

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

DEBORAH W. GOSA

Ocean Systems Technician Analyst, Navy, Peacetime

2011

OH
1483

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1483**

Gosa, Deborah W., (b. 1951). Oral History Interview, 2011.

Approximate length: 35 minutes

Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.

Abstract:

In this oral history interview, Deborah Gosa discusses her service as an Ocean Systems Technician Analyst with the Navy. She discusses her recruit training in Orlando (Florida), her advanced training in Norfolk (Virginia), her reassignment to administrative work. She then discusses her husband's experiences in Vietnam, and his experiences with PTSD. She also discusses her post-service as a computing teacher.

Biographical Sketch:

Gosa (1951-) served as an Ocean Systems Technician Analyst after enlisting in 1984, until being honorably discharged in 1985.

Archivist's Note:

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

Interviewed by Jim Kurtz, 2011.

Transcribed by Audio Transcription Center, 2016.

Reviewed by Robert Brito, 2017.

Abstract written by Robert Brito, 2017.

Interview Transcript:

[Beginning of Gosa.OH1483]

Kurtz: Veterans Day, 2011. My name is Jim Kurtz. I'm interviewing Deborah Welte Gosa at the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Um, she is married to a Vietnam veteran who is being— Bob Gosa—who's being interviewed at a different place, and anybody who's listening to this tape may be interested in seeing what Bob has to say. Can you tell me what your dates of service were?

Gosa: I enlisted on June 14, 1984, at the Milwaukee MEPS Building.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: And I was through the delayed entry program, through the start of recruit training— training—on April 25, 1985. And I went to recruit training in Orlando, Florida. And then I was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, on June 25, 1985.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: And then I was honorably discharged on December 13, 1985.

Kurtz: Okay. December—what was that date?

Gosa: Thirteenth.

Kurtz: Thirteenth.

Gosa: 1985.

Kurtz: 1985. We'll discuss that at the end of your military affairs, the reason for your leaving. Uh, where and when were you born?

Gosa: Born in Anchorage, Alaska, 1951, August eighteenth.

Kurtz: August 18, 1951. And where did you spend your time, through your education, your teenage years, and all of that?

Gosa: Yeah. I was, uh, basically in mobile homes because my dad was transferred from base to base—

Kurtz: Okay, so in other words—

Gosa: Yes. Yes.

Kurtz: Okay. Your dad was in the military—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —so you were a military brat.

Gosa: Yes. A milit— Air Force brat.

Kurtz: Air Force brat.

Gosa: Yes. [laughs]

Kurtz: Okay. So I don't think we need to necessarily go through all the places, but how many places did you go to school, do you think?

Gosa: Um, it was Park Ridge, and we went to a couple of different schools around that area. And then we eventually ended up at O'Hare, military side, through—probably from—oh, probably around from fourth, fifth, sixth grade up until about ninth grade, and then we were transferred through Dad's work. He became a civil servant and was transferred up to Janesville, Wisconsin.

Kurtz: Okay. So it—were there other members of your family in addition to your father that were in the military?

Gosa: His brother—yes. Yeah. They were—

Kurtz: So in other words his family is pretty much imbued in the military service.

Gosa: Yes. It's all I knew was on the military side and watching the men march and—

Kurtz: What was your dad's job in the military?

Gosa: He was an airline mechanic.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: [inaudible] engine.

Kurtz: Okay. And—

Gosa: He worked on C-119s, at O'Hare—used to be called Air Force Base at the time.

Kurtz: C-119s.

Gosa: Those are the Flying Boxcars.

Kurtz: Yeah. And there we— okay, so I think it's important—so the military had a presence at O'Hare at that time.

Gosa: Oh yes, they did. Yes.

Kurtz: And were these C-119s—you know, were they regular Air Force or National Guard—

Guard? Not that it's important.

Gosa: No. Not that I know of. All that I know is that he used to go out there to work on them all the time.

