Teresa Olszowy
Veteran

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Interviewer

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HW: Will you state and spell your full name?
TO: My name is Teresa Olszowy. My last name is spelled O L S Z O W Y.

HW: What branch of military and what dates did you serve?
TO: I served with the United States Army. I began my career as an ROTC cadet in Syracuse University in September 1978. I was commissioned as Second Lieutenant in May 1982, and served as an officer in the United States Army Ordinance Corps until December 1991. I separated service as a Captain.

HW: What influenced you to go into the military?
TO: I had a cousin who, several years prior, had received an ROTC scholarship. It was a tuition's paid scholarship. I thought I would take a crack at it, and lo and behold I ended up with a four year tuition paid scholarship to Syracuse. It initially required a four year active service duty obligation with an additional two year reserve. I ended up spending nine years on active duty. It was one of those procrastination deals. I was enjoying myself and having a good time and four years turned into nine.

HW: What did you have to do to qualify for the ROTC scholarship?
TO: It was a mix of academics and community leadership skills. They judged you not only on your standardized scores like SATS, but you also had to take a physical exam and a personal interview you had to go through with several active duty officers. I don't recall the numbers, but it was a fairly large, nationwide competition.

HW: Do you know approximately how many of the students you went to school with at Syracuse were on ROTC scholarships?
TO: I think in my freshman year there were about eighteen on scholarships. But there were a variety of others because in addition to the four year scholarship, you could also get a one-two-or three year scholarship depending on what year in school you were, whether or not there was a vacancy in the program, and whether or not you had shown the aptitude or interest to go forward.

HW: Do you think it was a competitive program?
TO: Most definitely. There was an academic requirement of maintaining a certain GPA, plus the fact that your final grade point average and your final ranking after your summer camp determined whether or not you got your first selection of branch choice when you graduated. It also helped to influence your assignment and choice of where you wanted to go. When you entered your senior year, you selected one of five different branches throughout the military.

Then people were selected and placed in the branches based upon their academic excellence, their field performance exercises that happened the previous summer during your junior year at summer camp at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

HW: What did you do at summer camp?
TO: Summer camp is basically your proving ground. You go out and execute your field skills. They teach you leadership skills. You and a number of other students up and down the Eastern seacoast went to Fort Bragg. The Midwest went to Fort Riley, Kansas and the far West went to Fort Lewis, Washington for their summer camps. You were placed in a company of about 50 others. Each day we rotated through leadership positions whether it be the company commander, one of the lieutenant platoon leaders, or a squad leader. We would go out on field training exercises and be given a mission and leadership reaction courses – which were always fun. They have varied (unclear @4:00) and they would give you this big ditch you would have to cross about fifteen feet wide and a board that was only fourteen feet wide and you had to figure out how to get everyone from one side to the other side without touching the water. Those kind of activities. It's more to test your decision-making skills and to see how well you work as a team. It was a lot of fun. I met a lot of snakes, a lot of ticks, a lot of chiggers – nasty little red bugs, but all in all it was an enjoyable experience that I probably wouldn't trade now. At the time I was less than ecstatic about the conditions. Coming from Upstate New York in May, where it snowed graduation weekend, and going to Fort Bragg in July to one hundred degree temperatures, it was a bit of a shock. But once you got acclimatized to it, it wasn't bad. After that you go back to Syracuse for your final year, and then you got branched and went off to your officer basic school.

HW: When you were at summer camp, did you have the feeling you were being prepared to become a soldier, or was it more fun?
TO: It was absolutely dead serious. You used the equipment, everything you did you were learning the skills because you were ultimately going to become an officer. You had to know what your soldiers were going to do and they had to have the confidence in you that you knew what you were doing in order to gain their respect and do what you had to do as their platoon leader or ultimately their company commander. A very serious and competitive environment. Everybody wanted to be an officer and had a gung-ho attitude. You had cadets from Virginia Military Institute, cadets from the Citadel, people from small military colleges and people from large public universities like myself. We were all thrown in and mixed together. Some of us had more knowledge, particularly from the military schools, while those of us from civilian colleges didn't necessarily know how to make the bunks, square the edges, and bounce the quarters. But within two or three weeks, we were all pretty much at the same level. That's how competitive it was.

HW: Five years before you started this, would you have envisioned yourself in the Army?
TO: Possibly, but I don't know. My father had served in the Korean War in the Navy. He did his time and left. I guess you could say the family was a regimented family. One was in the health-care profession and one was in the law enforcement profession so uniforms weren't necessarily unknown. A regimented lifestyle wasn't necessarily unknown. I don't think I ever gave it a thought that I was going to grow up and become an officer. Initially I think it was a means to an end. It helped me pay for a college education that I probably wouldn't have been able to achieve otherwise. In the process, I made a lot of friends, learned a lot of things, and I heartily enjoyed myself. Had an opportunity to do things I never thought I would. I saw some things that a lot of people would not have necessarily seen. I enjoyed a sense of camaraderie

and fraternity that I have not found on the outside.

HW: What things do you think you've seen that other people might not have had the chance to see?
TO: It's hard to put into words. The experiences that you have at the time, in retrospect, you look at incidents and activities throughout your career that you wonder what somebody who's never been through a situation where your decision depends on whether somebody is killed or not killed is a very different type of responsibility. Especially as a brand new 2nd Lieutenant. You turn around and look at thirty-five smiling faces looking back at you. You're sitting in West Germany, probably thirty kilometers from the Czechoslovakian border in the early eighties at the height of the Cold War knowing that any time someone could come across the border and that all of a sudden you were in charge and whether or not you made the right or wrong decision the lives of the soldiers in your platoon or company depended on what you did right or wrong. If you stop and think about that, it's kind of an awesome responsibility at age twenty two or twenty three. It's not something you think about at the time, but in retrospect there was a lot of pressure there.

HW: When did you find out you were going to Germany?
TO: It was right out of officer basic school. After you graduate from college every branch of the service has a qualification course you go to which is anywhere from four to six months long depending on the branch and how technical the training is. Mine was about five and one half months. Based on your performance there, you listed where you preferred to go and depending on the vacancies the units had you were assigned based on your academic and leadership performance. So when I left those proving grounds, I knew I was going to Germany, just not exactly where.

