

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
PAMELA L. BERG  
Occupational Therapist, U.S. Army Reserves, Vietnam War  
2007

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**Berg, Pamela L.** [b. 1928]. Oral History Interview, 2007.

User Copy: 1 sound cassette [ca. 45 min.]; analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Copy: 1 sound cassette [ca. 45 min.]; analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **Abstract**

Berg discusses her service with the Army Reserves from 1972 to 2000 and her experiences as a civilian occupational therapist at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tomah [Wisconsin] during the Vietnam War. She speaks of her father's service in World War II, and of her brother's service in Vietnam. Graduating from high school in Cashton [Wisconsin] in 1966, she attended Stout State College for one year, transferring to the University of Kansas and graduating in occupational therapy. Berg worked at the VA hospital in Tomah from 1970 to 1973, where she helped set up a six-week program to assist returning veterans who were having difficulty adjusting to being home. She explains that some were transferred while others were referred to the program or earned their way off of locked psychiatric wards. Berg explains that many veterans suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, but there was no name for it at the time. She describes the program as including group and individual therapy, work detail, and assessments. Berg relates that therapy focused on realizing you are not alone and that success came to those who came into the program looking for something. She reveals that some veterans were mentally retarded and were brought into the armed services through the draft and touches on the relapses of chronically mentally ill veterans and "free-loaders." Berg left the VA and went to work at the University of Texas and then on to Utah where she worked at a state training school and developed a program for handicapped preschoolers. After this, she returned to Tomah to work with the mentally ill and those in acute alcohol rehabilitation. She was a first lieutenant in the Army Reserve for the 44<sup>th</sup> General Hospital, was on active duty in Fort Carson [Colorado], Fort Sam [Texas], and worked in a burn unit at Brooke Army Medical Center. Berg tells about her participation in competitive rifle marksmanship from 1978 to 1987 and the sexism she had to overcome to be a part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army Team. She was a captain with the 328<sup>th</sup> General Hospital when she joined the combat rifle team in Salt Lake City [Utah]. She served on inactive duty from 1987 to 2000 and her highest rank was lieutenant colonel. Berg recalls that working with veterans gave her goals and direction. She finds the current veterans hospital conditions inexcusable.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Pam Berg was born in Sparta, Wisconsin and grew up on a dairy farm in Cashton. She married Vietnam veteran, Michael Berg, in 1983 and currently resides in Middleton, Wisconsin.

Interviewed by Jim Kurtz, 2007.

Transcribed by Becky Berhow, 2007.

Format corrected by Katy Marty, 2007.

Transcription edited by Christina M. Ballard, 2008.

**Interview Transcript:**

- Kurtz: My name is Jim Kurtz and today is March 19th, 2007. I'm with Pam Berg at her home in Madison, Wisconsin, interviewing her on how the Vietnam War affected her life as an employee for the VA and married to a Vietnam veteran. Pam, when and where were you born?
- Berg: I was born in Sparta, Wisconsin.
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: In 1948.
- Kurtz: And what was the date of birth?
- Berg: 4-14.
- Kurtz: 4-14-48. And where -- did you grow up in
- Berg: I grew up in Cashton.
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: On a dairy farm.
- Kurtz: And did you go to high school -- where did you go to high school?
- Berg: In Cashton
- Kurtz: Okay. And what year did you graduate from high school?
- Berg: 1966.
- Kurtz: And what did you do -- and when you were growing up, were there any veterans that had any influence on you, like father, uncles, aunts, or anything like that?
- Berg: My father was a World War II veteran.
- Kurtz: Did he ever discuss his military career with you?
- Berg: No, he didn't. He had a very hard time in the service and when he came home he dealt with it as other World War II veterans dealt with it and he had many, many pressures on him. His mother took her own life and he was in Milwaukee at a sanitarium for a 12 day rest and he came home and dealt with it.
- Kurtz: So he just never really just dealt with it after that?

Berg: After that and just recently my father, who is 82, and just recently within the last three or four years I've had two conversations with him about his service and I've been the only one that was brave enough to approach him about it because it's been something we just don't talk about.

Kurtz: What branch was he in?

Berg: He was in the Army

Kurtz: He was in the Army.

Berg: Signal Corps.

