RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARCIA COLLINS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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EDISON, NEW JERSEY
DECEMBER 10, 2018

TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an interview with Marcia Collins on December 10, 2018, in Edison, New Jersey, with Kate Rizzi. Thank you so much for having me into your home to do this oral history interview.

Marcia Collins: You're welcome.

KR: To begin, please tell me where and when you were born.

MC: I was born in Smithville Flats, New York, which is near Greene, New York, August 25, 1944.

KR: What do you know about your family history, starting on your mother's side of the family?

MC: Most of Mom's family were from England and most of my dad's family were also from England.

KR: How did your family end up settling in Upstate New York?

MC: Some of them came across on the *Mayflower*, six of the ancestors. Then, my mom was living in Connecticut for a while. My dad was born and grew up in Greene. My mom moved to Greene as a child and then met my dad as a young woman. When she was seventeen and he was twenty-one, they got married. They settled in Greene, lived in Greene. That's where I was born.

KR: What were your parents' childhoods like in Greene, New York?

MC: They were not wealthy. My dad's dad was a tailor in Greene. My mom's mother was a school teacher. My mom's father worked in the township. They were not poor but close to it, from big families. Then, they went through the Great Depression. After they were married, he became a farmer.

KR: How were your parents' families affected by the Great Depression?

MC: They had to get along on what was absolutely necessary, and they managed to do that.

KR: Tell me about your father's education.

MC: Well, he finished high school and then he went to Cornell University for about a year. Then, he started farming.

KR: How did the opportunity come about for him to go to Cornell?

MC: He had two older brothers that went to Cornell to become veterinarians. So, he knew about it that way. He applied and got in.

KR: He did not finish.

MC: No, he didn't. No, he became a farmer, because he wanted to go into the military, but his parents were dead set against it. To avoid it, he became a farmer.

KR: Tell me about your father's farm.

MC: It was a pretty big farm. I don't remember the acreage, but it was quite big. He had cows and a few horses and a couple goats. We had rabbits and lots of cats, some dogs. He was a dairy farmer. He'd milk the cows and send them out to the field after they finished milking and bring them back into the barn at night. He was a hard worker. He used to do haying and growing the corn. I remember he was very excited when he got his first silo to put silage in. There were five of us kids. We used to have a lot of fun playing on the farm. Then, we moved downtown when I was thirteen. Dad had become sick with hepatitis, and he was quite sick and was unable to continue doing the farming. He got a job as a chemical technician in Norwich, which was about twenty miles away, and we moved downtown. As kids, we walked to school.

KR: Was the farm sold at that point?

MC: Yes.

KR: Where did your father work as a chemical technician?

MC: It was called GLA, General Labs Association, in Norwich. They had something to do with the spaceships that were going up. They were building some parts for that, which was very interesting for him. He worked there for several years. Then, he retired.

KR: Did your mother work outside of the home?

MC: Well, she worked on the farm when we had the farm. Then, when we moved downtown and her youngest was going to school, she became a town clerk. She worked for the township for a number of years.

KR: I am curious what it was like for you growing up on the farm until you were thirteen and moved into town.

MC: It was fun. We used to have a lot of fun, went hiking, rode bicycles, went sledding, and hide-and-go-seek. We'd go down to the woods and cut down a Christmas tree at Christmas time and bring it back on the sled. I was the second born. My older brother was a year and a half older than me. My next brother was a year and a half younger than me. Then, a brother five years younger, and then, finally, I got a sister who was eight years younger. We had a lot of fun. We used to have to walk to the school bus, which was probably a half a mile, and wait on the corner sometimes for the bus when it was really, really cold. Sometimes, the school would be closed, and the bus wouldn't come. So, we'd end up waiting long enough, so we figured the bus wasn't going to come. We didn't have cell phones back then. We'd walk back home in the snow. My mother always made me wear snow pants. We were a fairly close family.

KR: What type of farm chores did you have to do?

MC: Mostly, I helped my mom in the kitchen and in the house. Then, sometimes, I'd go down to the barn and help shovel manure, like my brothers did, and I thought it was a big deal to get to do that. I would feed the cows hay. Then, during haying, I'd go out and help load the bales--I can't believe now that I was able to lift the bales, but I remember that I did--onto the wagon. I helped sometimes with the barn work.

KR: Did you know how to milk a cow?

MC: Yes. Then, my dad got the special apparatus that would milk the cows for him, so he didn't have to do it all by hand.

KR: You said that your father's brothers went to Cornell University to study veterinary medicine. Would veterinarians come to the farm to help out with the cows when cows were giving birth? What do you remember about that?

MC: Occasionally, if there was a problem, a veterinarian would come. My uncles lived a little ways away, so they weren't directly involved in our farm. I think if my dad had continued in college, he would have become a vet.

KR: He would have been pretty handy in handling animal health on the farm.

MC: Right, yes.

KR: What was that area of Upstate New York like, in Chenango County?

MC: Very rural. Greene was a very small town at the time, about two thousand people--it's grown since, probably three, four thousand now--but a lot of dairy farms and a lot of wide open space.

KR: Tell me about your education and the schools that you attended.

MC: I went to grade school, junior high school, and high school in Greene. By the time I went to junior high and high school, they had a new school. I graduated from the Greene Central High School. Before they built the schools, schooling was done in various buildings around the community, but by the time I went to junior high, the new school had been built. I was fortunate to get to go there.

I finished high school and decided to become a nurse, partly because my grandmother had been sick and in the small Greene hospital. I had volunteered to be a nurse's aide there and decided I wanted to be a nurse. I went to Wilson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing, which was in Johnson City, New York. I stayed at the nurses' home there and would take the bus home weekends sometimes.

My last year of nursing school, Lieutenant Suzanne Hart, Army Nurse Recruiter, came to our class and told us about the Army nurses. It intrigued me very much. Three of us in my class

decided to sign up, but I'm the only one that followed through. One reason I was intrigued was because my older brother was going to the Air Force Academy. I was very impressed by the uniform and the military. She sold me, Suzanne Hart, on the travel, which I wanted to do, and help people, which I wanted to do. It turned out to be a good experience for me.

The last nine months, I was signed up for the Army Student Nurse Program. I got ninety-nine dollars a month, which I thought was a lot then. I was considered a PFC [private first class]. After I graduated, I went to Fort Sam Houston in Texas for eight weeks of basic training, as a second lieutenant. This is where I met Barbara Chiminello, another Army nurse, and we became good friends.

From there, I went to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. I was there for the rest of that year. I worked on the pediatric floor and intensive care part of the time; Fort Belvoir is right near Washington, D.C. Part of that time, I lived on Capitol Hill with Barbie Chiminello. That was quite an experience, too, living on Capitol Hill. Then, we moved to Arlington. We were there for a few months and then got the big idea to go to Vietnam.