HW: Where did that rank on the list of your preferences?
TO: It was number one. I wanted an opportunity to go somewhere I hadn't been. I figured I could always travel the States, or find a State-side assignment. Overseas assignments were not always popular particularly with young married couples that had families. A lot of people simply didn't want to travel overseas. My second preference was Korea.

HW: Where did you serve in Germany?
TO: I served with the 7th Corps. It was a Corps-E level unit (10:20 term?) as opposed to a Division. The company I was assigned to, the 66th Maintenance Company, was actually on a post with the 3rd Infantry Division. As a member of the 66th Maintenance Company we were responsible for providing ground support maintenance. Basically, if it didn't fly or explode we fixed it. If it had a wheel or track on it, we were responsible for rebuilding engines and transmissions. Fixing trucks, tanks, half-tracks, personnel carriers, small-arms -things of that nature. We also had a small service evacuation and recovery section. That usually entailed if a unit was out and a vehicle broke down, it was our responsibility was to retrieve the vehicle and bring it back to a point where it could be repaired. We also serviced the 3rd Infantry Division, the 1st Armored Division and the 2nd Armored Calvary Division which was the mortar guard in Southern Germany. We were located in the Wurzburg area which is located about half way between Frankfurt and Nuremberg. It's a beautiful part of the country. It had a fairly rich history during World War II. The major assembly's point that I was in charge of was right on the edge of an air strip that had seen heavy bombing during World War II. At times you could look down our yard, and you could see what had been prior cement where the bombs had fallen. When they were excavating for the new tank park when the 3rd Infantry Division

received the M1 Abrams tanks they located two five-hundred pound unexploded ordinance bombs underground. Which was probably about one hundred yards from my yard. That was kind of an exciting experience.

HW: What did they do with them?
TO: They called in the Explosive Ordinance folks who come in and check that they are not live. If they are, they detonate them.

HW: Do you remember if they were live?
TO: I don't believe they were. They picked them up and removed them. There were cases where live bombs were still being found particularly in Berlin, down in the sewer systems. It was not unusual to find an unexploded ordinance at any given time. You just had to be real careful. It was an exciting day that day. [Laughs]. The MPs came through and we were evacuated for about three or four days until they removed the ordinances.

HW: Can you take me through a typical dawn-to-dusk day for you in Germany?
TO: In garrison, when we were on post in the field you generally had a three day (Monday, Wednesday, Friday) physical fitness schedule that started at six o'clock in the morning. Your calisthenics, your extended two, three, four, or five mile runs. You would come back, the troops would go to breakfast at the mess hall. That was the time for the Officers to do what they needed to do -clean up, take care of any personal paperwork. Then there was a morning formation, usually about eight o'clock, where the 1st Sargent read the orders for the day. He posted the details and let everybody know what was coming up and then the soldiers would break and go to their individual sections. The Officers would go to their Platoons or company headquarters to take care of a number of different duties that were outside of being a Platoon leader. Like being the Training Officer, Public Affairs Officer, or the Red Cross Liaison. There's a number of different things that have to be done to support a company and all that gets farmed out to the Lieutenants to do as additional duties. So you spent your day doing that. You would spend time inspecting the troops. You could ultimately end up pulling duty on post as a staff duty officer which basically means you are the go-to person for questions and answers if something goes wrong. Then you break for lunch. By either four-thirty or five o'clock would be the end of the day. The troops would break and go back to their barracks that would be their time. The Officers, if they weren't on duty, would break and go to your own personal quarters. That could be on post or off post which is what they called the “economy” which is where I lived. I lived with a German lady and a younger family at different points. I rented a room from them. It was just like living anywhere.

When we went to the field, it would be a totally different story. You would be completely what they called tactical at the time. When we went out you would cross a line of departure at which point you were officially in the field which meant you carried all your equipment. You carried your fire arms with you. When you set up for the night you established your local perimeter defense lines, your points of observation; and it was used as an opportunity to hone and retrain some of the skills all the soldiers learned in basic training. You had an opportunity to draw your different maps, check your orders, set your guards, things of that nature. You would still conduct your repair mission at the same time. Unlike the Infantry unit that goes out strictly to fight on the ground and maintain itself, the Maintenance Unit not only has to defend itself, but it also has to continue with its repair and support mission whether its a supply or maintenance company. So you have soldiers working during the day at the same

time you have soldiers out on your perimeters safeguarding to make sure nobody sneaks up on you and catches you flatfooted. Sometimes that makes for a pretty long day. Soldiers get very fatigued because they don't get a chance to rest. Those guards are kept up twenty-four hours a day. It is a challenge to keep those soldiers motivated when you are out there for two or three weeks at a time. A lot of them were young soldiers who had young wives and children and were constantly worried about them. Many of them didn't speak any German. The wives did not have a driver's license, or the troops did not have a car to get around. It was always something to try and keep their minds on their jobs and not on other aspects of their lives while important, but not the focus of what you were doing at the time. Sometimes that is a tough balance to maintain between the personal and the professional so that was a challenge.

Every once in a while you would have major exercises like "Exercise Reforger" which was an acronym for REturn of FORces to GERmany. That exercise would take place for about three or four weeks. The troops from the States that had overseas missions in the event that there was a major deployment, say if the Russians had decided to come over the border, certain State-side units had responsibilities and would be deployed to the European theater. They would come over for two weeks, their equipment would be flown over, delivered to the ports. The troops that were in German would be assigned to the ports to help off-load the same way they would have had there been actual hostilities. Our unit would go to the field in support of the divisional units. Every unit had its general deployment area where you went when the alert sounded. From there, it was fluid depending on what would happen. You might stay there for the entire two weeks, or you might be asked to pick up and move again. In a support unit, that's an experience because you have three times the amount of equipment that you have trucks for. You can't just pick up your stuff and go at once. You usually have to make what they call two or three lifts. That means you leave stuff on the ground and come back several times until you've got everything.

