Elizabeth Anne Belzer Rowe
Part 1

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[Interview begins at 00:00:40]

Cohen: Well, good morning. Today is August the 6th, 2020. My name is Leah Cohen and on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, I have the honor of interviewing Commander Elizabeth Anne Belzer Rowe. So, I thought we would begin at the beginning and talk initially about your background. So, where and when were you born?

Rowe: Okay, so I was born in Evansville, Indiana [on] November 18, 1958 and um, my family soon after—my dad got a job in Maryland and so, we moved to Maryland. We spent probably two and a half years in Germany on an [a US] Army contract and then came back to Maryland. And then I grew up in Maryland and when I was about twelve, I moved to a farm in Westminster, Maryland. The—the other residence was what's now Columbia, Maryland. So, I was in Columbia Maryland then when I was about twelve, we moved to Westminster, Maryland to a farm. So, my dad was a systems analyst and um… we had a family tragedy, a neighbor shot our dog. And out of that tragedy my dad said, "Okay we're done with the suburban thing," so we're gonna go and live on a farm and we'll make our— we'll make our living off the land. So… so we did.

[both laugh]

Cohen: Did…

Rowe: Say again.

Cohen: Oh, sorry, go on. I didn't mean to interrupt.

Rowe: No, I just wanted to say, so I was there until— I was there at that farm until we— until I went to the Naval Academy. So, yeah.

Cohen: How long had your dad served in the military?

Rowe: So, my dad was in the [US] Navy for… um, I think four years, just four years. Um, yeah, he enlisted after my parents married, and he was probably twenty-one, twenty-two, something like that. And then he left the military and, yeah, then went back to—uh, actually I think he went back to college. And then he got a degree and then started working in the… I think, yeah, I think it's today's IT [Information Technology] world. It wasn't called that then, but he did what—he called them data systems.

Cohen: Data systems. Um, was there—were there discussions of the Cold War around the dinner table growing up, such as the attack on the USS Pueblo? Was that part of the awareness at the time?

Rowe: So, I would tell you, Leah, the honest truth is I don't remember. But I can tell you that my family—I was just talking to my sister about this yesterday, coincidentally. My family, we listen to CBS news every night around—at dinner time. So, that was what was on while we were eating dinner every night of my life that I can remember. So, we were well aware of what was going on in the world, there's no question. Um, you know, as a young girl, I was… I can't say that I embraced that and said, "Oh let's go watch the news," and all that sort of thing, but my family made sure that—my family made sure that we knew what was going on in the world. And, um, you know, they were very, um—we were very… What would you call it? A very um… solitary family. We did not go places. We did not—we had my—both my parents were single, only children. We had no cousins. Uh, we moved from Indiana to Maryland. So, there were no—none of our, either of their families were anywhere near. So, we—we were a unit. We were a solid unit and so what my parents talked about, we listened to. And we weren't other places playing with other kids, we were there. And so, yeah.

Cohen: How many siblings did you have?

Rowe: I have two sisters and one brother and I'm the third child.

Cohen: Okay. And, um, in that Westminster is only about an hour's drive away from the naval base in Annapolis, like, did your family travel there or have contact with the base?

Rowe: Absolutely not. I'll tell you the… the only connection to the military that I had before I started pursuing the Naval Academy and ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] scholarships was that my brother after high school, he went to

college. But dropped out and joined the [US] Navy. So, my brother was in the Navy when I was a teenager. Then, my sister graduated a year later and did the same thing: started college and dropped out and she joined the [US] Army. Um, but I don't know that that—those were big influences on me. I—it was not a thing like I want to follow my brother and my sister into the military. It was not—that was not… I mean they were enlisted and, um, you know my parents were determined that for the third time their kid was going to college.

[both laugh]

Rowe: So, that was the focus. That was the focus at that point that, you know, I was going to go to college and all that kind of thing. So, yeah, but… but… but, I say all that, but the older I get the more I think oh my gosh my dad was in the military, my brother was in the military, my sister's in the military, and then it turns out that I was in the military. My—my baby sister was the only one that didn't end up in the military. So, we all [audio cuts out]

Cohen: [laughs] Okay. So, I'm probably belaboring this in light of what you just responded, but I was wondering if you were aware of the changes for women in the Navy during the 70s, that like Arlene Dudek became the first female Admiral, etc. Um, like were you aware even through listening to the news that things were changing for women in the Navy?

Rowe: Um, the honest truth is no. Um, but I was well aware of the women's movement of the 60s and 70s. I mean I was—yeah, I—you know, my mother went back to school and got her nursing degree as a 40-year-old. You know, uh, yes. Things were changing for women. I would say not…I don't… I was not, um, aware specifically for the military until again I tried—I tried to enter the naval academy and then I found out about how—how it was, you know, in that—in that area. But—but I was well aware of, um, the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment] and, um, you know, the women's liberation… you know, all of those changes. The whole abortion thing… I was very, you know, well-educated on all of that. Um, so yeah, I was aware of the women's movement, but not—not specifically what was happening in the military.

Cohen: Um, do you think it cultivated an attitude that—like, as you mentioned, in the article in Capital Gazette in 2015, regarding the potential acceptance of women to the SEALs [United States Navy Sea, Air, and Land Teams], I think you said, "Why should anyone be restricted if you can manage? Why should you not have

the opportunity to do so?" Like, was that your attitude when you were growing up, as well?