Kurtz: The Signal Corps, and did he serve in the Pacific or the European --

Berg: He served in the Pacific.

Kurtz: Okay. What did you do then after high school, Pam?

Berg: I went to Stout in Menomonie for my freshman year of college and then I transferred to the University of Kansas where I got my degree.

Kurtz: And what did you get your degree in?

Berg: Occupational therapy.

Kurtz: So that was the University of Kansas or Kansas State?

Berg: University of Kansas, in Warren.

Kurtz: Okay. And what did you do with this occupational therapy degree?

Berg: Well, I came back to Wisconsin and I worked for the Veteran's Administration in Tomah.

Kurtz: And when did you start there?

Berg: And I worked there from September of 1971 until October of 1974.

Kurtz: And what were --

Berg: I'm sorry, those dates are wrong. September, 1970.

Kurtz: Okay.

Berg: Because I began working before I graduated. I graduated in January of 71 and I left in October of 73.

Kurtz: 73. Okay. And what were your duty assignments there?

Berg: I was a staff there first and I was working with chronic mentally ill veterans and also with a [Inaudible] veterans who would come in on the walk boards and then become -- be transferred to different wards. I worked in the chronic setting and I later became part of a hand-picked staff that worked with a pilot program. We were charged from Washington with setting up a program to serve returning Vietnam veterans. It was a six week program and it was very successful.

Kurtz: So were these veterans all at Tomah already, were they in the hospital that were in the six week or this program or where did they come from?

Berg: They came from other hospitals. They were transferred there. Some came by referral directly. Others came to us by way of the locked ward. They had to earn their way off the locked ward and into the program.

Kurtz: Can you describe what the locked ward was?

Berg: Locked ward was a very secure setting where it was very regimented. We were under total supervision and they had to come in and have medications, assessments, and be stabilized before they could -- privileges could be off the ward.

Kurtz: These were not criminals, these were people that just had mental difficulties, is that accurate?

Berg: Yes. Yes. They had an episode where they just often times they would be deemed safer there than somewhere else. Also they would arrive by police car, by personal vehicle, people would bring them there, ambulance.

Kurtz: Okay. These people that had these mentally difficulties, were they military related?

Berg: Yes and no. We found that many of the veterans that went into service were looking for something different and often times they had difficulties before they went in and at that time often times judges gave them choices to go to jail or go to the service. So we would get many of those veterans who --

Kurtz: And what age level were these, were they pretty young?

Berg: Yes. Yes. We were getting -- well, we had veterans there, of course, we with the loss [Inaudible] the World War II veterans, they served their country and VA's philosophy years ago was then we'd take care of the veterans and we had many chronic veterans, but the young vets, the Vietnam veterans were quite young.

Kurtz: Were their difficulties triggered by their experiences or alcohol or drugs or all of the above?

Berg: All of the above. They were using alcohol to self medicate often times. A lot of times they had PTSD, which we didn't call PTSD until the 80s. But it was -- it was a known fact. Many of them were genuinely and sincerely interested in improving and finding a reason why they couldn't readjust and really asking for help and others were chronically mentally ill, so we had -- they fell in two different categories.

Kurtz: So what was your responsibilities in this pilot program?

Berg: I was in the chronicle setting and part of the treatment team. We assessed the veterans, we had them on a very regimented program, where they had work assignments in the morning, they had group therapies and individual therapies, they had activities where their work abilities were assessed.

Kurtz: Okay. So what kind of work assignments did they have?

Berg: They might be assigned to the outside detail. They might be assigned to one [Inaudible] therapy, to the laundry, any of the services that provide -- any of the --

Kurtz: Okay. The support services for the operation of the hospital?

Berg: They could be handled in that setting and they could then be assessed and their performance could be assessed. Many times they came in, they would come to the program and were very fragile and those were the ones I dealt with in a clinical setting. I would take them on a work detail in the occupational therapy clinic and could really keep a close eye on them.

Kurtz: What would do you with them in the occupational therapy clinic?

Berg: We would have them maybe doing project preparation for other veterans, they could be doing cleaning tasks, just the fact of when they showed up, could they stay the entire time, the two and a half or three hour work assignment, I believe it was in the morning; just seeing if they could function.

Kurtz: Okay.

Berg: Basically.