HW: Do you leave people with the stuff?
TO: Yes. You have troops on the ground where you are going, troops in transit, and troops on the ground behind you. Your unit is split up. It could be over twenty or thirty miles. Maintaining communications and keeping track of where everybody is, hoping they don't get lost, is a large challenge in and of itself. Troops make the wrong turn, they get lost, trucks break down, not everybody has a radio. You spend your time, particularly as an officer, running back and forth to the other using your non-commissioned officers to assist you in that task. It's a pretty intense environment.

HW: In the course of your regimented lifestyle, how far from your mind was the thought that the Russians might try something?
TO: I suppose the thought was always there. Sometimes you could forget it, there were times I didn't think about it like when your duties were fairly light. A lot of times when you could go out and visit. In some instances it was almost like you were on a paid vacation overseas, being able to travel around on the weekends fairly freely in Western Germany. But there were times when they called the alerts, which were practice runs. Ninety-nine point nine percent of the time they were strictly practice and everybody knew it. They almost always got called at the same time. It was always early morning, three or four o'clock in the morning. You would be finished with your alert activities -getting everyone in, testing your recall procedures and then fall into the routine of a normal day. There were a couple of times when the alerts were called in at odd hours. I recall one, the year the Korean airliner was shot down near the Russian boundaries. It was called late in the evening in Germany. The Officer's Club was emptied, the

Post's theaters and laundries were shut down. The MPs actually went through town collecting up the soldiers and bringing them back to Post. We were told to pick up our basic ammunition loads, actual ammunition was issued to soldiers at which point it became very real to a number of people. You've got eighteen year old kids straight out of Basic Training as well as Veterans who had served in Vietnam who had seen contact. Things became very serious at that point. It was fun to talk about later, but at the time the thoughts running through your head were "Here we go. This is what we were trained for. God I hope I remember everything I need to do". But somehow you do it. It's part of the training and regimentation that you learn because somethings just click in then. You find yourself doing things automatically. You have a mental check list you go right down, you do it, and find yourself amazed at how much you have done in how short a time.

HW: Do you remember the mental checklist?
TO: There's always a number of different ones depending on what you are doing. First thing is to get yourself and your own stuff organized and keep it organized. Then you look for your people and make sure you have everybody. You check their equipment, make sure it is functional, and that they know what they are doing. Then you start going down your checklist. Where am I going/what am I doing/do I have everything I need packed for the first lift/what is or isn't important? Then, depending on what orders your company's Commander has received, you move from there. Sometimes you move, sometimes you don't. If you move you are busy organizing your equipment, trucks and transportation for your convoys. If that is the case you are looking to make sure your vehicles are fully fueled, that they have all the oils and liquids they need, hopefully they start [Laughs]. If you are doing your maintenance ahead of time, then your equipment is in good shape. You've heard stories of Desert Storm, and most recently in Iraq where weapons jammed due to poor maintenance. Proper maintenance is very easy to do when you are in a Maintenance or Support Unit because your emphasis is either providing the supplies or fixing the trucks. You have to squeeze in your own personal maintenance time. It's like the story of a painting contractor whose house is always the worst because he spends his time painting everyone's house. That same analogy could be applied to many of the Support Units too. And that is where it becomes key to make sure that you are not putting off the routine, mundane tasks in peace time. Because if you do, you have nothing but problems when you have to use it. Your equipment does not function well under stress when it's not maintained. It's probably one of the hardest things you had to do was to maintain the will and the drive to do those kind of things.

HW: Do you remember, as part of your training as an Officer, did the government train or tell you anything in particular in how to perceive the Russians?
TO: There was always training in terms of what their tactics were. What type of equipment they used. Not everyone got foreign-language training. I wouldn't say we got any cultural training, but we would be kept abreast of any changes of where their forces were concentrated. What they were most likely to do and where their weak points were. And, if you were in that position, how best to function against what they had. We'd be told what the range and effectiveness of their weapons were. Knowing what their willingness to use regarding chemical or biological weapons. Whether they would use conventional warfare, a land or airborne, or bombing invasion. As a Support Unit in the rear area our biggest concern would have been insertion of airborne troops to disrupt your local area as well as aerial bombings. Those were probably our single largest concerns along with local insurgents or guerilla warfare. That's one of the hardest things to teach people to defend against because a lot of that stuff becomes willow-wisps kind of activities. It can be very difficult and become a demoralizing

environment to have your soldiers in because they become confused. They don't see their enemy, they don't know where their enemy is. That is a challenge to lead against also.

HW: Did you practice for that?
TO: Absolutely. We would have internal reactionary forces where soldiers, NCOs and Officers were designated if something should happen within the confines of your area there would be a signal and you would rally at a certain point. That would be your job and you would become the initial defense forces to help throw your weaponry against whatever threat was there at the time. We would also be used to what they called "sweep the area" as advance parties before the bulk of the unit entered the area. A lot of that is your basic, simple infantry style training. Everybody did it, male and female. It didn't matter, you were all soldiers at that point. That was your primary responsibility if you were on one of those teams. As far as tactical trainings, one of the things that the Senior Officers in the Battalion would do is hold Officer Development days. They would take us out, separately from the troops, similar to what we had done in Advance Camp. As fellow Lieutenants, we would serve as a team member while another lieutenant led and we would ultimately end up critiquing each other. Actually, it worked out best because sometimes you take recommendation advice better from your peers than you do from your superiors. You always listened to what your superiors had to say but it's always "what does this guy know? He's old." [Laughs] But that didn't happen often, you usually had enough confidence and respect in your senior leaders. In my case, many of them had combat experience from Vietnam. They had valuable experience to share with you.

HW: Can you try to explain the idea of the military enemy was formulated in the minds of the troops?
TO: With the Army, and the military as a whole, your enemy is basically established by your mission. It is the guy that can do the most harm to you. The entity that has a threat to you. The enemy did not necessarily have to be the Russians, it could have been a terrorist organization too. One of the favorites at the time was an organization called the Red Brigade. I believe they originated in Italy. Their sole purpose was to disrupt and destroy anything that they could to achieve their ends, whatever they were.
Whether it be getting comrades out of prison or creating general mayhem. You had to teach people to pay attention to what was going on to their own personal lives. Even as individuals in the local communities. Often times you would get caught up in something like that. Perception of the enemy could change based on where you were stationed. If you were in Korea, the focus was the Koreans or the Chinese or the North Vietnamese, it all depends on what your specific mission was. In our case it was the Soviet Union. That was the focus, to provide safety in Western Europe at the time.