Then, we volunteered and, of course, were accepted. We were stationed at Nha Trang for the first--I was there for nine months--and then I was transferred to Tuy Hoa for three months. They needed nurses there. Both Nha Trang and Tuy Hoa were right on the beach, right on the South China Sea. So, I got a lot of beach time that year.

I went on R-and-R [rest and relaxation] to Thailand, and my older brother was stationed in Thailand at the time, flying over North Vietnam. He and I met in Bangkok. I went with a friend, and he went with a friend. I got to see my brother for a few days in Bangkok, which was very nice. He's the only family I saw for the year. Then, my other R-and-R, I went to Hawaii to meet a friend towards the end of my year. We each got two R-and-Rs, while in Vietnam.

Vietnam was quite an experience. I felt like I helped. I worked on intensive care most of the time, so I saw some really bad cases. The helicopters used to bring the patients in from the field. When helicopters go over now, it takes me back.

KR: If it is okay, I want to ask you some follow up questions about your childhood.

MC: Okay.

KR: Going back to junior high and high school, what were your academic interests?

MC: Home economics, sciences, biology, chemistry and physics, and math, I took business math and some other basic math. I guess that pretty much covers the optional classes that I took.

KR: As a woman, were you encouraged to pursue math and sciences?

MC: Not particularly, no. I knew I couldn't go to college because of the cost, but I was fortunate enough to be able to go to nurse's training. My brothers did go to college, but they all got scholarships and they were boys. My sister also went to nursing school.

KR: I am curious what messages were being sent to you as a woman.

MC: From my parents, you mean?

KR: From your parents, from your community, from your school.

MC: It was pretty much universal that women would probably not go to college. Most women would not go to college, mostly because of the cost, I believe. Also, they figured you'd get married and have kids and not make use of the college. That was pretty much the feeling I got from my parents. Then, nursing worked out well for me because it was "my calling."

KR: What were your interests outside of school?

MC: I shot archery in high school. I really liked that. I used to read a fair amount. I was interested in the boys. A lot of family time. I learned how to crochet afghans when I was a student nurse, so I crocheted some afghans while watching TV with my classmates. Just usual stuff, I guess.

KR: What types of local activities or clubs were there around Greene for young people when you were growing up?

MC: Baptist Youth Fellowship, and I did go to that. We used to have classes and entertainment. Also, we would go roller skating and different things like that. I was fairly involved with that. They'd have dances, sock hops, at the school. They had a pool in Greene. I would do swimming. I never got very good at it. There was a lot of family time, play hide-and-go-seek on the farm and hike and bike. I had one really good friend that was a neighbor. She lived at a nearby farm. We are still in touch sometimes, but we were friends all through school. I had a few good friends.

KR: How politically engaged were your parents when you were growing up?

MC: Not very. They would vote for the people rather than the party. I've always been that way myself. My mom was somewhat religious. She would go to church sometimes. My grandmother on my father's side would go. I would go with her sometimes.

KR: What historical events stick out in your mind from your childhood?

MC: Historical events. I was too little to remember Pearl Harbor. I remember there was a depression going on, or at least when my mom grew up there was a depression and they still had the remnants of depression mentality, my parents did. With five kids on a farm, we didn't have a lot of extra money, so hand-me-downs and a lot of food from the farm. We managed. Historical events, I don't remember really.

KR: On the topic of you and your siblings going to college, how did it come about that your brother went to the Air Force Academy?

MC: He had very good grades, and somehow, he found out about the Air Force Academy and applied, made it, and he went. It turned out to be good for him. He was career Air Force. He's retired, but he still attends some military functions.

KR: What was your brother's service like in Vietnam?

MC: He was stationed in Thailand. He flew missions over North Vietnam, dropping bombs. It was very stressful. He never talked about it a whole lot. He lost some buddies. He was married at the time. He got married the day he graduated from the Air Force Academy, because they couldn't be married while they were going to the academy. A lot of them got married that day. I was at the wedding--I was in the wedding. Then, when he was in Thailand, his first baby was born. I remember when I saw him on R-and-R, he was showing me pictures of his baby. I think he was home when the baby was born. He was able to go home for that, but then he couldn't stay.

When he had basic training at the Air Force Academy, they went out on field trips. He'd come back, and he was really, really thin. He had lost a lot of weight. It was very strict training, preparing him for more, which is what he did. I remember John F. Kennedy saying, "Do what you can for your country, not what your country can do for you," or something to that effect. He influenced me. The historical stuff, I think I remember when the presidents became president. Other than that, it wasn't stressed.

KR: During the early and mid-1960s, what do you remember about what you heard in the news about the Vietnam War?

MC: The main thing that stood out in my mind was the casualties and the people getting injured. I knew they needed nurses. When I was over there, I remember having the feeling that we were winning. I've read since that there was a lot held back from the public. I think a lot of people that were over there felt like we were winning when we really weren't. I was not pro-war at all. I just wanted to help, and I felt like I did.

KR: How long was your brother stationed in Thailand and flying missions over North Vietnam?

MC: I think it was a year.

KR: How did his career progress after the war?

MC: He was stationed at different places in the States. He kept moving up as far as rank went. He ended up being a lieutenant colonel. I believe that's the right rank. It's different in the Air Force, but it was equivalent to a lieutenant colonel. He continued flying for a while, but then, towards the end, he wasn't flying as much.

KR: Do you know what type of plane he flew?

MC: I think it was an [F-4], I think they called it the Phantom jet. It was a fighter.

KR: I want to ask you about nursing school. Describe your course of study.

MC: The first year was a lot of classwork. Then, towards the end of the first year, we'd go on the wards and learn how to take care of patients, how to give a bed bath, how to ambulate patients, how to empty bed pans, how to do catheterizations, change dressings, a lot of basic nursing skills, first aid, CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation]. The first year, like I say, a lot of it was classwork. Then, after that, it was more on the wards (surgical, medical, pediatrics, obstetrics, psychiatry), working with the patients.

At graduation, I received the award for surgical nursing, not in the OR, operating room, but surgical nursing, pre/post-op. I have a pin. I was pretty proud of that. That's the rotation I liked the best (surgical pre and post-op).

In Vietnam, I worked on intensive care surgical nursing. When I got out of the military, I went back home for about a year and worked evenings on a surgical floor at Wilson, where I had trained. Then, I decided to go to National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. I worked on the surgical intensive care unit there. That's where I met Harry, my husband. He was the pharmacist there, but then after we got married, he went to medical school. That's my husband. That's our son.

KR: Nice. For the record, we are looking at pictures on the wall.

MC: Our daughter has the white bathing suit on. Our son's wife has the blue top on and the artistic hairdo.

KR: Why did you prefer surgical nursing?

MC: I just liked the care. I don't remember specifically thinking I prefer surgical nursing. It's just when I had that rotation, I liked it better than the medical, pre and post-op as opposed to pneumonia, etc.