Kurtz: And from—when he left the military, where did you move?

Gosa: To Janesville, Wisconsin.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: And that was in June of '66.

Kurtz: How was that different than living—living on a military situation?

Gosa: I loved staying on the base. I loved doing that. We used to drive—uh, we used to go on the bus, on a military bus. It was a big, blue Air Force bus. And I liked that. It was great. I would like to have stayed there, and when he got transferred, I was not very happy about that. I would like to have stayed on the base.

Kurtz: So there actually was a base at O'Hare, you know, where they were all—

Gosa: We had a gate that we had to show who we were, and nobody could visit us, really. We were kind of secure there.

Kurtz: Mm-hm.

Gosa: And, uh—so I liked that.

Kurtz: Okay. So where—did you go to school in Janesville, complete your schooling in Janesville?

Gosa: Yes. I graduated from Janesville at Craig Senior High in 1969.

Kurtz: [pause] So you were growing up in the, uh, Vietnam era. What—did you—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —what were your impressions about the Vietnam War and all that—if you could just share that with us.

[00:04:43]

Gosa: It was, uh, very sad. I remember my dad was in the Reservists also, and I remember he was called a couple of times for various problems. That was during probably the Cuban crisis at the time. But he was, uh, called away. And so then I knew that when he moved up in '66 we had a neighbor that was killed in Vietnam during the night raids. He was one of the guys that worked with the flares.

Kurtz: Mm-hm.

Gosa: He was doing training, and he was killed. So that happened just before we left, and that was June of '66. So it was a very sad time. We used to watch on our TV every night the number of people that were killed. It was in white numbers, I remember. And they sent back a lot of the narrations and the awful times and the killings and what was going on, and it was a very sad time. And I also wrote a paper, and I had a big page paper. It was—I just had blood all over the place, because it was very sad. And I believed in the military, and a lot of people at the time were not happy with the military when I went to college. Which is another issue of how I was asked if I supported the Vietnam War. And I guess—

Kurtz: Did you share—I mean, where was this—what college did you go?

Gosa: In Whitewater University. And at that time they had the Warhawks Stadium inside, next to where the main campus was. And I did not know it, but, um, one of my teachers wore a black band, and she asked me if I supported the military, uh, and who else supported the military. And she made me stand up, and pointed out to me, to all the people, about that I was probably the only one who was supporting military at the time. And I said, “Well, my dad was in the military; I support him and what he believes in. And I—and I think that’s very important to understand what we’re doing here and to support them as much as we can.” Whitewater was a problem with protests. A lot of anger—and you just couldn’t talk about it.

Kurtz: Yeah. So did—did you—were you treated adversely as a result of this, or did you just—

Gosa: In that one class, yes. Yes, I was. I still talk about it to this day—

Kurtz: Mm-hm.

Gosa: — about how it was, how I stood up for what I thought was right, at the time. Because, uh, there were people in my class—one of the—my friend’s brothers was killed at the time, and we talked about that. It was in our—I remember that day when they said that he was killed, and it was just right after, and I remember that—and I—and it was sad.

Kurtz: How long did you stay at Whitewater?

Gosa: I went there for a whole year, at that time, and then I went back and forth. But at that point it was from '69 to '70.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: Yeah. And that was the time that Old Main burned down—

Kurtz: Yup.

Gosa: —in February of '70.

Kurtz: Okay, then what did you do between the time that you enlisted in the military in the eighties—we don't have to go in great detail, but if you could just sketch briefly what you did.

Gosa: Yeah, I was working in Beloit. I was taking care of a large estate that was being settled at the time. So I—

Kurtz: Were you working as a paralegal, or—

Gosa: I was involved with the workings of the corporations that were involved—

Kurtz: Oh, okay.

Gosa: —some companies. So I had to be around for the lawyers and tax people.

Kurtz: Oh, so did you work for this company, or did you—

Gosa: Mm-hm. Yes. Yes. I worked for them for—

Kurtz: What was that company?