Kurtz: How many would you have under your supervision when you were doing that in the veterans?

Berg: Well, when they were very ill -- the program, you mean?

- Kurtz: Yes. When you were doing in the project room, how many veterans would you have with you on a two hour shift or whatever?
- Berg: Oh, they would come in for, depending on how ill they were, if it was in the locked ward, for instance, they might be there for 35 or 45 minutes.
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: And I had assistants who worked with me and --
- Kurtz: How many veterans would you have under your supervision through one of those sessions?
- Berg: Maybe fifteen.
- Kurtz: Okay. So you did need help?
- Berg: Uh-hum. [Yes] Plus having one of these veterans assigned to me to the -- lot of one-on-one supervision is these young fellows who would come in as a work detail.
- Kurtz: I would assume that this was mentally zapping, was that --
- Berg: It was. It was. But I really enjoyed it.
- Kurtz: So you had a session like that in the morning, then you said that following that there would be a group therapy, were you involved in those too?
- Berg: Sometimes, yes. Generally they were run by the social worker --
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: -- and the psychologist.
- Kurtz: And what was the focus there?
- Berg: I guess dealing with the issues and just finding out that they weren't the only ones who were dealing with those issues and just sharing with how the group was functioning and why certain people were having problems in the group. It all came back to their military experience oftentimes and just trying to deal with it, being able to make sense of it, and dealing with family problems, readjusting when they came back.
- Kurtz: What was the success rate for this type of treatment?
- Berg: You know, it depended on, we had the chronic mentally ill or those with other issues, maybe mild retardation, that was at the time when we had a draft.

- Kurtz: Uh-hum.
- Berg: So we had a different level of veterans. It was very, very different group of veterans then, and the success rate was generally much higher for those who came and generally who were looking for answers, I can't read the number.
- Kurtz: Okay. What would happen with the ones that you weren't successful with?
- Berg: Oftentimes they ended up back on the locked ward and they could be put out of the program. It was a six week program.
- Kurtz: Okay. And then they'd just -- so basically that was the expectation, they'd come there for six weeks and either you'd be fixed or you wouldn't, is that --
- Berg: No, it was -- there was a sense of completion. I guess they -- they really enjoyed being able to say that they completed the six weeks.
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: Of this kind of a goal.
- Kurtz: So that then they would go back to where they were before, whether they were living in Mauston or Minneapolis or wherever?
- Berg: Some stayed on in the hospital, some were still in the hospital, some came back many times. Of course, we had the patterns where they were annually reassessed and wanted to maintain their 100 percent disability. There were those free-loaders and they were dealt with accordingly. Many times they were discharged the day before their authorization, needed to be so long they were given one day short. But we saw many of them several times.
- Kurtz: So you suggested they were a few free-loaders, how were they weeded out?
- Berg: Well, they would have a history, they would go from VA to VA to VA and obviously clinic review were able to be assessed and physically they were able to be assessed and it was a team effort.
- Kurtz: Got you. Things never change, do they?
- Berg: No. No. And it was very fair. I mean, they honestly -- they had a 30 percent service connection, for instance, we weren't trying to take that away from them, but if we had somebody who had 60 percent and wanted 100 and had no reason to not be working, for instance, that was taken into consideration.



Kurtz: You said that based on what you know today, that there were a lot of people that had PTSD, was the treatment pretty much the same as they are treating PTSD today?

Berg: Yes. I was very encouraged to hear about the program where they have the quarters where they're housing the wounded veterans together because by sharing they really were able to put a lot of it behind them and to know that they weren't the only ones and I see that same theme being used today, and we had many that came back and visited us that weren't part of the program or came back to the hospital for an assessment, you know, just for a check up but came to visit us. And the program helped a great deal.

Kurtz: How was the program evaluated by the VA?

Berg: I don't -- I don't know.

Kurtz: How was it evaluated -- was it evaluated professionally at all by the different disciplines in the therapies and stuff like that, were there professionals that would come in and --

Berg: Oh yes, we had visitors from other VAs and it was seen as a success because we were taking veterans from here and there who had all these problems that couldn't be dealt with individually and then a sense of camaraderie with this program. And the underlying theme was I'm not crazy, I'm not an alcoholic, I really do have problems. I need to deal with them and it gave them some sense of hope.