KR: What did you do for fun when you were in nursing school?

MC: Some of my friends and I used to walk to Dunkin Donuts. We'd go for other walks. I learned how to crochet afghans, did that. I read some. I would go out on occasional dates. When I had days off, I would usually go home. I did a lot of studying.

KR: Right around the time you were in nursing school and then joining the Army Nurses Corps, how was the Vietnam War affecting people you knew from your community, your classmates, your friends?

MC: Well, everybody was aware of it. I don't remember that any of my friends or classmates were directly involved with the service. Just everybody was aware of it. We'd watch the news and knew what was going on.

KR: You went to basic training at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

MC: Right.

KR: What type of military things did you learn in basic training?

MC: Marching, saluting. We shot guns. We learned the basic rules of ranks and how to respect upper ranks. Just the way the system worked. We learned if we were taken by the enemy that we could only give our name, rank and service number; no other information. We learned how to dress, how to keep our shoes shiny, what was expected of us as officers.

KR: Who were the people who were training you?

MC: They were officers that were stationed at Fort Sam, nurses, soldiers. I don't remember specifics very much. We wore our fatigues. We went to Camp Bullis for a few days. That was rather rustic. I think that's where we learned how to shoot a gun. We got a little bit dirty, but I don't remember too much about what we did. I remember marching in the big open area at Fort Sam. We would go to the officer's club at night and have dinner and dancing. I met a pharmacist that I kind of liked. Then, he was actually stationed at Walter Reed [Army Medical Center], so I got to see him a few times when I was at Fort Belvoir. I don't remember what else at Fort Sam. [Editor's Note: Walter Reed Army Medical Center was in operation from 1909 to 2011. In 2011, it combined with the National Naval Medical Center to form the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.]

KR: What type of medical or nursing training did you receive when you were at Fort Sam Houston?

MC: I remember we went to the burn unit, which was actually at a nearby hospital. They told us about how burns were treated. When I was in Vietnam, I saw quite a few burn patients, which were pretty bad. They taught basic antiseptic techniques and how to treat different wounds.

KR: Were they teaching you specifically how to treat certain types of wounds?

MC: They did, and some of the medical problems that were in Vietnam, like malaria and things like that.

KR: Did you learn how to do a tracheotomy?

MC: Yes, they did go over that with us.

KR: Did you know that before from nursing school?

MC: I don't think so.

KR: I read somewhere that when learning to do tracheotomies that animals were used as practice. I am wondering what you recall about that.

MC: No, we didn't use animals. They just told us basically. They went over the process with us.

KR: What was your cohort like, the women who were in the training with you?

MC: We developed friendships. There were, I think, six of us that hung out together. We'd go to different local places. There was a zoo near Fort Sam, in San Antonio, that was very nice. We'd go there a couple times. Different outings, hang out, get to know each other. Barbie and I clicked. Everybody had similar interests.

Then, we had to request where we wanted to be stationed. That was an interesting process. I think Fort Belvoir was one of my top choices, so I was glad to get that. I think one of my tops was California and Hawaii. Fort Belvoir worked out well. I was able to drive home sometimes. It was a bit of a drive, but I did it. Barbie was stationed at Walter Reed, so we got to see each other, which helped, having friends.

KR: You referred to wearing fatigues at Fort Sam Houston. Did you wear fatigues as your uniform the whole time when you were in basic training there?

MC: No, we wore fatigues when we went to Camp Bullis. We went there for a few days, maybe a week. I remember a picture of me. I had a helmet on and my fatigues and I was real dirty. I don't think we crawled in the mud, but I was dirty. We may have worn fatigues quite a bit, but we had a dress uniform also and a green summer uniform that we wore. The fatigues was probably a good part of the time.

KR: What was the dress uniform like?

MC: It was green. It was a skirt and a jacket and a blouse, hat, ugly black shoes. When we wore the fatigues, we wore combat boots.

KR: What about at Fort Belvoir? What did you wear then?

MC: A white uniform, whites, yes, and a cap. Nursing's pretty much gotten away from caps now, but we had our cap and white shoes and white stockings. Then, when I was first in Vietnam, we wore the whites, which was surprising, but that didn't last long. They switched the nurses to wearing fatigues. Maybe for a month we wore whites. We wore fatigues most of the time over there with the combat boots.

KR: Before we get to your time in Vietnam, what was your life like when you were serving at Fort Belvoir?

MC: There was a lot to offer in Washington, D.C. I used to go into Washington, D.C. and get to see some of the monuments and museums. It was a good experience to be near D.C. Mount Vernon was not too far from there. I pretty much took advantage of the area that we were in and got together with friends, go to different clubs, jazz clubs, in the city. There were some officer's

clubs in the area. They'd have dancing and get to meet different people. That's about it. I was pretty busy with work. When I had a number of days off, I would go home. It was a long drive, but I did it.

KR: Did you have a car?

MC: Yes, a little Volkswagen.

KR: What was your nursing work like at Fort Belvoir?

MC: I worked on pediatrics. Part of the time, it was pediatric intensive care. It was a little bit of everything. There were some injuries and some sicknesses. It was military families. I liked it. I think I requested pediatrics, actually. It was basic nursing. I don't remember any individual kids there. None of them really stand out in my mind, but it was a good experience. I wore the whites. Our officer's quarters were right across the street, so I would just walk until I moved on to Capitol Hill.

I don't really remember how much of the year I lived at Fort Belvoir, probably about three months, then moved to Capitol Hill. Barbie and I used to walk to the different museums and monuments. We would go to concerts. We did a lot of different things, would go to different shows, took advantage of what Washington had to offer. It was a nice experience.

Then, when we moved to Arlington, we were the upstairs of a house, and that worked out quite well. We had to walk to a laundromat to do our laundry, which was a bit of a pain, but we did it. We'd go to Georgetown and go to Washington for different events. Then, I think it was she that came up with the idea of going to Vietnam. I was all for it. We did it together.

KR: Tell me about the buddy system.

MC: The buddy system was where two of you could volunteer to go to Vietnam. You were pretty much guaranteed to be stationed at the same place. It made it easier to go with someone and knowing that you'd be stationed at the same place. Basically, that was the "buddy system."

KR: What were your personal thoughts of the Vietnam War at that point in 1965-1966?

MC: I've always hated war. I hated war then, and I still hate war. I felt like we were there for a purpose, to help the South Vietnamese not be taken over by the North Vietnamese. I felt like there was a purpose there. I was never pro-war at all. That was my feelings.

KR: What was the flight over to Vietnam like?

MC: Long, it was long. Barbie was socializing a lot. I was never quite as social, so I didn't. I just remember it was very long, dozing off and on.

Then, when we landed in Saigon, the pilot, bless his heart, said, "I'm going to turn the lights off now, so the enemy can't see us landing." Can you believe that? This is what I remember. So, he turned the lights off. Then, we landed, but it was scary.