Gosa: —about ten years. It was a building company. It was a construction company at the time. And the owner had died in 1983, and I worked, for him, I don't know, on and off—for about nine years at the time. So I was always involved with the company business, and then when he died, then the attorneys and tax people came in, and I had to work with them. And when I enlisted, then I asked to be able to have time for me to work with the lawyers and the tax people for a while. And at that point—and finish up what I needed to finish.

Kurtz: What motivated you to enlist in the mideighties?

Gosa: Because I wanted to, uh, do something that I would be proud of and to be able to say that I accomplished that, yes. And being from a military family—at that time I was about, um, 32 years old, and I would like to have gone in the Air Force. I was not able to because, I believe, the age was 28, so I was a little bit older than that. So I needed to choose between the Army or the Navy, and I chose the Navy.

Kurtz: Mm-hm. So what was the reaction of your friends and family when you enlisted?

Gosa: My dad called and, uh, told me he was real proud of me, but he says, uh, “Just beware that it is the military, and they have their own set of rules.” And he said that he wished me the best. And it was not easy, especially looking forward to boot camp, and to try to experience that. And my friends, they just supported me, and said, “That's—that's good.” And so they were hoping that I would be able to succeed in that.

Kurtz: Did any of the people you knew in college, were they aware of the fact that you went into the military?

[00:10:03]

Gosa: Nope. Not at that time, no. Because they were a whole different group of people, and that was back in '69 and '70. And I had a whole different group of friends at the time.

Kurtz: Okay. Could—where did you go to boot camp?

Gosa: In Orlando, Florida.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: They called it “Navy World.”

Kurtz: [laughs] So it was on—it was at Disney World, then, right?

Gosa: Yes. Close by, yes. [laughter]

Kurtz: Is there anything that stands out about that for you?

Gosa: It was, uh, an exciting experience that I think everybody should go through after high school. I think it's very important, because it's a very humbling, uh, kind of atmosphere. And training was good, and I liked it, especially when I look back on it. At the time, it was very rigorous, and it was quite stressful.

Kurtz: Was this—was this co-ed or just females?

Gosa: They had men on the base, sir, yes, but we couldn't fraternize with them.

Kurtz: Oh no, but—so in other words, your training company was just females.

Gosa: Yes. Yes. But we had the men next to us, yeah. We all trained together—in the morning, when we had the exercise program, we were all together in a great big group, with men and women. But I was with about eighty-two women, uh, during the recruit training, and I was the master at arms, because I was the oldest [inaudible].

Kurtz: What was—could you explain what a master of arms was?

Gosa: Yup. I was the one who took care of all the little minor problems; I was the one who got up first in the morning and went to bed late at night and did sentry duty, walked around, checked to be sure everything was okay while everybody was asleep. I was the last one asleep. I would take care of, uh, the clothing that was washed; I would have to take care of that. Plus I'd have to do some things for the commanding officers, the crew commanders.

Kurtz: Was that something that was coveted to be, or was it a punishment? I mean, it sounds like a lot of work.

Gosa: It was. But I didn't mind, because, again, I was—I'm more like a den mother of all the younger ladies, and I was also the person who took care of the smoke breaks. I mean, I'm not a smoker, and so I was the one who controlled that. And yes, I liked it, because it gave me duties, yes. And I didn't mind at all.

Kurtz: Were you older than most of the lieuts?

Gosa: Yes. Yeah.

Kurtz: Smoke breaks are interesting.

Gosa: Yeah. [laughs]

Kurtz: Uh, so, is there any—any event that stands out during your training?

Gosa: During the training itself?

Kurtz: Yeah.

Gosa: The graduation was marvelous, was wonderful. I liked to march. I liked that. And I liked to be in uniform at the time, yes. It made you feel proud—a sense of accomplishment.

Kurtz: Sure. Then what happened after, [clears throat] after boot camp?