Kurtz: What do you think the underlying problem was, was it lack of maturity, was it -- were they -- or was it that they were -- felt like they were treated different because they were drafted, I mean, by society?

Berg: I saw a direct correlation to the age when they went into service, and the fewer life experiences they had, the more difficulty they had making sense of what happened to them in Vietnam.

Kurtz: And did you see any particular duties in Vietnam that caused more problems than others?

Berg: I think the more -- more horrible the experiences, the more difficult the readjustment. My brother was part of my driving force. Why I had this common theme staying with the military and VA, he was a Vietnam veteran.

Kurtz: Okay. And did he have some issues when he came back?

Berg: He still does.

Kurtz: And how -- as a professionally trained person, how do you deal with the family issue like that?

- Berg: Well, he trusts me above all. I have physically -- should I talk about this?
- Kurtz: Well, here. [Tape paused] What's happening today in 2007 have any negative affects on your brother, or --
- Berg: At the beginning of the most recent Iraq war, he had a complete return to the traumas and the stresses that he had returning from Vietnam, and I was -- I've always been very close with him and I was able to talk with him and he had a very life-changing experience. He's been much better since then. He was able to separate himself from the alcohol after that crisis and it's ongoing.
- Kurtz: Good. Away from the personal here, you said you stayed there for about three years. Are there any highlights of that three year stay at Tomah that we haven't covered?
- Berg: Well, I believe my involvement with the Vietnam era Veteran's program was the highlight of that stay. But I was working with the chronic mentally ill and I very much enjoyed that population because this was kind of at the beginning of the time when they were beginning to de-institutionalize mentally ill and we had community programs that were developing form moving these veterans into veteran's home in the community and that was very gratifying.
- Kurtz: Did you have any experience specifically with establishing any of these Veteran's homes or --
- Berg: Yes, I was the -- I was working with returning the Vietnam -- the veterans to these homes. So we were in the community with them, giving them community experiences, things that you and I would take for granted. But -- how to use a pay phone, and how to order from a menu, and how to go shopping.
- Kurtz: Some of our presidents need to know how to do that.
- Berg: [Laughter] It was really, really rewarding.
- Kurtz: Okay. So summing up then we've covered your career, then you went somewhere else, is that accurate?
- Berg: Yes. Then I took a position in Galveston, Texas with the University of Texas Medical Branch and I was directing occupational therapy and recreation therapy and education therapy, a long time ago, for a school for multiply handicapped children, which was part of the University of Texas Medical Branch and I was doing that. It was a three quarter/one quarter position. I was teaching one quarter school [Inaudible].
- Kurtz: And then you joined the VA again, is that correct?

Berg: No. Then I went to Utah.

Kurtz: Okay. I'm sorry.

Berg: Again working with multiply handicapped children. I was in Utah for four years. I worked for the state training school and then I took a position half time with a school district and we were -- we developed a program, a physical therapist and myself developed a program for severe -- or for handicapped preschoolers and we began assessing children as young as six weeks, Downs children and at the same time I had a private practice where I was specializing in feeding and positioning and handling of severely handicapped preschoolers.

Kurtz: Okay. And then when you finished that, what did you do?

Berg: Then I came back to Tomah to the VA.

Kurtz: Okay. And what were your responsibilities there then?

Berg: I was working with acute alcohol rehab, rehab and alcohol program. And I was also again working with the chronic mentally ill and retraining them to put them back into the community and they would come in for tune-ups, as we used to say, and kind of get their meds squared away and work on some community skills and --

Kurtz: So in these tune-ups, were they meds and then what else, what would be the social skills that you'd work on?

Berg: Well, we'd have them back in the clinic and then we would deal with -- I had such things as personal hygiene. I had to watch their checks and we had to deal with all of the basic issues of changing clothes and laundry and shopping for clothing, just personal hygiene.

Kurtz: Did you see some of the same people you saw nearly a decade earlier?

Berg: Yes. Yes. I was gone six years and I literally had one veteran who walked into the clinic and said, good morning, Pam, and took his project from the cabinet, went to the table as though I'd never been gone.

Kurtz: That was enjoyable, yes.

Berg: Yes.

Kurtz: So how long did you stay at Tomah this time?

Berg: I was there four years.