We stayed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon a couple of nights, until they had our flight to Nha Trang arranged. We had a bunkbed, but it was more like a canvas cot, I think. I was up and she was down. There were mama-sans running around with the Vietnamese hats on. I have some pictures of that. They have monsoons there, very heavy rains. The roof where we were staying was tin. I remember the rain beating down on the tin roof. It made quite an impression on me. When I hear that now, real heavy rain, I think of that. We could see flares going off in the distance. I don't know if we heard shooting then or not. We may have. The whole time in Vietnam I heard shooting off in the hills. That stayed with me. I don't like fireworks much.

KR: What were first couple days like at Nha Trang?

MC: It was just before Christmas. I had a terrible migraine. In fact, I went to the emergency room. It was terrible. It was stress, I'm sure. They gave me a shot of something to relax me and to get rid of the vomiting and headache. I slept for quite a while after that.

KR: Was your second R-and-R in Hawaii?

MC: Yes.

KR: I was wondering if you could describe to me what Nha Trang was like, the base and the hospital.

MC: The base was--I think they called it a temporary base. The intensive care unit was actually a stucco building and had air-conditioning in it, but a lot of the units were Quonset huts. It would just be row upon row of canvas cots. The intensive care unit was a little different.

The place that we lived was called a villa. It was a stucco house. It had the concertina wire all around the hospital and the surrounding buildings that were used by the staff. Most of the rooms in the villa had bunkbeds. We had mosquito netting over the beds to keep the mosquitos off us or at least try to. They were right near the hospital, so we would just walk over to where we were working.

The enlisted men lived in--I think they called them--Quonset huts. They were the tin buildings and weren't as nice as where the officers stayed.

Most of the hospital was where they had the cots lined up. We had a big board where we would write the names of the patients. We had some Vietnamese patients and some Vietcong patients who were prisoners. They were shackled to the bed. There were guards standing there watching them.

Then, there were a lot of soldiers, mostly soldiers that were injured or sick. I remember a few of them. A couple of them wrote me letters. They gave me letters, which I have copies of,

expressing some of their feelings for the nurses, which was quite interesting. Some of the patients would just sign off their number, not the name, the bed number. It was quite an experience.

[At the Eighth Field Hospital at Nha Trang], I worked on the surgical unit some, and then I went to the surgical intensive care, which is where I spent most of the time. We had patients on Stryker frames and some kind of ventilators. I used to suction patients a lot and worked pretty closely with the corpsmen, who did a lot of the nursing care, too. They were enlisted. It was a fairly small hospital, maybe three hundred and fifty patients or something like that, some medical and some surgical. Lots of times when I was working on the surgical intensive care I would be the only nurse there with some corpsmen. We really didn't have enough staff. We didn't have enough medicine. A lot of the medicine that we did get was not ideal for what the patients needed, but they were the best that they could get.

I went on a helicopter once with a couple doctors and a couple of the nurses to a Montagnard village to give out cough syrup. They thought we were healing them. I guess we gave other medicine too, and the doctors examined some patients. It was a goodwill venture. Montagnard was a different--have you heard that term? [Editor's Note: The Degar, known by the French term Montagnards for "mountain people," are indigenous peoples to the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The service described above by Marcia Collins refers to the Medical Civil Action Program (MEDCAP), in which American medical personnel treated Vietnamese civilians.]

KR: Yes.

MC: A different sect almost of people. They lived differently than the other Vietnamese.

We would go downtown sometimes. One of the nurses would borrow a jeep and drive us down to Nha Trang. We'd walk around the village, which was very interesting. A lot of poverty. The landscaping was beautiful. The ocean and the beaches. Then, there were mountains. Really pretty landscaping. But for the poverty and the war, spoiled it. I understand now it's a nice place to visit, but I have no interest. I don't know if I answered your question about the hospital.

KR: You did. Thank you. For the record, was it the Eighth Field Hospital?

MC: Yes, Eighth Field Hospital.

KR: What would a typical shift be like when you were working in the surgical ICU?

MC: We did a lot of twelve-hour shifts, some eight-hour shifts, but when the staffing was in need of it, they gave us twelve-hour shifts, which was long. You were very busy, so the time went by. I really don't remember the percentage of twelve hour versus eight hour, but I do remember that we did have some significant time of twelve-hour shifts. We had a couple times when they had alerts and we had to put on our--they called them--flak jackets and our helmets and go to a certain building. I think they were false alarms, or they didn't amount to much. Maybe they were just practices but a little nerve-wracking.

Then, when General [William] Westmoreland came, that was very exciting. We saw his helicopter come. I saw him. I have a picture of him saluting me. I have a picture of shaking hands with him. It looks like we're shaking left hands because the picture was processed backwards. It was exciting. He just went around to different hospitals and facilities to show his presence and find out what's going on there.

KR: You mentioned going to the village of Nha Trang.

MC: Yes.

KR: What did you do when you were not on your twelve or eight-hour shifts? What did you do when you were off duty?

MC: I would rest, write letters home. We used to copy friends' tapes of music. We had the reel-to-reel tape recorders. We would copy each other's music, also send 'talk' recordings home. We had the small reel to reel and make tapes home, write letters. I went to the beach quite a bit. We were right by the beach. I would go to the beach and play with the baby-sans and sunbathe and go out on a raft and float around in the South China Sea. They had a beach house where they made fried rice and I got addicted to fried rice. I still like fried rice. I did some reading. I would have to rest for the long shifts I had.

During monsoon season, one time I remember there were really heavy winds, and some pieces of the metal roofs were blowing around. It was pretty bad. I was afraid to go to work, so I was hanging out. I got a call, "You get over here. We need you. We need you at work." I battled the weather and made it, but it was scary, the monsoons.

KR: You mentioned before that some of the patients stand out in your mind. Some patients wrote you letters. What recollections do you have of those patients?

MC: They were young men and far away from home. I would write letters for some of them to home because they were unable to. One of them had a bad abdominal wound, and I would change the dressing. I had a habit of when I finished with the dressing, I would gently pat it. He said, "That hurts. Don't do that." So, I felt bad because it hurt him. It was just something I did, like, "Okay, here's my dressing. I finished it." I took care of him for quite a while. I think his name was Mike, but I'm not sure. Then, finally, they transferred him to Japan, where they sent some of the patients to recoup. I felt he should have been transferred sooner. Then, I found out that he died there. I felt really bad about that. There were some really bad burn patients, one in particular that I remember, that the doctors would be changing the dressing and I'd hold the patient's hand. It was really bad, one of the worst cases I'd seen.

One of the VC [Vietcong] patients who was a prisoner, I remember I had a very busy shift and that patient died. The corpsman didn't tell me right away that he was dying because I was busy with other patients. We took care of them, but they weren't our priority. [Editor's Note: Vietcong, or VC, refers to a member of the Communist guerrilla movement that fought along with the North Vietnamese Army against South Vietnamese and American forces during the Vietnam War.]