Gosa: Then I was assigned to the school, the class A school, the ocean systems technician analyst, and I went to the school down there, over in Norfolk, Virginia. And it was involved with the anti-submarine warfare group. I wanted to be in computers. I wanted to be involved with that. So I was involved with machines that checked the calibration of the submarines that were off the coast and various areas around the world, and, uh, that's what the job would be for monitoring. We—and we went to school for that.

Kurtz: How long was the school?

Gosa: Oh, geez, probably around a couple months, I think it was. At the time.

Kurtz: And was there—of course, Norfolk's the biggest navy base in the world—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —now.

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: So—

Gosa: Yes. And we—I was not into any of the submarine group. Back at that time, the women were mostly on tenders that would work with the boats. Now, we didn't do that. I did not go on the ocean at all.

Kurtz: Yeah. So is there anything that stands out about that training?

Gosa: It was very well done. It was very comprehensive. And we had to also do guard duty at the same time, so sometimes you went into school but had to keep awake, but that's what happened.

Kurtz: What were you guarding?

Gosa: The buildings.

Kurtz: Oh, okay.

Gosa: The buildings, when you're on there. And then you always had to stand at attention and get inspected the next morning, when you met the group, as—and we marched, also down in the base area. And went on the big field, and a band played, and we did whatever we needed to do to impress the people who were watching.

Kurtz: Okay. So when you completed the school, what did you do?

Gosa: At that time I was going through the school, uh, and that's the farthest I got, because at that point then I changed my lifestyle at that point. Then I was working—they changed—

Kurtz: What does that mean, if I can ask?

Gosa: That means that when my lifestyle changed, then, uh, I had to change jobs because—well, because—when—I had a medical condition—

Kurtz: Oh, okay.

Gosa: —it was kind of hard to stand at the machines. That's what I thought, being a little older, that's what I thought, see. And so then I was transferred over to the administrative office, where I worked with the chief petty officers. And I worked in an office atmosphere at that time, working with the top-secret material. And I had security clearance for me to do that.

Kurtz: I just want to back up here so I understand what—so did you do any of this actual anti-submarine warfare work after—after your training?

[00:15:18]

Gosa: No, because besides the—where you're being shipped to, we had—at that point, we were selecting the areas we were going to go to at the time. I was supposed to go to Coos Bay, Oregon. And so it never got that far, because then things changed at that time. And then I was focusing on, uh, what I was going to do, and when I was going to be getting out, in December.

Kurtz: Okay. And—well, this would be a good time to ask why you were discharged in December.

Gosa: Yes. Because of the medical condition, the pregnancy. And at my age, of course, then I needed to make some other lifestyle changes at the time.

Kurtz: And was that typical of disch— at that time, of discharging—

Gosa: No.

Kurtz: —women who were pregnant?

Gosa: No. Not at that time. So I had to get some special dispensation at the time. Also, the gentleman I was with, who I had also married at the time, and he was not too keen on the military, per se. So that was one of the reasons why also—if I loo— as I look back on it now, naturally would have been better to stay in. But at the time, um, when you're going through that, your priorities change, and so then I went with that. And I'm the kind that will go along if I feel that it's for the good of what we're trying to—to do. So I went along with what he had said—

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: —and that's what he wanted me to do, is not to stay in at the time. So that's what I decided to do.

Kurtz: When you had this top-secret—

Gosa: Mm-hmm.

Kurtz: —clearance, what was the nature of the material that you—I'm not going to ask you what it was, but what was the nature of the material that you had?

Gosa: For what they were working with, uh, being I was in the anti-submarine warfare, it was more like paperwork. Nothing that I was really involved with, just information that came through. I might have dictated something, or they might have dictated something to me at the time, and being—I can still see the office with all the gentlemen there. They would give me things to type. But I had to also, uh, not say anything, you know, because I—they didn't want me to say—

Kurtz: So in other words—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —it would be fair to say that—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —the paper had top-secret information, and it really didn't mean a heck of a lot to you.