HW: Do you remember your last day in Germany?
TO: Not particularly. The last month or so was a total blur. I was a headquarters detachment commander at the time. That September we had a major deployment, we came back and then had a major core-level inspection. At the same time I had to turn over company command, and that included a thirty-day change of command inventory. That is something every officer does when they are out-going, they pass it off to the in-coming commander. You inventory all your equipment, trucks, tools, your bed linens… So within the space of about sixty days I went through a three week major deployment, a thirty-day change of command inventory, a major core-level inspection and then I flew out. Not to mention having to pack up all my personal gear, make arrangements, ship my car back, travel to the port to deliver the car and get myself to the airport at the same time. So what happened on any specific day? All I remember is

when I got back to the States and started school for the mid-level officer training course, it felt SO good to be responsible just for myself. All I had to do was get up, be at class at eight o'clock until four o'clock, do the homework, and go back in the next day.

HW: How long did that last?
TO: That was six months and boy was it a welcome break.

HW: What sorts of things did you learn there?
TO: After you graduate from college, you go to officer qualification basic course. Then you spend anywhere from two to four years in the field practicing the skills as a lieutenant. In that time frame you are normally promoted to Captain. If you come back at the three year mark, you are usually a Captain.
The Advanced Course is used to prepare you for company command and Staff Officer training. Up to that point you have normally been serving either as an assistant Staff Officer, or more likely as a Platoon Leader within a company. The Advanced Course is to provide you with skills to command a company and serve as a primary Staff Officer whether it be for logistics, intelligence, or administrative personnel.

I was in a little bit of a different position because I had already commanded at that point. Because of that, myself and a half a dozen of my classmates who had also been in that position, were often used as additional trainers for the rest of the class. You would share your experiences. How you did things, and handled certain situations because taking company command is a huge responsibility. It's a very scary proposition sometimes and you wonder how well you are going to do. There are always questions about “how should I do this or that?” When you are in command, sometimes it is too late to ask the question because you are faced with the situation. Now you have to make the decision on your own. In many cases during the Advanced Course like I said we were used as additional trainers, which was kind of nice because we had an opportunity to sit back and critique ourselves and then provide some lessons learned. What to do, what not to do. What things would really get you into trouble. Some people do well, some people do okay, and some do extremely well. It all depends on the kind of personality you have.

HW: What happened after training?
TO: Because I had a company command, fortunately or unfortunately, I was reassigned right to the school. I was assigned as a small-group instructor for the Advanced Course.

HW: Where was this?
TO: This was at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. This is what is called the United States Army Ordinance Center and School. That is where all the maintenance soldiers came, anybody who was assigned a wheel or track vehicle mechanic, a small arms or electronics repairman. Anybody with those particular types of MOS (Military Occupational Specialties) were sent to Aberdeen for their basic, what was called “the advanced individual training for the enlisted”. There were NCO schools for the Non-Commissioned Officers in the maintenance fields, as well as Officer Schools. I was assigned to the department that dealt with the Officers. As a small-group instructor, you took anywhere from twelve to fifteen Officers going through their Advance Course. You had the Seniors, First Lieutenants and Captains for approximately twelve weeks. You ran them through everything from small unit administration and tactics. They would go out and do training exercises. They would also do staff walks which means we would go to a local historic battlefield where they would study the

tactics, maneuvers, and strategies that the Officers there look at it and determine how they might have done something differently.

From there I was assigned as the Officer Basic Course Director, which meant I was responsible for the administration of all the incoming brand new Lieutenants. That was a bit of a challenge particularly in the second half of my eighteen month tenure there. The last eight or nine months of that was during Desert Storm, the first Gulf War. That was a bit of a scary proposition because before a Lieutenant could be deployed overseas they had to go through their initial training courses. There were a lot of Guard and Reservists that were coming through that had to be certified. Because of that you had to make darn certain they knew what they were doing. On top of that, the Guard and Reserve units were being deployed to Aberdeen Proving Ground. And went through a certification course before they were allowed to leave the States to enter the Gulf area. We had to make sure that they understood what they had to do, that their weapons and equipment worked properly. They needed to understand the proper tactics and protection with a huge emphasis the on chemical biological aspect of warfare.

HW: Can you tell me how they prepared the troops and Officers for that?
TO: For the Officers, there was a heavy emphasis on individual small unit skills which meant a lot of time spent utilizing the chemical-alarm gear. There are a number of different types of instruments that the Army uses for early warning. There are a number of types of test kits that you use to determine what kind of chemicals were used. You had to make sure the people understood and knew what kind of reactions were created by nerve or biological agents so you knew how to react to it. Things like how to decontaminate personnel and equipment. How do prevent the spread of contamination. How to read weather patterns to judge the severity of what could happen to you even if you weren't necessarily in an area that had been struck. You needed to know what kind of threat an area forty or fifty miles away might present to you, and at what time in order to make a decision based on that. Putting your troops into protective gear too soon fatigues them. It is a very difficult thing to wear for an extended period of time because you are totally encased and a lot of it is plastic and rubber. You know what happens when you put on a sauna suit, you just roast. You end up with a lot of heat casualties. We had to teach people how to care for and prevent those heat casualties. The last thing you want to do is reduce your effective strength by having people in the hospital. Not to mention that heat injuries can be deadly by themselves.