I was in Tuy Hoa [at the 91st Evacuation Hospital] when Barbie found out about her brother's death. I wasn't in Nha Trang with her. I found out about it afterwards. I felt really bad about it. I don't remember how I heard. Word of mouth somehow. She re-upped, I think. She went back home with him. Then, she went back and I think she extended her tour or she re-upped, spent another tour of duty there. [Editor's Note: Marcia Collins and Barbara Chiminello both served at the Eighth Field Hospital in Nha Trang. Barbara's brother Thomas Chiminello, who was a dust-off helicopter pilot, was killed in action on October 29, 1967. Barbara flew home to San Antonio, Texas with his casket and then later volunteered to go back to Vietnam and served at the 71st Field Hospital at Pleiku.]

KR: Yes, she did.

MC: Yes. I didn't do that. I got out. I think part of that was because of her brother. I don't know if she understood, but she felt like she wanted to go back.

KR: Did you ever meet her brother?

MC: I don't think I ever did. I know they were a pretty close family. She lost her husband, I think she told you. Seven or eight years ago she lost her husband. She was living in Alexandria or Arlington, down in that area. Then, she moved to New York to be near her daughter. I actually visited her once when she was staying in her daughter's place in New York, with her husband. Harry and I went in and got to meet her husband and went out with them. I remember we went for a long walk and then went for lunch. That's the one time I met her husband. Then, her daughter encouraged her to move to New York after she lost her husband. That's where she lives now.

KR: What types of wounds were soldiers suffering from, that they were treated for, in the surgical ICU?

MC: Amputations, abdominal wounds, chest wounds, head wounds, all sorts of stuff. I remember one Vietnamese kid, his penis had been blown off. He was a patient. I don't know what became of him. You name it. One Vietnamese kid lost his eye, had a patch on his eye. A lot of amputations. There were some patients on, I think they called them, Stryker frames, where they would turn them. I think those have been replaced by something now. I used to put--they had these long catheters that would go in the vein, plastic, and I used to insert those myself.

KR: What was the purpose of the Stryker frame?

MC: It was if a patient was paralyzed or semi-paralyzed and they couldn't move themselves, it would turn them over and keep them in position. It's important that they not always be in the same position, so it would keep them in position and flip them over. It was a big metal thing. There was a way to--I think you would put part of a bed over him and then turn him, so they'd be resting on that. I don't remember exactly, but I remember that's what it was called. It was quite a contraption.

KR: What other medical innovations were there?

MC: They had some kind of a respirator. I really don't remember just what it was like, but it would keep people breathing, not very modernistic, but it did the breathing for the patients. A lot of suction machines, oxygen. A lot of medicine. Like I said, it wasn't always the best medicine for the purpose, but it was the best that could be provided at the time. Sometimes they'd run short on medicines.

KR: What did you think of the quality of the medical care?

MC: I gave good medical care. I gave the best I could. Certainly, there were some rustic machines, like the suction machines were not the very best, but they worked. They served a purpose. There wasn't enough staff to give ideal medical care most of the time, but you did the best you could. I felt like the doctors did the best they could. The nurses did the best they could. The corpsmen, some of the corpsmen were better than some of the nurses. They'd have hootch parties sometimes, where we'd get together with different doctors and nurses and socialize, have a few drinks. I think the enlisted men went through a lot of beer. [Editor's Note: Hootch refers to military living quarters or to a thatched hut in Southeast Asia.]

KR: Are there any stories that stick out in your mind about working with corpsmen or doctors or surgeons or other nurses?

MC: No, nothing.

KR: What were you hearing from the wounded soldiers about the war, the progress of the war?

MC: I really don't remember that they talked about it. They would talk about what happened to them. I really don't remember them talking about that, but I remember having the feeling that we were winning. Whether part of it came from the patients or newspapers--we had a TV in the villa, so I think there was probably one channel that we'd see sometimes. We'd get some news that way. I remember until I came home, I felt like we were winning.

KR: What was it like when a new nurse would arrive at Nha Trang?

MC: I just remember when I was new. I don't remember any other nurses being new, to be honest with you. It was very stressful. Everybody would train each other. I think they usually came in groups. I don't think they usually came individually, but I may be wrong there. There was some training there, but I don't remember. It was mostly on-the-job training.

KR: You talked before about having to put on your flak jacket and your helmet for the alarm. I am curious, did you wear a sidearm?

MC: No, no, we didn't. We knew how to use them, but we didn't have our own, no. I guess if the need arose, they'd provide us with one, but we did not have one. At the hospital, there were elevated (almost like lifeguards at the beach) platforms and the guards would be up there with guns on the outskirts of the hospital grounds.

KR: What was your interaction like with Vietnamese civilians when you went to the village of Nha Trang?

MC: It was a little reserved on our part, because you couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys really. You hoped that most of them were Vietnamese that lived there and were okay. I never learned the language much, just a few basic words. I tried taking Vietnamese language before I went to Vietnam. It was very difficult. I didn't follow through on learning it very well. *Dau* meant pain. Some of the basic words you learned.

KR: What does that mean?

MC: *Dau* means pain. *Beaucoup dau* meant lots of pain. Dow, D-O-W, that's how I [pronounce] it. I don't know if that's how they spell it. That one word stuck in my mind, that's for sure. What was your last question?

KR: Your interaction with civilians.

MC: Okay. We tried to be friendly with them and smile. Like I say, I didn't know the language very well, but when we'd go out to eat, we'd tell them what we wanted and they'd serve us. We went to restaurants in the village sometimes.

There was one Vietnamese woman who lived in a villa outside the hospital grounds. I would walk to the beach, and it was a fairly nice villa. She invited me in a couple times and she spoke English pretty well, but then she wanted me to bring her things from the PX [post exchange] and stuff like that, so I didn't keep going there. It was inappropriate.

Then, you'd see Vietnamese kids--there was a lot of trash around outside the hospital grounds, a lot of trash around--and you'd see Vietnamese kids sitting there looking at papers. A lot of poverty and sadness. The kids on the beach, some of them were naked, which was cute. The mama-sans on the beach would carry the fruit baskets up and down the beach selling fruit. I have a picture of me in my bathing suit holding one of those. Besides that one woman and the kids on the beach and the patients, I didn't have a whole lot of interaction with the Vietnamese.

Some of the patients were Vietnamese, but walking through the town you're always on your guard. I was well aware of the fact that there were some "women of the world" who invited the GIs into homes, but I never saw it. I was just aware that that was going on a lot, which was sad, I thought.

I visited an orphanage once, which was very interesting. I remember this little girl in a red dress with her hair up like this. Cute little kids, orphanage. I guess their parents were killed in the war. I visited a Vietnamese hospital once, which was interesting. I have some pictures of that, not a very good facility.