Gosa: No.

Kurtz: You just knew you were supposed to—

Gosa: That's correct.

Kurtz: —not say anything about it.

Gosa: That's correct. And, of course, it was during the time that communism was still around. You just didn't say things like that. So that's what we were monitoring, was, uh, communist, Soviet ships of some sort—submarines—but the actual paperwork that I was dealing with later—

Kurtz: Yeah. Gotcha. Uh, okay. So when you left the military—I want to hop forward. This marriage ended; is that correct?

Gosa: Yes. Yeah, 1990? Yes. We moved from Virginia Beach, where I was at, and then we moved up to Janesville. I went back to Janesville.

Kurtz: Okay. Okay. So when you went to Janesville, at some point then you met Bob. Could you tell—

Gosa: Yes, because the gentleman that I was with was not a very nice gentleman.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: And I happened to meet Bob because, again, I was into music at the time, and the person that I worked with at Blackhawk Technical College knew that, and she was a friend of mine, and her husband had gone to Vietnam with Bob. And so she said he was a musician, Bob was a musician, and they says, "We're having a party for my husband's birthday," and that was back in May of 1991. And we met at the party, and that was it. And we got married in August of 1992.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: So we went through the music.

Kurtz: So it was basically—there were two common factors there: the military—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —and with your feeling so good about it, and the fact that he was a musician, which was your other prime interest.

Gosa: Yes. That's correct.

Kurtz: So there were a lot of things that meant this good. Now, for the people, again, listening

to this tape, if they're interested in—you know, what Bob's read on this, you listen to the other tape! [laughs] Uh, so when you—you knew he was a Vietnam veteran when you got married.

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: What—did that have any impact on your marriage, the fact that he was a Vietnam veteran?

Gosa: Yes, because I understood the military. I knew what he was going through. I knew up to that point that he probably had a rough time of it. Uh, it was not an easy time. He always talked about being in Albuquerque the three years before he went in, from '66 and—until he went over to Vietnam in '68—so he liked that period of time, and so we talked about it a lot. The only time that he would have a problem is, like, for instance, if there was thunder, he would, uh, get up and grab the dresser and—those kind of things. It was very scary for me, because I had never been with a person that had post-stress syndrome, at that point. And, uh, so I saw that happen. And we—and plus we never go to fireworks displays. It's not too cool, [laughs] because it—it's just not good, especially when a person's been around, uh, those kind of incoming issues for bombings and things. And a lot of things he just doesn't talk about, which is—that's fine. And I always find out more every year, from when he talks to his Vietnam buddies.

Kurtz: Okay, so in other—because I'm kind of going through my experience here. So in other words, when he is talking to somebody who is a Vietnam veteran or familiar with it, he's more open and discloses his information when you're there.

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: Yeah. So that—

Gosa: But he's talking to them, not to me.

Kurtz: Right. Right. Does that bother you, that, uh—

[00:21:07]

Gosa: No. Because I understand when it's ready, when it's time, then he will, and if he wants to, and, uh, sometimes maybe I don't need to know. From what I've seen in various documentaries, it was not good. A lot of things were very stressful.

Kurtz: Yeah. That's very true.

Gosa: Okay?

Kurtz: Uh, okay. So does Bob go to any reunions?

Gosa: When we can. We went in 2002—when I found out that his 820th Red Horse reunion was online, the information was, we did that. Because I just—on the computer in 2001

or '2, I says, "What was the name of your groups?" And he says, "820th." And I put it in there, and all of a sudden the information came up about his group. They talked about a reunion. We went down to Branson.

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: And he hadn't seen these people in many, many years. And so we had a nice time. We also visit one of his buddies in Pennsylvania. So we do do that, and we've had contact with the others, yes. And then we went to another reunion just in Reno, in June of this year.