A lot of physical conditioning took place, particularly with the Guard and Reserve units. They don't receive near the level of physical conditioning that an active unit would receive simply because you are not there five days a week. Unless a person is pretty dedicated to maintaining their own physical fitness, a lot of them were not in the shape they needed to be in. There is a lot of truth to physical fitness allowing you to do your job properly without making a lot of mistakes. The more physically fit you are, the less fatigued you become, the less fatigued you become, the less likely you are to make poor decisions. That is a very difficult thing. It was a very demanding time and some of it entailed changing outlook, attitude and perspective of the Guard or Reservists who had only done it for the weekend and now was thrust into it full-time and they had not made that mental jump from civilian to military life yet. There is a distinct difference between civilian and military lifestyles. In the military, you do what you are told, when you are told. There is a time to question, and a time not to question. In a civilian world, it is totally different. There is a lot of questioning that goes on before people do anything. That is not a particularly advantageous situation in the military. A lot of times things are done, just

because they are done that way. The people above you know more than you do in many cases about why you are doing what you are doing. It may seem silly to you, but in retrospect, there was a very valid reason. You don't always have time to explain and understand what it is. That is where having the respect of your troops comes in handy. Having the confidence they have in you that you are going to do right by them and have their best interest at heart while you are doing what you have to do. That is not an easy thing to achieve sometimes particularly with the various backgrounds of the soldiers that you have. You can have a soldier from the inner city, and you can have a soldier from Appalachia. You can have a soldier who could barely read and write, as well as one who has a Master's Degree. You have a wide range. It's definitely a challenge, and it is definitely worthwhile. It's a lot of fun too. [Laughs]

HW: When did you first hear that the troops were going to go to Kuwait?
TO: In the first Gulf War, I couldn't put my finger on the official time that I knew but there were signs that you could see there was a buildup, particularly in the support Corps. Because it takes so long to get something ready. There were a lot of things that were happening administratively like reassignment of people and freezing resignations. Putting in what is called a "stop-loss" which means even if you were going to separate, you were involuntarily extended sometimes. They were not accepting Officer Resignations, which cut down on turnover. Priority units were suddenly getting filled. You could have seen Officers at Aberdeen who were supposed to go to an active duty CAD (Call-to-Active-Duty) rate to a guard unit all of a sudden be diverted to a First or Third Infantry Division or the First Armored Division, or something like that. Orders were cut to divert people. So the line between officially knowing, and seeing things that were going on becomes blurred. If you watch what is going on sometimes you sense what was going to happen before anybody says anything. It is just one of those things that you learn. You start to see things and hear orders, all of a sudden requisitions that weren't being filled because of budgetary concerns were dropping on your desk. You were getting inundated with things that you had been trying for for months but were on the back burner because the funding was not there and all of a sudden, now you have it. Those kinds of things were happening.

I remember at the time, my brother was assigned to (unclear @44:40) Nurse Station in Hawaii and he had gotten word that he was deploying and that was by the end of July 1990. When the Marines get deployed, you pretty much know there is something big in the wind because they are the first ones in. Then the Army comes in to hold the territory afterwards. So when you see the Marines moving, you know something is up, particularly when people who don't normally deploy are headed out.

HW: When was your brother deployed?
TO: In August of 1990, he was one of the first Marine units that got deployed. The units from Hawaii went to Kuwait very early on. I do remember the day the air war started because it was a strange celebration for my birthday. The air war started on January 16, 1991. I was on my way into work that day and didn't realize exactly what was going to happen at Aberdeen, but they closed off all the entrances to the base except for one. You don't realize how many people work at Aberdeen until there is only one gate for everyone to go through. Everybody has to stop, show identification, and have their vehicles checked before they can go through. It was probably a three mile back up on I-95 of people waiting to get off the exit to get into Aberdeen Proving Ground, and the exit was about two miles from the base entrance so it was a fairly large backup. It took me about three or four hours to get into the post that morning. At that point it wasn't worth going home for, I just stayed.

HW: How long did you stay?
TO: I stayed for two days on post with some friends who lived in quarters there.

HW: What did you have to do?
TO: Nothing specific other than our normal schedule because we were at the school with certain routines we had to follow. Classes were in session at the time and there were units on post that had to be certified, so we just continued with that. The only difference was we probably stepped up the pace because we anticipated quicker deployments. Eight hour days became ten hour days. It was just one of those things that nobody thought twice about. It came naturally.

HW: Did you have any personal feelings about the war in Kuwait?
TO: There is always two sets of feelings. One is the political and one is the personal. I don't think at the time I necessarily disagreed with the political reasons for it. Being in a position and knowing what your Army can do, you certainly do not want another guy's army to potentially do to you, what you can do to them. Given the fact that it was a fairly unstable area, I didn't have a problem politically with it. On a personal note, I think I spent several days on personal reflection. I was not in an assignment where I was going to be deployed initially because I wasn't with a unit that was deployable. I knew that upfront because what was getting deployed were Infantry and Armory units, and maintenance companies. The school was not deployable as a unit. But what you were deployable as, was as an individual prioritized by their rank. Whether you were the first, second, third, or fourth to go as if there was a need as individual replacements.

The thought that went through my mind at the time was I would miss the opportunity to go because I was not with a unit. I wanted to go because that is what you trained for, but you didn't want to go because you knew it was a very dangerous environment to be in. It is not necessarily something you look forward to doing but having been trained for it, that's your job and sometimes you want to test yourself. Then I thought about it, being an individual replacement I was going over because there was a vacancy. The most primary reason for a vacancy would be for a casualty. Which means someone was extremely wounded or had been killed. When you stop and think why you are back filling somebody, the dangers become very real to you. All of a sudden you are looking at leaving everything behind. It is a scary thought.

And particularly as a woman looking to go into the Gulf area, which is a Muslim-oriented area where men in positions of authority are not plentiful, that would have been an additional challenge. Especially since I was an Officer and would have been in a position to be giving orders and commands. That thought concerned me and how it would play, not only with the bad guys on the other side, but how it would play with our Muslim and Arab allies on our side. Even while the Saudis and Kuwaitis are fairly forward in their acceptance of women, there is still a line that isn't crossed. Having talked to people who had been there, that was a difficult line to deal with. You are not the assertive/aggressive female that you are in the States. You have to learn a little more diplomacy. That thought also concerned me. How do I function in the proper role without antagonizing someone else? That was a different thought to carry as opposed to when we went to Panama or Grenada where that particular facet did not enter into the realm of “How do you do your job?”