KR: What was it like?

MC: Some of the cots had a hole in it where the excrement would go in a bucket. Some of the patients were very thin. The maternity ward, some of the mothers would actually share a bed. Then, the babies would be in bed with them. It was very crowded and dirty and not very pleasant. You didn't feel like they were getting very good care. Probably not much staff. It was sad, interesting but sad. You wanted to fix it all, couldn't fix it. Like I said, except for the poverty and the war, it could have been a beautiful country.

I spent a lot of my free time on the beach when I wasn't working. I got to be fairly good friends with one of the enlisted corpsmen, which you weren't really supposed to do. I think that's one reason I was transferred. I was never sure, but I figured that had something to do with it because I was getting to be friends with him. I would see him on the beach. We would talk.

KR: That is a difficult situation because as a nurse you were an officer, but you were working so closely with corpsmen who were enlisted.

MC: Right.

KR: What did you think about the rules of fraternization?

MC: I guess there were reasons for the rules because they're supposed to obey the higher rank, but you become friends with someone because you work closely with them. It can't be helped sometimes. I think the rules were a little bit stringent. I never got spanked or my hand slapped, but I got transferred. Whether that was one of the reasons or not, I don't know.

KR: When you found out that were getting transferred, were you and Barbara upset because you had gone into it with this buddy agreement?

MC: We had some kind of a disagreement at one point in time. For the life of me, I don't remember what it was, but we weren't as close. When I got transferred, I don't remember that we were particularly upset because of the friendship part. I think she was hanging out with somebody that I didn't really approve of and I was hanging out with somebody she didn't really approve of. That had something to do with it, I think.

KR: You talked about the Montagnard village. What were your impressions of the Montagnard people?

MC: They were darker skinned. They look a little different. They had coarser features than the other Vietnamese. They lived in these buildings that were elevated and had like grass floors and thatched roofs. I remember seeing the little kids smoking. I don't know what they were smoking, but they were smoking. You could just tell that they were a different--not really a different race, but a different sect. I think they were more rural. They were a different group. They looked a little different, and they lived a little differently. That's all I remember.

KR: You talked about civilians being treated at the hospital in Nha Trang. Were these civilians that were injured in the course of the war that you were treating?

MC: Not necessarily. Some of them were sick with malaria or whatever. I don't remember how they came to be our patients. I really don't know. They were in the surrounding community and came to our hospital. I'm not sure if there was a process they went through to become our patients or what. The prisoners were the ones that were captured and had injuries or were sick. They had a bed. They got fed. They had it pretty good for prisoners. We took care of them. Unless there was a real staffing problem, we took care of them the same as we took care of the other ones. If there was a staffing issue or a supply issue, then they did not get priority. We understood they were doing what they were told for their country, just like we were doing what we were told for our country. Do you understand what I'm saying?

KR: Yes. I am curious if you had any contact with American women who were serving in another branch of the service.

MC: There was American Red Cross there. Another branch, Navy, Air Force, no. The Red Cross were civilians there. They helped patients write letters. What else did they do? I'm not sure. They delivered mail, talked with patients, and they did non-nursing things.

KR: What was your communication with your family like, with your parents and your siblings?

MC: We sent tapes, some of the reel to reel, I would make tapes and send them to them. They did the same for me, and then letters, a lot of letters back and forth. I wrote letters frequently, at least every week.

KR: Was there ever an opportunity to call home over the Military Auxiliary Radio System, known as MARS?

MC: Yes. My brother was the ham radio guy, still is a ham radio guy. He was able to--I think it was called--"branch me" to them, but it would have to go through a few different people and then you'd say something. Then, you say, "Over and out." It wasn't real aesthetically pleasing, but we did it a couple times, not very often because it was more frustrating than good, but he tried.

KR: When was it that you got transferred to Tuy Hoa?

MC: I had about three months left, yes. The chief nurse came to my room. She said, "You're being transferred." Staffing issues, I think is what she told me. "Pack your bags. You'll be out of here in two days," or something like that. I didn't have much notice.

KR: What was the trip like to Tuy Hoa?

MC: I really don't remember. I think it was a flight, but I'm not even sure. Tuy Hoa was a little further north along the beach from Nha Trang. I packed up my duffel bag, and we had these metal chests, like a hope chest but a metal chest, that you pack up. I packed up that and my duffel bag, and off I went.

KR: What were your first couple days like at Tuy Hoa?

MC: I really don't remember. I wasn't in a villa. I was in a wooden building. I did have my own little room, which was pretty small. It had a pretty comfortable bed and a locker and what I needed. Then, there was a public female bathroom for the whole building, showers and toilets, which were private. There were mama-sans that would wash your clothes for you and be around all the time. I really don't remember what the first few days were like.

KR: What was the base like?

MC: It was a lot of wooden buildings, one story wooden buildings with the sandbags all around the outside of them. The intensive care unit was one of the few units that I think had some air conditioning. I don't really remember what the other hootches were like because I don't think I worked [anywhere] except in intensive care there, but they were probably small, wooden buildings, with the canvas cots lined up. I became very friendly with a surgeon there. They had a very nice officer's club where we'd go and hang out, some dancing there. Again, the beach and the mama-sans and the baby-sans. The patients were--I think it was a similar situation as Nha Trang--the intensive care unit cared for amputees, serious wounds. I was there three months. It seemed like longer, but I was only there three months. Then, I didn't really consider staying in the Army. I was ready to get out.

KR: What stands out in your mind about your commanding officers?

MC: They were intimidating, not really scary, but intimidating. I didn't have much contact with them. Just the superior ranks, when you would be walking, you'd have to salute them, but in the officers' club it didn't matter what rank you were.

KR: Did you have a commanding officer who was a nurse?

MC: I'm sure I did. I don't remember her.

KR: What was daily life like at Tuy Hoa working the ICU?

MC: I worked nights sometimes and days sometimes and twelve-hour shifts sometimes. When I wasn't at work, lots of times I'd go to the beach and hang out. Evenings, I'd go to the officers' club and hang out. Again, writing letters, making tapes, taking pictures. We wore fatigues there for work the whole time.

KR: Was there the threat of attack at Tuy Hoa?

MC: Yes, I think there was. I don't remember any alerts or anything like that, but I could hear shooting in the outskirts. So, you felt on guard all the time. The helicopters would bring the patients. It wasn't a whole lot of fun.

KR: Did you leave the base?

MC: Yes. I did leave the base a few times to go to the town, walk around. Actually, it was Tuy Hoa where I went to the Montagnard village. It was Tuy Hoa, rather than Nha Trang, because I remember some of the people that went too, Tuy Hoa doctors.

KR: What was the town of Tuy Hoa like?

MC: It was very similar to the town of Nha Trang. They have a lot of stands where the Vietnamese would sell things made in Vietnam.

KR: Oh, wow.