Kurtz: Have you had any discussions with the wives of these other veterans, or is—

Gosa: Just what they say, no. Because they've been married to them since the Vietnam. There was one lady, yes, but she just said it was what happened at that point that he was gone and whatever. And then the other one, in Pennsylvania, they were married at the time, and then she had children, and how sad it was, and—so she kept all the letters. What was interesting is when we went out to Pennsylvania, and she has a suitcase full of the letters. And Bob's writing is in there, from back in the '68, '69. And she talked to me, because she had a medical problem also, and she wrote—talked to me on the phone. She says, "I want you to write about the suitcase that I have, of letters." And as we set back, and I wrote a song, and we're going to record it shortly, and then we're going to probably go see them probably in June of this next year.

Kurtz: How has this military experience affected your music?

Gosa: I want to support it as much as I can. Oh, it's very important, especially with, uh, today's administration that may not support it as much. And I—I've always supported that. I want to be involved with it. In fact, I have a person at Blackhawk Tech that is a student, and he's in re—involved with the Patriot Guard Riders, so I joined up, because I want to be part of that.

Kurtz: What is Patriot Guard Writers?

Gosa: That's where they are gentlemen—not necessarily military, but they have motorcycles. They stand—

Kurtz: Oh, "riders," and not "writer."

Gosa: Riders.

Kurtz: Oh, okay.

Gosa: R-i-d-e-r-s.

Kurtz: Okay. [laughs]

Gosa: Motorcycle riders. And, of course, I don't have a motorcycle, but he said, "You can just

stand there and support the gentleman or woman who is going to be buried.” Or they—when they come home, they come home from being deployed. So that’s important. And also there’s Families of Forgotten Heroes that’s a genealogy program—I’m involved with that too—that find information about the forgotten heroes. And—yeah.

Kurtz: What kind of veterans are you looking at that?

Gosa: Any kind. For the genealogy one, it’s any kind. Any year. Like, Civil War on, if you need to have information. So that’s online. I do that also. That’s a volunteer, of course.

Kurtz: Mm-hm.

Gosa: I’m also a member of the Navy Club of the USA. They have various ships that they—the group gets together. I’m also a member of that.

Kurtz: Oh, okay. So if—assuming that you become wildly successful as—with your recording, what is the name of your band?

Gosa: [laughs] Gosa Country. G-o-s-a Country.

Kurtz: Gosa—oh, Gosa.

Gosa: Uh-huh.

Kurtz: I was going to go—and is it just you and Bob, or—

Gosa: Yes. And if we need to have somebody, we al— have a few people that can fill in, but it’s usually Bob and me that play.

Kurtz: So how often did you guys play?

Gosa: As often as we can. We’ve played more when he was a little bit better, uh, physically able to do it more. Because with the Agent Orange, he’s not—

Kurtz: Yeah.

Gosa: —able to climb steps. So he has a little problem walking. So we had to be careful. And it’s hard to lift anymore. So we have cut back on that because of that. And that’s fine. We play at private parties if we can. We’re scheduled to play at a meeting in January for the Sons of Norway. So we’ve been around. We’ve also played at the Rock County Fair. We’ve played there for a number of years. And so it’s been fun to do that.

[00:25:45]

Kurtz: Uh, you mentioned Agent Orange.

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: What is the nature of your husband's problem with Agent Orange?

Gosa: He's got, uh, diabetes very badly. He's had that since he was 50 years old. So it's been about 15 years now. And he also had neuropathy in the legs, and—because of various medication.

Kurtz: I'm going to turn—

[break in recording][00:26:07]

Kurtz: —the pause thing on. Now that I'm no longer incompetent, dysfunctional, let's talk about—a little bit about Bob's Agent Orange issues. You said he has diabetes. Uh, how did you first come across knowing that he had these problems?