- Kurtz: Four years?
- Berg: Uh-hum.
- Kurtz: And did you still -- was the Vietnam veterans your more significant clientele, I mean, a major part of your clientele?
- Berg: At that time there were a lot of young people but I don't believe the program was intact any longer, specifically for the Vietnam veterans. But they, of course, were on wards according to their abilities and their diagnoses and were treated in -- they had special groups that were geared towards that era.
- Kurtz: So, when people came in to get their tune-ups, they would get released, then was -- to your knowledge, was there any community support for these people when they were released from Tomah?
- Berg: Well, the group that I'm talking about these with the tune-ups, they had to come back for annual reassessments and so we would deal with any issues they maybe were having at the group home where they lived --
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: -- and just sort of give them a good attaboy attitude and doing well and reaffirm that they were -- that they were where they needed to be.
- Kurtz: Did any of this clientele live in the more conventional situation with a wife or by themselves or anything like that or were these all group home type people?
- Berg: Oh no, we had them from every where.
- Kurtz: Okay.
- Berg: From every where and oftentimes if they would have a life crisis, like the loss of a spouse or something, some crisis, they would come back to the VA and spend a given amount of time there and then be discharged back to the community.
- Kurtz: How employable are these folks?
- Berg: The whole spectrum. The whole spectrum.
- Kurtz: Was there much difficulty with criminal activity?
- Berg: Not when I worked there.
- Kurtz: What about suicide?

- Berg: We always dealt with suicide and the threat of it.
- Kurtz: Were there actually many -- I mean, one of the old wives' tales at least is that half the Vietnam veterans committed suicide or something like that. It's -- was there a significant or unusual number of Vietnam veterans that committed suicide in your mind or --
- Berg: I can't say a disproportionate number to the average population. I mean, of course, there were suicides and probably we didn't hear about them if they weren't recently connected because, of course, we have no way of hearing. But we did have suicides and dealt with many crises.
- Kurtz: What kind of people worked at Tomah in this work that you did?
- Berg: In what way?
- Kurtz: I mean, you know, were they male, female, ex-military, were they just social worker, therapist, professionals that didn't have any time in the military?
- Berg: No. A great deal were military veterans themselves, and they were a huge asset to The program. We had aides who were just invaluable.
- Kurtz: And they were there because it was a good job or because they felt some commitment to helping?
- Berg: I think many of them did feel the commitment, but it was a good employment. Tomah is rural. It was a Government job. It recognized their military service as part of their retirement programs, and so I think it was a combination. But we generally had just very excellent and dedicated employees.
- Kurtz: Did you ever -- did the uniformed military ever come up to the VA hospital?
- Berg: Yes. We had reserve volunteers who would maybe be at Fort McCoy and come do part of their experience at the VA. We had many physicians who would come and spend their two weeks with the program.
- Kurtz: Did -- speaking of Fort McCoy, did the patients ever go out there like Memorial Day or 4th of July to see military demonstrations or was that not good for their therapy?
- Berg: That would have been a recreational activity and I really don't have knowledge of that.
- Kurtz: Because Tomah's unique in Wisconsin anyway, because it's sits between Oakdale and Fort McCoy and there's a lot of military activity up there.
- Berg: Uh-hum. [Affirmative] **[End of Tape 1, Side 1]**

Kurtz: I had the pause on now. You can go ahead. I had the pause on. We're talking about Pam's reserve experience. So if you could tell us about your commission?

Berg: Okay. A year after I finished college and had worked a year, I was directly commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Army Reserves.

Kurtz: Did they recruit you for that or did you do that on your own?

Berg: No. It was an interest that I'd had and I said earlier I wanted to go into the ROTC Program when I was in college and finish out my education and my brother, returning Vietnam veteran, was very, very much against it, and told me I wouldn't fit in the military. He said it was a hard, hard group and said he would do anything to keep me out of the military. Anyway, so I took his advice and I finished college, but I still had an interest in serving, so I joined the Reserves.

Kurtz: And describe what your experiences were in the Reserve, what you did and –

Berg: My first unit was here in Madison was the 44th General Hospital and of course, it was as an occupational therapist. We grilled on the weekends, came here to Madison, we worked at Meriter Hospital, we helped, we volunteered in the physical therapy and occupational therapy clinics on Saturday morning. My experience was very good. I met excellent people. Very -- very -- we met very many professionals that I just really to this day admire.