MC: Iron. I don't know if it was made in Vietnam, but that's where I got.

KR: For the record, it is an iron.

MC: They put coals in it to make it hot. This is a Vietnam souvenir. I have a hat hanging in the living room that's a Vietnamese souvenir. It's from one of the Vietnamese stands in town.

KR: Please tell the story about meeting Charlton Heston.

MC: He was on a goodwill trip, visiting with different troops, and I don't know how many hospitals he visited. He visited the intensive care unit, which is where that picture was taken. I got to shake his hand and look into his eyes. It was rather cool, rather cool. I have a book on him. He's sort of my hero. I like his movies. It was neat getting to meet him.

KR: For the record, Marcia has a photograph in her dining room of her shaking the actor Charlton Heston's hand.

MC: Yes. [laughter] That was exciting and [meeting] Westmoreland was exciting also, in a different way.

KR: Did you go to any USO shows?

MC: Yes. I did go to some. I remember the rows and rows of patients in blue pajamas. Then the singers with--I don't remember who--one of the female singers was well-known at the time, but I don't remember what her name was now. The patients would be there also to see the USO show, patients and staff. It was interesting. I saw a couple of them. The USO shows were nice. I missed seeing Bob Hope. I missed seeing him, but then I saw him on TV, *The Bob Hope Show*, in Vietnam. I just missed him both times. I think he had already been to Nha Trang when I got there, and then he was coming to Tuy Hoa when I left. I watched him on TV. He had nice shows for the troops. Except for the nurses and Red Cross, [through] the USO, the patients and GIs would get to see females from back home. [Editor's Note: The United Service Organizations (USO) provides entertainment, programs and services for American military personnel.]

My daughter wrote this when she was getting her master's in health administration. She wrote this, and she interviewed me. You might find this interesting to look at.

KR: This is by Melissa Collins. It's entitled "Army Nurses in Vietnam," dated December 15, 1997. When we pause, I would like to look this over.

MC: Yes. It may have some of the letters in it. This is actually a copy. This is my collection.

KR: Tell me what each of these are.

MC: This is the Army recruiter's card that came and talked to my nursing student class and convinced me [to join the Army Nurses Corps], Captain Suzanne Hart. This is just a ten cent from Vietnam. This was my name tag. This was the Vietnam Service medal. This is the National Defense medal. My second lieutenant bars and my first lieutenant bars and my nurse's symbol that I wore on my uniform. This was on my hat, Army nurse. This was my "U.S." that I wore on my uniform, and my dog tags. This was a patch from Fort Belvoir. This was a patch from Vietnam.

KR: Patches.

MC: Patches, yes, that I wore on the uniform.

KR: Thank you for showing me that collection. You said earlier that you went to Bangkok and to Hawaii on R-and-R. What sticks out in your mind about visiting Bangkok?

MC: The temples and the Buddhas and getting to see my brother and getting to share that with him. The River Kwai I got to see, *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Sylvia is the gal that I went with. She was another Army nurse. She and I hired a taxi driver one day. He drove us to the bridge on the River Kwai and around some of the country outside of Bangkok so we could see some of the [sights]. It was very interesting, pretty country. A lot of flowers and trees. The main thing is the temples and the Buddhas. In every temple, there was a Buddha. All the Buddhas were different. Every temple was a little different, very colorful, interesting. I went to some restaurants and got to try Thai food. To this day, I like Thai restaurants. That's what stood out there. [Editor's Note: *The Bridge on the River Kwai* was a 1957 war film that depicted the construction of the railway connecting Burma to Thailand by prisoners of war during World War II.]

KR: What were holidays like when you were in Vietnam?

MC: Well, I told you about Christmas. I was sick. [laughter] They'd have special meals in the mess halls. I don't really remember celebrating holidays much. When I was in Tuy Hoa, I left before Christmas, so I didn't get to see Christmas there.

KR: What were your thoughts at Tuy Hoa when your time to go home was coming up?

MC: Mixed feelings. I felt like I had helped. I knew I was going to miss that. I was anxious to see my family, sad to leave some of my friends. I know it was a long flight back. When we took off on the airplane, everyone cheered a big cheer.

KR: What was it like when you stepped foot in the United States?

MC: It was exciting, but I don't really recall much about it. I was anxious to call my family. I know we landed in California, and then I got a flight to the Binghamton, N.Y. Airport. I don't remember if it was direct or not direct, but Binghamton Airport is where my parents picked me up.

KR: What was it like getting back into civilian life?

MC: I think it felt good, but there were some things that I missed about the military. I took a few weeks off and interviewed at Wilson Memorial Hospital, which is where I had trained. I went to work there evenings on the surgical floor, but then I was restless. I didn't want to stay living home because I was used to having more freedom and being on my own. I looked into different possibilities and decided to go to National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, which was a civil service job. I got credit for my military years pay-wise. That was quite an impressive place. I don't know if you're familiar with that or not, National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland.

KR: Tell me about it.

MC: They do a lot of research. It's grown a lot since we were there. I worked on surgical intensive care there.

I went to a Christmas party at the Navy officers' club, which was across the street. Harry was a pharmacist at NIH and he went to that Christmas party, and one of the nursing supervisors introduced us. Seven months later, we got married. Forty-eight years later, here we are, worked out good!

NIH was a good choice. They do a lot of good research work. Then, when I went back to work after our kids were old enough, so I was ready to go back to work. I actually went to work in clinical research. My husband had a research coordinator at his family practice office, and she was leaving. They were looking for a replacement for her. I was interested in getting back into work part time, no nights, no evenings, no weekends. It seemed like a good opportunity for me, so I took over and she taught me the ropes and I got hooked. I really liked the drug research. Then, I grew the research at Edison Medical Group. Then, after that, I decided I wanted to start my own business, and I started my own business and had my own business for eighteen years, clinical research business. I just retired five years ago from that. It was very interesting and fulfilling.

KR: What was the name of your business?

MC: It was called Anderson and Collins Clinical Research. Anderson, he was actually a patient at Edison Medical Group. Harry and I got to know him as a patient. He was interested in starting a business also. We did it together. He started out being president, but then five years later, he left the business. Then, I became president. It was good. I had a staff of fifteen at one point. We did a lot of research for major pharmaceutical companies. We would find the patients. The pharmaceutical company would provide the drug and protocol, and we would follow the protocol and find appropriate patients to be in the study and then follow the protocol of the study. It was a very successful business.

KR: What types of drugs?

MC: Drugs for: high cholesterol, high blood pressure, bird flu, regular flu, different antibiotics, arthritis, a wide variety. It was an interesting business. Harry was the Principal Investigator for most of the studies, so we got to travel to a lot of the startup meetings together around the country, different places. It was an interesting business. I enjoyed it.