But fortunately, I did not have to deal with that. I did have to deal with, and was very

concerned about the Lieutenants that were graduating. We were probably very hard on a number of them. Many did not get certified. About one or two percent were washed out of the program. That created its own problems, particularly with the Guard or Reserve unit. A lot of the time they would write to their State Senators. This person has their college degree, they have gotten their commission, why did you take it away from them? It is difficult to quantify sometimes, but you just know that there is a person whose heart is in the right place but they just are not capable of providing the leadership that they need to be in. You have to make that call and say "you are just not going to go, you are not going to be an Officer, it's not going to happen."

HW: What happened to those people? Were they eliminated from the military altogether?
TO: They were all discharged. They lost their commissions, their service was terminated. Unless, they were in some sort of program with a Guard unit which they took tuition assistance, in which case some of them reverted to enlisted rank. That in itself can cause a problem, particularly if you revert to an enlisted rank in the same unit you were in. I don't know if I want to do that myself after having been an Officer. It would be difficult to step away from that position of authority. I don't know how I would have dealt with it. I don't know what happened to any of those who did. I suspect they severed their association with the service entirely at that point.

It was not unusual to have Congressmen call and demand an answer. Parents would engage lawyers. You have to make a decision what is more important, the career of one person or the lives of the Platoon they were going to be leading. It was a difficult choice, one that was not made lightly. In some cases, you were taking away a person's career which meant they had to go back to square one and start over with something else. It wasn't easy because in some cases they came from an area of a state that was economically depressed-that was their money maker.

Unfortunately, you have to live with that decision. Then you may find out you passed somebody who did not do too well or cracked under the pressure. That didn't happen too often but there were those who did not deal with it. They finished out their assignments, then ultimately resigned. That is one of the benefits of being an Officer unlike being an enlisted person. The enlisted sign a term of two, three or four years. An Officer comes in, take their commission, and can apply for resignation at any time. Whether or not it is accepted is another story. If you find that you are in over your head, you can put in your papers and ask to be released. Some did that, some decided this was not what they were looking for, others decided to take it for college tuition or an opportunity to make some money and decided they liked it and were good at it and end up making it a career. It's interesting to see people bloom in different directions.

HW: When did you decide to get out of the military?
TO: It was after Desert Storm. I stayed the entire time we were in conflict over there until they redeployed everything. Then it was one of those situations where I was up for reassignment. I had not planned necessarily to make it a career. Originally it was a four years and out routine. At that point there were some personal considerations with family members that had contracted a long-term illness. I had two brothers who were in the service at that time, one in the Army, one in the Marine Corps. My life was taking a little bit of a different direction in terms of what I wanted out of life. I opted to leave active duty. I retained my commission in the Reserves for another two years at which point I ended up with a disability

rating. Then I ended up resigning my Reserves commission too. It was much more of a personal decision than a like or dislike to leave the military. I don't think the military had anything to do with my decision to leave. Rather it was where I wanted to go with the rest of my life kind of attitude. I wanted to do certain things, and if I stayed with the military I would not be able to do them in the time frame I wanted.

HW: During your entire time in the military did you stay in contact with your family?
TO: Absolutely. I came home on leave one year. I bought airfare tickets for my parents to come over and visit one year as a Christmas present. They came twice. I paid for their tickets the first time and they enjoyed themselves so they came back a second time. I went home once. Every once in a while you make a long distance call. I wrote letters. I remember one particular communication from home. The military publishes a newspaper they call the Stars and Stripes. I picked it up one day and one of the headings on it says "A Robot Finds Criminals". I started reading it and the byline caught my attention because it was dated Elmira, New York. It was a story about how there was a gun battle in the city of Elmira and they called in a robot to find where the bad guys were hiding in the building which was over near Jones Court. It did not mention any names, just that there had been a police officer wounded and one killed. At that point I went into a tail spin because, here I am sitting in Germany and this activity is happening in Elmira where my father is a member of the police department as well as the S.W.A.T. team leader. While it did not specifically say who, I knew based on the situation, the S.W.A.T. team had to be involved. I tried to call home but the line stayed busy. I tried for about twelve hours but could not get a hold of any relatives. Finally I got through to a next door neighbor, and asked him to have my parents give me a call and let me know what was going on. Fortunately, my father was not any of the casualties but it was kind of a unique way to get news from home. News from home comes in strange packages. You get your Christmas and care packages from home. People send you all kinds of stuff that you take and share with everybody. When they get one, they share with you too. It's always fun to see what you get.

HW: What was most prized?
TO: Probably a food item. For me, funny as it sounds, homemade bagels was the thing I liked getting the most. Other people with a sweet tooth loved their cookies and brownies. The candy in Europe was different from the candy in the United States. While you could get it on Post, sometimes there were things that the exchange didn't buy that people would get from home. If they could have sent pizza, I would have liked to have had pizza. The western European pizzas are NOT like American pizza. They don't do hamburgers well [Laughs]. Somehow buying a McRib sandwich at McDonald's in Germany just was not the same. I think the two things I missed the most were pizza and burgers, but there were a lot of other things to make up for it.

HW: Do you remember any particular period of time when the Korean airliner was shot down that your family could not contact you?
TO: I don't think my parents gave that much of a thought because I was on one side of the globe and that action happened on the other. I don't think people that were not connected probably realized how much of an impact that one instance might have had on the entire military. Not knowing why it went down, or who or what caused it....you don't know if that was a prelude to something else. (1:02:18 tape jumps-sentence is cut off)

HW: Were you aware of anything that happened during the Persian Gulf War that you don't believe the public was generally aware of?

TO: It is tough to tell. Just thinking back to more recently with my brother being in the current Gulf War, there are things that go on that the general public at large does not understand or does not know. I would have to say troop movement's maybe, how people got from one place to the other, how troops on the ground ended up being where they were and what they ended up doing. It is tough to really put your finger on it especially now because I am on the outside looking in. Knowing what I know about how the military operates, I would have to say that their lifestyle, the types of activities they are involved in, the day-to-day drudgery that the troops go through and the individual guard mounts that the soldiers pull make the days long and hard. Probably something that most people here would have any opportunity to actually partake in. The closest would be a construction worker who is out there twelve hours a day in all kinds of weather to get a project completed. They probably come the closest to that type of physical involvement. It is tough to know what is going on. You see the news and hear about the 3rd or 4th Infantry Division, or the 1st Armored Division, but that does not tell you a whole lot about what they are doing. You hear about what the Generals are doing on a grand scale but when you are involved with somebody in Company B of the 1st Regiment-3rd Armored Division, you want to know what is that Company doing? Or you hear about an engagement where the 1st Armored Division was involved in this heavy fire fight. That particular unit may or may not be involved and it isn't until days later sometimes that you find out.