Kurtz: How was the clientele different that you were dealing with in the civilian -- when you were in the military you were dealing with civilians and when you were a civilian you were dealing with professionals?

Berg: That's right. That's right. Because [Inaudible]. That was more an acute setting too, at Meriter. We were just working with people who were there and who were working on leaving the hospital. So the experience was fine. It was more like my clinical training I was in school, but it was good for the skill.

Kurtz: What do you -- I mean, you had a summer camp obligation I assume with this?

Berg: Yeah. It depended on -- I may have gone for my basic officer training for my two weeks. I did my advanced and my summer camps, it wasn't until I was my unit in Salt Lake City I was with the 328th General Hospital there, and I did different active duty since at Fort Carson, Colorado. I was at Fort Sam Houston where our military school is. One of my most memorable experiences was working at the Brook Army Medical Center in the burn unit. Very, very much enjoyed that and could have done that -- could have done that as a profession.

Kurtz: So how long did you stay in the reserves?

Berg: I was in the reserves from 1972 until 2000, but I wasn't active the last many years since 1987. I was going to get out earlier but it felt very unpatriotic to resign my commission. I just had a really hard time with that. But I wasn't working in the civilian sector after 1984 and I didn't feel it was fair to be going on active duty and working in an acute medical setting when I didn't have -- my skill levels wasn't --

Kurtz: So you were in an inactive reserve status is this accurate then?

Berg: Yes. Yes. And I also competed the last, let's see 19 -- 1978 until 1987 I was involved with competitive rifle marksmanship.

Kurtz: I understand that you're dangerous, is that accurate?

Berg: Yes. Well, I -- that's what my husband says.

Kurtz: So that was part of your military activities was being part of a competitive shooting?

Berg: Yes. I shot small bore in college and I always shot -- grew up on a farm, so I was very familiar with weapons and when I got to this unit in Salt Lake City, they had a combat rifle team and they were very traditional in Utah and they really didn't see a woman fitting on a combat rifle team. So after asking for two years, I got a little more insistent and I was allowed to try out for the team, but they reiterated that you're not on the team, you're trying out for the team. So I was able to out-shoot all but one of his men so I was on the team.

Kurtz: So that's the merit rose to the top?

Berg: Yeah.

Kurtz: What rank were you at this time?

Berg: At that time I was a captain.

Kurtz: And what did you go inactive as, what was your highest rank?

Berg: Lieutenant colonel.

Kurtz: Lieutenant colonel. So I should be locking my heels. Was there anything that stands out about your reserve experience that we haven't talked about?

Berg: No. I've mentioned the quality of the people that I met and the experiences of -- I thought that the being in the Reserve really helped me in my professional life as a civilian working with Vietnam veterans, working with all veterans. But just gave me more of a sense -- more of an understanding because going in as an officer I really did not get the military experience going in as an officer, reserve officer.

Kurtz: So you didn't have to do any extensive active duty?

Berg: No.

Kurtz: Okay. How much interaction did you have with other reserve units as part of this experience?

Berg: Not until I started shooting that I had much exposure [Inaudible].

Kurtz: Okay. So then that happened as you went around to events around the country, I assume, that that's what they shoot --

Berg: Yes. Correct. Our reserve rifle team in Salt Lake City competed in the 6th Army regional matches for instance. It was at a fort over in California and all the other reserve teams came together there as well.

Kurtz: When did you stop shooting competitively?

Berg: 1987.

Kurtz: And why was that?

Berg: Well, it's a process. After I shot on the combat team, then it makes you eligible to go in the high power rifle team and you have to shoot the scores or you don't go on the team. My team [Inaudible] in Utah, we won the 6th Army and were sent back to the all Army matches in 1979 and that gave me a chance to be noticed by the high power rifles and the coaches. So then they pick up shooters from the lower team. So then when -- and I was in the process of moving back to Wisconsin when I started shooting with the local ArCom high power rifle team, and had success. There's an award called a distinguished award high power rifle shooting as well as pistol shooting, but I began earning points for my distinguished award in 1980 and each year you have to compete at each level and shoot your way back on to the team every year to be considered and you don't get to shoot in the distinguished matches unless you're on the team. So that was a process for me too. In 19 -- okay, I finished my distinguished -- can't remember exactly. Anyway, my new shooter status I was shot on the all audited -- the All Reserve Army team, they used me as a new shooter in 1987. So I felt as though I had fulfilled my obligation to the shooting program because I worked my way up. My skill levels were such that they were able to use me as a new shooter on the team that year. And I had developed a sun allergy, which made it really difficult for me to be doing the extended active duty outside and I think it was just time, and I finished my distinguished too, my individual award on the 17th one, the inception of the distinguished program. Mike --