Gosa: When he had a skin rash, we—and, of course, I'm not a nurse. He knew there was a problem. And so he went to one of the—emergency room, when he knew that something was wrong, and he didn't feel good. And so something was wrong, and they did not diagnose it right. They thought it was just a—just a [inaudible]. Went to another—Janesville Hospital, and they realized that he was somewhere up, like, 600, for the count, for his sugar count. And they said, "We need to have you right away, we need to have you intravenous." That's how we found out about it. We had no clue. And, uh, so, he took pills. Now he's on shots. And so then he took Avandia. Now we know that there might be problems with the heart. And Actos, which messed up his legs.

Kurtz: Yeah, they just found that—

Gosa: Yes!

Kurtz: —some heart diseases are Agent Orange-related.

Gosa: Yes. That's correct. We're working with that now. We—yes, we go to the VA [Veterans Affairs] many times. And sleep apnea. And—so we're doing that, with the machines.

Kurtz: Uh, what has been your reaction to the type of treatment Bob has received from the VA?

Gosa: I think it's good. Yeah, it's good.

Kurtz: So you go to Middleton Hospital [inaudible].

Gosa: Yes. Yes, we do.

Kurtz: Supposed to be one of the best—

Gosa: That's correct.

Kurtz: —which just makes us very lucky. Uh, what is your—what was your reaction when you found out, uh, that he had these Agent Orange-related problems?

Gosa: It's something that was probably hidden by the government at the time. And we knew what was going on, but we did not know that it was dangerous. And, of course, this is defoliant. We knew that there were problems. And back here in Wisconsin, I knew that there was something wrong, yeah, because there were a lot of protests about that kind of activity going on and some of the bad things that could happen. And, of course, we didn't know that much, because it was not instantaneous information.

Kurtz: Yeah.

Gosa: So you kind of just guess it's not good.

Kurtz: Did—does he also have PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder]?

Gosa: That's where—when we have, like, thunder.

Kurtz: Yeah. Oh, that's—okay. So the—

Gosa: Yes.

Kurtz: —PTSD—

Gosa: Oh yes.

Kurtz: —and that's—thunder—I guess that was stupid for me to ask that.

Gosa: That's—yeah, because another thing was, that happened the other night, a big—a thunderclap, and all of a sudden, he reaches over, and he says, "Is everybody okay?" And I woke him up, and I says, "What were you just—who were you—who were you with?" He says, "I was back in my hooch with the guys because I thought it was incoming. I was going to protect everybody." And he was one of the older ones there at the time.

Kurtz: Sure, sure.

Gosa: But he did say that. And I could tell, his whole demeanor changed. About his—the way he talked, and how he said that at the time. And it was more protection; it was—he went right back.

Kurtz: Have—how do you evaluate the, uh, Vietnam experience, uh, in light of everything that's happened with your husband here?

Gosa: He was going to be drafted by the Army, but he enlisted in the Air Force. And he wanted to do what he needed to do at the time. He graduated in '65 from Beloit Memorial High School. And so when he enlisted in the Air Force, of course, he went to Albuquerque, Kirtland Air Force Base. And then he knew he was probably going to get sent over to Vietnam at the time. So it wasn't until '68 that he was. And he was in heavy equipment, and so he probably thought that that's what he was going to be doing anyway. He was

going to be drafted anyway. He had to go to Vietnam anyway. So he did.

Kurtz: And that was a fairly typical phenomenon, somebody that—in that cohort, that was graduating in '65, things changed dramatically after that, about attitudes and all of that. How has he articulated his feeling to you about his Vietnam experience?

Gosa: He will talk to me about it, uh, up to what he can talk about.

Kurtz: Yeah.

Gosa: If I ask him and say, “Well, what really happened at,” he won’t say anything. He just said, “There’s things that you don’t need to know.” Probably I don’t want to know. And so when he was on convoys—you—I found out finally that when they go on convoys, when they have those mines—

Kurtz: Yeah.