It was particularly during the first Gulf War there was a big concern about (unclear @1:05:15) security. In fact, the single largest casualty activity happened when the scud missile landed on the Quarter master unit. They were far from the front lines. They were never engaged. They were involved in a rear-area support operation. That was a case where a long-range missile reached out and touched somebody that was not supposed to be actively engaged in combat. Those are the kinds of things I think that the public does not necessarily know what is going on. I'm not sure that there is any way to teach them how to do that. Once you start broadcasting that level of detail then you have to worry about tactical concerns and security of your personnel. Where they are, what they are doing. That has to be balanced. I'm sure there were things that took place that nobody has heard about yet.
It is hard to put your finger on it. Convoy operations like what happened to the 507th Maintenance Company during this Gulf War -those were the kinds of things that we were training units to avoid here in the States during the first Gulf War. Convoy operations and security, what to do, how to do it, and how to defend against it. How to prevent yourself from being in those kinds of positions. It started with a wrong turn and went progressively worse from there. That is why, when I talked earlier about being tough on the Lieutenants, they have to know how to read maps. They cannot make a mistake. A lot of times folks today grow up in a culture of "well, I took a test, I got a ninety, I only missed one question-why is it such a big deal, why are you on my case?". Well if you are off by a digit on a grid coordinate on a map it is a big deal. Things like what happened to the 507th happen. They have a huge impact when you make a mistake.

Those are the kinds of things I think about today when I think about what we did during the first Gulf War at Aberdeen preparing those Officers and those units to go over. The smallest little detail, you forget to tell them something and it's like "God, I hope I remembered to emphasize this and I hope they remember this". There is a lot of hindsight. Should we have taught them this, or that? That kind of stuff. But there is nothing that can prepare you for all eventualities. You can only do the best you can do and hope people apply their training the way it is supposed to happen. I think what happened with the 507th happens more often than

not. There are other activities where things like that happen. I had friends that would tell me stories of soldiers who were put on dark post that fell asleep. They would have to be awoken. That is a scary thought. People just get tired, or they don't see the need for it. The day-to-day administration, the usual discipline that goes on, just daily life that the public does not see. They see the big things, the battles and conflicts, the parades, but day to day life what the soldiers go through I don't think the public at large necessarily has a full understanding of what they go through. It can be a grueling lifestyle sometimes. It can be fun, drudgery at times, exciting, and scary but I think in the long run the ties and relationships that you form are all worth it. You get a sense of accomplishment when it is done. That you have done something and made a difference even if it is in one person or one job. As much as I grump sometimes, I would not trade the experiences.

HW: Are you involved with Veterans organizations now?
TO: Yes, I'm a member of the American Legion right now. I'm involved in a history group that is responsible for remembering Veterans' contributions in the past. I still support both my brothers who are on active duty. One is a Major in the Army, and the other is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Marine Corps who has been told he is probably going back again to the Gulf by August. He expects to be redeployed again, not that he is particularly crazy about it. It will be his third time in ten years. He would just as soon as stay in the desert in California, fires or not fires. [Laughs] I have friends that are members of the VFW Legion, the Vietnam Veterans Association, activities like that. I make it a point to celebrate the different holidays: Memorial Day, Veterans Day, by stopping by and talking to those folks. It means a lot to them to be remembered. Particularly the Vietnam and Korean Veterans that are around. A lot of the World War II Veterans are no longer with us, but the Vietnam and Korean Vets really appreciate somebody thinking about what they did because both of them were pretty nasty operations. One was cold and one was hot.

HW: When you first entered the ROTC Program, what percentage of potential Officers were women?
TO: I want to say that in my freshman class there were thirty of us of which maybe three or four were women. My roommate was one, but I didn't know it at the time until I ran into her at drill practice that day and said “oh, I know you!” That was kind of a nice thing because being in the ROTC Program on the Syracuse University campus, while not necessarily being an unpopular association, it was not high on the list of organizations that people wanted to be a part of. Syracuse tended to be a little bit of a liberally-based organization. A lot of rallies, a lot of student activism, and the ROTC department was a lightning rod for a lot of those kinds of activities. You were not harassed to a large extent but there were certain places where you did not wear your uniform. There were classes where you found it more to your advantage to change out of your uniform before you got there. Other classes, it did not matter. In fact some classes did encourage it because it caused a lot more open discussion rather than just cause grief for you.

HW: By the time you left the military, even in Aberdeen, how many women did you work with then?
TO: There were quite a few more at the time. About one third of the classes were female in the Officers Corps. I don't want to say unfortunately, but my numbers were probably more skewed because the Ordinance Corps is a traditionally male field-mechanic and auto mechanics, things of that nature so
it is not a branch of service that women naturally gravitate to. In my first Company, when I

was reassigned to Germany, I was the only female Lieutenant. I had one female mechanic out of thirty and she did not stay long. It was a traditionally male field, much as mechanics are still a traditionally male field. The military as a whole is traditionally male. It requires some adjustment on your part to fit into the mentality and understand what is going on and accept what is going on sometimes. There were definitely more women that were involved when I separated from the military. A lot more women were becoming Non-Commissioned Officers. But, again, in the enlisted ranks there were not nearly as many women under an Officer's supervision as there were Officers. A lot of that I attribute to the fact that it was not a traditional female calling. Not many women enlisted in the military to become a mechanic. You do find them in other roles such as truck drivers, or the administrative field which is full of them to the point sometimes where the number of women are restricted so it does not get too out of balance. I know there is a larger number of senior field-grade military women then there ever was before. They are starting to break into the General Officer ranks with regularity now, although the top ranks will probably almost always be male simply because those higher ranks are achieved through combat experiences, which are limited for women. I don't think you will ever see a woman General in charge of an Infantry, Artillery or a Tank unit. I don't think that will ever happen. Those are the kind of roles that lead to the more senior levels in the military structure. Not to say that there will not be at some point, but I think the opportunity is somewhat limited. It would take a very special person to get to that point, someone with an enormous amount of leadership ability. But it is not undo-able.