Then, I stopped, because, number one, I was getting a little tired. The lease for the office I had was up, and so I chose to just close the studies down and close the business and retire. Five years later, still the group staff gets together once in a while for get-togethers. It was a good experience for Harry and I. He was usually the investigator and I was the owner of the business. My office was right next to his doctor's office, so it worked out really well. I put my nursing to use and got to contribute to research, helped get a lot of drugs approved, unrelated to the veterans, but it was follow-up.

KR: To go back to your military service, how do you think you were treated as a woman in the military?

MC: I thought I was treated well. I felt like a lot of respect was shown to the Army nurses. I thought I was good. I have no complaints.

KR: You got back to the states in December of 1967.

MC: Right.

KR: Right after that, a big turning point came in the war with the Tet Offensive in January 1968. What do you recall about 1968 and what was going on in the war and that you had just been there?

MC: I remember watching it on TV and feeling very sad that people were still getting injured, wounded. Just that it was still going on, that's what I remember. I was following it pretty closely at the time.

KR: What do you recall about the anti-war movement?

MC: Like I said, I was never pro-war, but I think I thought it was overdone a little bit, the anti-war [movement]. I felt like we were there for a reason. Unfortunately, the reason didn't come to fruition. We tried, but war sucks.

KR: How much did you talk about your service in those first couple of years after you were in Vietnam?

MC: I think I talked about it to my family and friends quite a bit. My dad belonged to the Lions Club, and he had me go show my slides to the Lions Club one time and tell some of my experiences. They were very interested. He was very proud of me for that. My parents weren't really in favor of me joining the Army, but they said, "If that's what you want to do, that's what you should do." The same thing about going to Vietnam. They were good about it. I think I told you my dad had wanted to serve and his parents did not want him to and insisted that he not. I think because of that experience he was more inclined to say, "If that's what you want to do, that's what you should do." I felt that my parents were proud of me.

KR: How do you think Vietnam veterans were treated by society in the aftermath of the war?

MC: I think there was a lot of prejudice against them, that people felt like they shouldn't have been there. They probably weren't treated the way they should have been. I can't give specifics, but that was the general feeling. I never felt like anybody criticized me to my face. They were respectful and thankful for what I did. To this day, in Home Depot, we have our veterans' cards and we get a discount for it. The people will always say, "Thank you for your service," which is nice. Are you interested in seeing the DVD?

KR: Yes, I am. I want to ask you a couple more questions.

MC: Sure.

KR: We have talked a lot about your friend, Barbara Chiminello. Are there other friendships that have persisted?

MC: No. I know she was over there more than I was. She's maintained more friendships, but she's the only one I kept up with.

KR: Have you been involved in any veterans groups?

MC: No, I haven't.

KR: Would you like to talk about your children, your grandchildren, on the record?

MC: Sure. Our daughter's the oldest. We were married in '70, and she was born in '76. She got her master's in health administration. When my business partner left, she had finished getting her master's, and she came to work with me. I became president and she became my vice president. She worked with me for a number of years, actually, until I closed the business. Now, she works at Ethicon, which is a branch of J&J [Johnson & Johnson].

Our son was born in '78. He went to college in Pennsylvania. She went to a college in Pennsylvania also. Then, he decided he wanted to go to California. He went to California, and he had gotten a degree in industrial engineering. Then, he had interviews for that kind of a career. He decided he really didn't want to work with "things;" he wanted to work with "people." He went to work in California at a facility that was for children who needed extra help. They weren't really delinquents, but they needed extra help. He worked there for a while. He was a big swimmer. He did life guarding. He went to San Diego to be a lifeguard one season and decided he wanted to live in San Diego, took up surfing. He went to San Diego, and I actually suggested to him, I said, "Marc, you were always really good in math. You want to surf! You want to have time when you can surf? Why don't you become a math teacher?" He took the classes he needed, and he became a math teacher, deciding engineering wasn't what he wanted to do, although he did okay in college. Then, he became a math teacher in San Diego and was surfing and met his wife-to-be, Jamie, in San Diego. They got married, and a couple of weeks later, they moved to Hawaii. They've been [in] Hawaii ever since, about ten years. They're very happy in Hawaii. They live on Oahu. We go there twice a year, and he comes back once a year. Now, he's into paragliding. He walks up a mountain with a parachute on his back and jumps off and flies around up there for hours sometimes. He loves it, gets phenomenal pictures.

Melissa's working for Ethicon, which is forty-five minutes from here. She's doing well in her job and likes it, and she's working with clinical research but more devices rather than drugs. The work she did for me helped prepare her for this job.

Our granddaughter's fifteen. Our grandson is twelve. Our granddaughter's into cheer and loves that. She's now going to Metuchen High School, ninth grader, and is starting to date. Cody, our grandson, is twelve and a very good student. They're both good students. He just finished football season, and he loves football. That's his favorite. Now, he's doing basketball. We go to football and basketball games and cheer him on. We get a lot of joy out of our grandkids. This is a picture of them.

KR: Is there anything that we skipped over that you would like to add?

MC: Just my husband and I have been very happy and have had a very good marriage. We have two good kids and two good grandkids. It looks like that's going to be it, but we're content.

Harry was in the Public Health Service. When I was in Vietnam, he was in San Francisco. He was in the Public Health Service at NIH. Then, he finished his time in the Public Health Service shortly after we got married and went to medical school in Philadelphia. Then, he finished medical school and went to family practice residency. When he was going to medical school, I was working at the VA hospital in Philadelphia. Then, when we went for his residency in Fairfax, Virginia, I worked at the Fairfax hospital on a surgical floor. We lived in an apartment complex right next to the hospital. We were living there when our daughter was born, at which time I stopped working for about ten years, full-time mom. Two years later, we had Marc.

Harry was an only child. I never knew his dad because his dad died before I knew Harry. His mom had lived in Philadelphia, and then she moved up to be near us. The last few years of her

life she lived in Edison. I think I had mentioned I have three brothers and a sister. I lost my mom last year. I lost my dad in 2000.

KR: I am sorry.

MC: We've lived here for forty years. We moved here when Marc was a baby and have been very happy here.

KR: What did you do at the VA hospital in Philadelphia?

MC: I worked on surgical intensive care.

KR: What years were those, roughly?

MC: That's when Harry was going to medical school, which was--let's see--we got married in '70. He was in medical school in '70 to '74.

KR: Were some of the patients being treated at the VA hospital Vietnam veterans?

MC: Yes, some of them were. Some of them were older veterans. There's a veterans' home near here. I've actually considered doing some volunteer work there, but I haven't done it yet. I've thought about it. I have a soft spot in my heart for veterans. So, I worked there while he was going to medical school, and then he finished medical school and he kept me, which isn't like all the stories go. [laughter] Anything else?

KR: Is there anything else you would like to add?

MC: I can't think of anything right now.

KR: Well, thank you so much. I am going to stop.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Transcribed by Molly Graham 1/2/2019
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 1/6/2019
Reviewed by Marcia Collins 2/3/2019