bobby and her—and the fact that she killed her daughter and herself cause she was scared of losing her career. That's something a straight soldier will never understand, that kind of fear, that kind of haunting, that kind of loss. They'll never get that. They'll never get why a women would take her life and her daughter's life because she's so scared of losing her career. There are just things—they'll never understand the fact that I had to sacrifice my friendships with my best friends for thirty years so that Robin could have a career in the military. For thirty years—for twenty years. And not be able to get back together with my best friend in the Army for twenty years. Till after her career was done, so that we could be friends again. To keep her safe so that she could have her career. There are things we had to sacrifice. I sacrificed my career. My whole military career to make sure that Robin and Kimmy were safe.

Those are things straight soldiers would never understand that you do. And yet, those are the very things that make you a good soldier. Those are the sacrifices you make to be a good soldier. And that's something a straight soldier should understand, but never will. They'll never understand the sacrifices we made as gays. That Auntie took a risk of telling me that somebody was searching for me. And he could have lost his career. He might have lost his career. I don't know. I

don't know what price he paid by telling me. I don't know what happened to him. So yeah, there's a lot of things they don't get that we paid for, we sacrificed. That our—a certain war we fought that they—a silent war we fought that they will never get.

Halaska: Thank you. In your opinion, I guess what changes have been most important in the past few years for—

Hanson-Bailey: Well, I think a friend of mine, a colonel, who was a lieutenant when I was in, who was able to keep her career and serve all the way through, she came home from Iraq and she was—her battalion, I believe it was battalion, when she got home from Iraq—or Afghanistan, I can't remember if it was Afghanistan or Iraq, but they were—every time you come home they sometimes will have a welcome for one soldier. A special welcome for one soldier. And so, she was coming home and she was retiring. And they made sure that on her coming home that her wife and children would be there to greet her. And that her wife and children would be the first ones to welcome her home. And so, for the first time ever her wife and her children were waiting to welcome her home. And to me, that was the biggest change was her wife and her children get to be the first ones to welcome their mother home. So, it's moments like that that are truly a changing military when someone gets to see their wife and their children, and be honored as if that's a family. And that is a family. That is a powerful moment. I wish I could have been there to see it.

[01:20:18]

And so that, to me, that's what I fought for. That's what I struggled for for years for gay rights. So, yeah, I mean times have changed. I think of people like my niece who are young. Well, she's in her thirties, so she's old now. But, you know, people who are younger. I think of—I can now look at a seventeen-year-old lesbian and say, go ahead and join the Army, it's a good career. I don't know if I'd say that right now the way things are. But, you know, I mean, it's an option now. I don't have to worry about you hiding and denying. You can join and be yourself. Can't say that for transgenders, cause that's gotten bad again. And there's even a little fear for gays with Pence in. But, you know, times, you know, are a little better. It would be better if Trump wasn't in. It would make you feel a little more secure. But it's better. At least we've got some protections. Luckily the generals are very clear that they don't want to change policy. They like it the way it is. Yeah. Times have changed. Times have changed.

Halaska: Why was it important for you to do an oral history interview that focused on your time in the military, and also your sexual orientation?

Hanson-Bailey: So, no one has to say Dorothy's particular friends anymore. I think it's important—there's not a whole lot of us left. A lot of the gays are dead of AIDS

that were my generation. A lot of the lesbians that served are dead of alcoholism or drug addiction. A lot of the women my age, in their fifties and sixties, aren't around anymore. And so, hearing our story before the Don't Ask Don't Tell—I'm a generation of before the Don't Ask Don't Tell. We were a generation that were kicked out, that didn't have options. We didn't even have the option of hiding. We were hunted like animals. We lost our careers, we lost our dreams. We lived in the shadows. And I think it's important to tell our story. And like so many of us, there was beauty and fun. I remember the T dances on Sundays, when we go to Frankfurt and dance in this beautiful Grecian dance party place in Oberursel in Frankfurt. And it was the most fun, and we were beautiful people, and we had the most gay time. And it was absolutely marvelous. Champagne flowed and we had fun. And we were fully alive. But then we had to walk back to the base and go back into hiding. But we were proud to serve, and we were good at what we did. We were good at our jobs. And we deserved the respect of being soldiers that were good at our jobs. But we had to do it in hiding. And yeah. I think it is cool that today soldiers don't have to be in hiding. I would do anything to step back fifty years and be able to be a soldier to proudly be gay and proudly serve. That would be cool. That would be a moment. And I can't ever have that. But that would be cool.

Halaska: Okay, is there anything else that you would like to add?

Hanson-Bailey: No.

[End of OH2133.Hanson-Bailey_access.mp3]

[End of interview]