HW: Is there anything I have not asked you yet that you would like to say?
TO: There are always stories to tell. [Laughs] Some funny, some not so funny, some that you would never share with people. Things that seemed like mountains and very important at the time in retrospect you look back and say “God, I can't believe that I worried about that.” I will never forget my first major I.G. inspection. They had what they call Inspector General Inspections and they were career makers or breakers. If you did well, you did well. If you did poorly, oh boy were you in trouble. When the first one arrived, I had been in my unit less than ninety days. You hear all these horror stories of people being relieved of their duty/kicked out, just awful things happening to them. I had gone through my Platoon and my barracks. We set everything up, their clothes and their records were just right, we polished the floors and the brass. Some places across Post they painted the grass so when the helicopter came in all they saw was green instead of brown spots-silly things like that. The Inspector walks into one of my troop's rooms, opens the wall lockers, goes through it and does a lot of “hrumpping”. Then he opens up the small dorm-style refrigerators that the troops were allowed to have in their rooms. I was feeling pretty good at the time because we had already gone through it, defrosted and wiped down everything. He was not going to find anything in there that was going to cause a problem. He opened up the refrigerator, which had a very small freezer section. In that freezer he pulls out a box of Steak-ums. While I wasn't necessarily concerned about it, I could feel this was not going to go the right way, I felt a pit in my stomach. The inspector turns around and looks at the soldier asking him if those Steak-ums belonged to him. “Yes sir” replies the soldier. The Officer says “I understand you are not allowed to cook in the rooms.” “Well no sir, we can't”. The inspector says “I realize you have a bar-b-q pit outside in the back, how do you do Steak-ums on a bar-b-q pit? It is not the kind of thing you can put on a grill.” The soldier replies “that is real easy sir”. He reaches into his wall locker, turns around and he has two irons in his hand. One is a fairly large surface that is wrapped in tin foil, and the other one is a smaller one. He says “I have two irons, one I use to iron my uniform and this is the one I plug in and put the Steak-ums on top of”. At that point in time I just knew my career was over because the reason the troops were not allowed to cook in the room was because hot

plates and heating devices were considered a fire safety hazard. The inspector turns around and his face was just as red as a beet. I knew he was about ready to take my head off. He says to me, "Lieutenant, meet me outside." We are standing outside the room and he had tears running out of his eyes. He thought that was hilarious. He never heard anything like that before, I was mortified. I just knew my career was over in ninety days. That is the kind of level of detail they went through and at the time I must have had an ulcer over that. [Laughs]. Looking back at that, it seems so silly.

HW: Did you have to discipline the trooper was he allowed to continue to cook his Steam-ums that way?
TO: No, we went back and tried to explain why that was a risk, but he was something else. Just daily life brought your share of dealing with drug problems and theft incidences. Troops would get drunk, have accidents, hurt themselves. You asked earlier about things the public does not generally know about. With the current war, there is something broadcast every day about another troop being wounded or killed. Almost every day, on an active military post, there is an accident of some sort. I don't think the public realizes how dangerous an occupation the military is, even in peace time. There are a number of deaths on a regular basis from training accidents. Trucks overturn, weapons explode, every once in a while a soldier will kill another soldier. There are any number of ways, and it is not unusual to have a death on a post and the public rarely hears about it. The local towns around the Post might hear about it, but overseas, with the exception of their family, I don't the public realizes how many military deaths occur from non-combat causes.

I remember the first one I came in contact with, I was assigned as the investigating Officer for it. Every time there is an accident like that, the military assigns what they call a "disinterested" Officer. Somebody that is not a member of the unit to investigate and determine whether or not it was preventable, was somebody at fault or not. Was it truly and accident or was it negligence. The first one I was assigned was in the 3rd Infantry who had been given a new M1-Abrams tank. They had traded in their M-60s for it. They were on their range conducting laser-training fire. The M-1 had a mechanism in it so that once the gun locked onto a target, even if the elevation of the tank itself changed like it went down into a small ditch, the gun barrel would automatically readjust and stay locked onto that particular target. While they were on the training range, there was an extra radio placed inside the track because the radio in the track was used by the tank commander to communicate with his staff inside the tank. The Range Training Officer had to communicate from the outside in for the administrative purposes so there was an additional radio in the tank. To reach the radio you were supposed to reach underneath the gun tube inside the tank. For some reason, this individual either forgot, was not told or did not pay attention and he reached over the gun tube. The tank, in its movements, shifted the gun tube and he was caught between the roof of the tank and the tube itself. That was a pretty messy deal, not a fun thing. Guys get crushed between vehicles all the time. Vehicles overturn and burn, there are a lot of ways people can get hurt. I think that is the one thing the public at large does not realize. It is hard to say it is the cost of doing business, but it is not unexpected.

HW: Did you ever lose anyone from your Company? Did you have to deal with their families?
TO: I did not lose anyone directly from my Company or in my Platoon. It was dealing with always other soldiers. The hard part being, if you investigated a death and I had two of these, was trying to explain what happened to the families of suicide victims. Depending on how the investigations were written, and the circumstances surrounding the suicides, the families may

or may not receive the group life insurance or benefits. In the cases where the benefits are denied, it is a very difficult situation to explain why you made the decision that you did. It is not a pleasant situation. You don't want to do it, but it happens even on the outside with personal life insurance policies. There are exclusions too. That was the toughest thing I had to explain to some body. But we did not have any immediate deaths within my organization.

HW: Is there anything else you would like to say today?
TO: Not today. [Laughs] I could probably talk forever if I sat down with a couple of other folks and we started trading stories we could come up with a dozen more.

HW: Well for now, thank you very much. If you ever want to do this again, let me know.
TO: No problem....that's done.