Gosa: —they would travel fifty miles an hour on these tracks. So I’m envisioning that—he would be the lead truck, and then they would go quick, when they heard the mine go off behind them. The truck behind them was far enough behind. So they didn’t know who was going to get killed any time of the day. Of course, they stood guard, and, uh—with the—with the incoming coming in. As far as I know, they had some of that on the base. Again, some of the details he doesn’t tell me about. He also worked with some of the Vietnamese people who helped, and they call them “papa-sans” and “mama-sans”. Talks about them, and how they might have been friendly towards them, towards the United States, but then they would probably go to the other side at night, and how they were, and what they did. And I think he also talked about the Montagnards, the people that helped him. And that was so sad, because he said that they probably were killed when the communists came in. And so that’s what he talks about. And it’s a sad—

[00:31:25]

Kurtz: What did—what is his attitude about Vietnam today?

Gosa: Doesn’t want to go back. Because I have a Vietnamese friend who works at Blackhawk Tech with me. He finally met her. And I was kind of wondering how he was going to react to her. It was—it was nice. She thanked him for his service, and she bowed to him as a person who was helpful to them as a country. She was one of the boat people who escaped, with her children, and so it was out of respect. But—I asked her, I says, “Well, would you go back?” She said, “Yes. Do you want to come with me?” she said. And, of course, I talked that to Bob, and he said he doesn’t want to go back.

Kurtz: Now, that’s kind of an interesting deal, because just—yeah, going back is a tough thing, one way or another. Um, what is your attitude about the military today, now, the present wars and all of that, given what we’ve talked about?

Gosa: I believe in the administration—of course, I am a conservative and a registered Republican, so I support what the past administration had done. And I believe it’s

necessary for that to happen. And if there are any cuts to the military, we're going to be in serious trouble. That's what I feel about the military today, how important it is to keep up-to-date with what's going on. Especially with what's going on in the world. I tell people who may not know about certain countries the various governments that are taking over, "What's going to happen if this happens?" So I, as a teacher, can maybe plug in a little thing. I have to be careful, because you don't do that in a classroom. You do not say, "I agree with this, I agree with this." You don't do that. You listen to what they say, and you work with them and say, "Do you know what—what we were fighting for in Vietnam? Do you know what communism is?" And they shake their heads, and they don't know. So it's like, I have to say, "This is what we did because we wanted to protect our way of life now. Without the military, you wouldn't have that. It's very important."

Kurtz: What do you teach?

Gosa: I teach computers and computer software and family history genealogy at Blackhawk Tech, and I've been doing that for about twenty years now.

Kurtz: I imagine that's a pretty satisfying job.

Gosa: Yes. Yes, it is. Because I get to be a history teacher, I get to be a lot of different things there.

Kurtz: Um, what—what's your attitude towards the fact that only a small number of people are serving now?

Gosa: Yes. As volunteers, we need as much as we can. I heard different numbers, that they don't or they do serve. I don't know what the volume is for that. But I hope it stays at a high level. I don't like the pull-outs from Iraq—Iraq or Afghanistan. That's not going to help. However, there's a lot of things that we don't know what are going on, so it might be that this is the way it's supposed to be to get out. Because again, there's a lot of things we don't know.

Kurtz: Yeah. Well, I guess I didn't ask the question quite right. Does it—say what's going on right now, particularly at the lower level, is an economic draft.

Gosa: Sure.

Kurtz: I mean, you are not getting the kids of the elite going in the mil—I mean, it's a rare exception. Do you think that that's a problem?

Gosa: I think that's always been, where they don't go in because they can—don't need to. I think that everyone should do that, but that's not what they do. And I think everybody should serve, but it's not going to happen. It's just not going to happen.

Kurtz: We've covered a lot of stuff here. Is there something that we haven't covered that we should have?

Gosa: No, I think that's fine. It's—

Kurtz: Okay.

Gosa: —that's—that's good.

Kurtz: Okay. So are you satisfied with what we did here?

Gosa: Sure.

Kurtz: Okay, then we will quit. Thank you and goodbye.

[End of Gosa.OH1843][End of interview]