Kurtz: That's pretty good. If you were a Russian they'd make you go to the front line shooting at people.



Berg: I could be a sniper.

Kurtz: Yes. You mentioned Mike, who is Mike?

Berg: Mike is my husband of almost twenty-four years.

Kurtz: And he was a Vietnam veteran also?

Berg: Yes.

Kurtz: Could you tell us how you met him and --

Berg: Mike and I met -- well, I knew who he was after the All Army matches at Fort Benning, Georgia in 1979. He was a coach for the high power rifle team at that time for the 6<sup>th</sup> Army team, and I was their combat shooter in the 6<sup>th</sup> Army. And he was then transferred with his civilian job back to Madison the following year.

Kurtz: Year.

Berg: And so he was then coaching the ArCom team that I shot on. So we met shooting.

Kurtz: Okay. So you hadn't shot at each other?

Berg: He's an excellent coach. He's just a wonderful coach.

Kurtz: The fact that he was a Vietnam veteran, did that have anything to do with the way the relationship developed?

Berg: No. I don't think that he was because he was a Vietnam veteran, obviously the veteran tie was there. But with Mike, the Vietnam part of it was never an issue and again, I think it goes along with my philosophy of the age that the veterans went to Vietnam having to do with the success of their readjustment. He went in as an officer and he was older and he had he had a new perspective, he had many more life's experiences. He was an old man when he was there, he told me he was the old man. So the Vietnam part of it was not an issue, other than it was part of the man that he was that I admired.

Kurtz: How would you assess the Vietnam War affecting you both personally, I mean, your experiences in total, having a veteran husband, a veteran brother, and then your professional experiences in dealing with many Vietnam veterans, how would you assess that it affected your life?

Berg: I think it gave me a goal and direction. I felt a need to do something and I offered my services as a veteran. I've was never called to active duty as a reservist. I just -- I guess I felt an obligation.

- Kurtz: How did -- you said your brother didn't want you to go in the ROTC, how did he react when he found out that you were a lieutenant in the Reserves?
- Berg: That was fine because I was an officer. I think he was afraid of me going into the enlisted ranks.
- Kurtz: What do you think now -- I mean, some fairly extensive experience with the VA, what do you think about what's going on with the Walter Reed situation now?
- Berg: I'm happy for the shake up. It's inexcusable. There's no reason for there to be conditions like that, especially for a veterans who have served there and who need our help.
- Kurtz: What kind of care do you think you're going to need because we get these very severely brain injured and multiple amputees, what kind of care do you think they're going to need over the long haul?
- Berg: Well, that's yet to be determined. But because of the kind of warfare that we're fighting now, injuries are more severe and the brain injuries are going to require a dedicated, long-term program just focused on that. I just feel like we're dealing with a whole different problem.
- Kurtz: You mentioned something that you don't hear very much in the Dane County area in 19 -- in 2007, I'm saying 1900s, shows how old I am, 2000 about obligation, what do you think that's happened that society doesn't seem to have a sense of obligation to the country now?
- Berg: I don't know. I don't have children of my own. I have step children, so I'm not a very good authority on this. But my sense of it is that children aren't being raised with that sense of obligation. They're being raised in a very self-centered society that focuses everything on them and more of us -- I don't know how to say it, I can't even think how --
- Kurtz: You don't have to say it.
- Berg: That's right. I just -- I feel like kids are just being raised with too much now and it's as though they are owed things, owed everything.
- Kurtz: Well, we've covered a bunch of ground here, have we missed anything that you think that we should cover?
- Berg: No, not that I can think of.
- Kurtz: Okay. Then we'll quit.

**[End of the interview]**