Rowe: Absolutely. I think having moved to a farm and having done the things that we did on the farm. Uh, there was three girls and a boy. The three girls carried their weight. We—we all did it. We all, you know, built fences and, um, you know, dug ditches and mucked out barns and went out when it was raining. And, uh, you know, I took care of the cows. Uh, you know, I remember the electric fences and having to, you know, unhook those electric fences and getting zapped and, um, we rode horses… You know, we did all kinds of things. Um, yeah—yeah my dad never—[laughs] we did exactly what my brother did. You know the only thing that held us back is how strong we were. So, um, yeah my older sister, I think she… she was one-on-one with my brother. I mean, it was amazing. So, for me it was always if you—if you can do it and you want to do it, nobody should ever say no. Right? If you can do it and if you want to do it, you should be able to do whatever you want. It was, you know… that was—that was how I grew up.

Cohen: Right. Yeah, that was how you lived your life.

Rowe: Yes, yeah.

Cohen: Just out of curiosity was the farm, like, sustaining for the family?

Rowe: [laughs] Well, that's a good question… So, um, it was a twenty-one-acre farm. My dad was a systems analyst. So, he came into this with a lot of great ideas and absolutely zero experience. And so, what he decided initially was that we were gonna raise, um, calves and we were gonna make them, um, veal. We're gonna do veal. And we were going to do corn-fed. Now, you know, now it's grass-fed, but then it was corn-fed. Oh corn-fed that—you know… it's cleaner… they'll do better. Anyway, so my dad said that was the route that he took. Well, you know we started with these poor baby calves. We built—we built our own, um, stalls for these calves. You know, like these three-foot-tall stalls with, you know, mesh around them and in a row, we'd do like six in a row. And we built them and we got those big baby bottles and went out there and fed them. And, um, you know, had boluses to give them, you know, vitamins and antibiotics. Uh we—we, um… We burned the horns off of their heads. We castrated them. We did the whole thing. The whole farm… I mean, just unbelievable, out of nothing. Like out of nothing. But the sad thing was we were small, first. Second, uh, those calves kept dying. I mean we had some tough winters and just didn't know… Didn't… We had a barn, but the barn wasn't someplace that we could put, you know, thirty

calves. Anyway, so, um, you know, we would go and we'd go to auction and sell them and we did the whole thing. But it was not a money producer. And it did… I mean… We had the—we did the whole garden; we put in a garden and got the potatoes and the beans and we did all this stuff. But, and of course, I was a kid. So, who knows, but obviously we didn't—It did not make money and in the end we went bankrupt. So, yeah.

Cohen: But a lot of training for life…

Rowe: Oh, my gosh, yes. I would tell you, Leah, to be honest with you, one of the biggest reasons why I was able to become who I became at the Naval Academy was because I was pretty tough. I didn't look tough. I never *looked* tough. And I didn't—and I was not—you know, I was not the kid that was the uh… the softball player and the, you know, the field hockey star. I was not that. I was actually a cheerleader in high school. But my life on that farm… I—I was pretty tough. And yeah I think that that's one of the reasons why I was able to sort of overcome… my, um—overcome the negatives and just keep putting one foot in front of the other and just keep going, you know.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah… Um, how did you hear that the Naval Academy in Annapolis was beginning to accept women as students in 1976?

Rowe: So… um, very interesting… I just did a photo album on this. Um, you know, I—you know, I retired four years ago. So, I, you know, started trying to clean my house up. So, anyway, so I pulled out all the Naval Academy stuff and went through it. And, well in fact, I'll pull it out now because I don't want to mess the story up and I didn't really know the story until I saw the paperwork on it. It just happens it's sitting right here. Anyway, so, um, let's see. So, um… So, I—my mother, I don't know if I have the article. I do. I still have the article. So, my mother gave me an article titled, "Byron Taking Applications to Academies," my congressman Byron. Byron taking applications… she says, "Liz! Here it is." So, I think what happened was I went to a… a high school meet and greet, um, with a blue and gold officer, which these are the officers that come and help midshipmen, uh, potential midshipmen. They interview them, they evaluate them, they give them advice, all that sort of thing. So, anyway, they came to my high school, and I went to this meeting and sat down at the meeting. There was me and a bunch of guys and the blue and gold officer, um, turned to me and said, "They don't admit women to the Naval Academy." And I went, "Oh." So, anyway, that's how unaware I was. Well, I think that happened and then this

letter—this newspaper article came out about Byron taking applications. So, I sent an application to Byron and I actually have it. It's kind of funny. Here, I'll show you this. This is so funny. I somehow… maybe I rewrote it on a better piece of paper, but I have it on my little apple stationery. [Holds up scrapbook to camera.] Can you see? It's on my little apple… oops…

Cohen: Oh yeah! Yes, I do see the little apple. [laughs]

Rowe: My little apple… my grandmother probably gave me this stationery. So, anyway I wrote this dear... dear representative Byron and I wrote the letter, I'd like to go to the Naval Academy. And well, I got back from him a letter, Congress of the United States House of Representatives: "Dear Miss Belzer, I'm in receipt of your recent letter informing me of your interest in obtaining a nomination to the U.S. Naval Academy. The U.S. Naval Academy is not yet admitting women. However, I would be happy to…" [phone rings] um, sorry… "I would be happy to keep your application on file in case this policy changes." So, his letter is dated November 20, the light's terrible in here, hang on. November 26, 1975. Then I have next to it, dated October 8th 1975 public law 94-106.

Cohen: Oh…

Rowe: So that's the… I mean you talk about timing, right?

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: It's just amazing. So, this late September thing and then the law was passed two weeks later. So, anyway, so that's how I ended up finding out that, oh, gosh women do. And then after that I get a letter back from Byron that says: "Thank you for your letter dated October 27th, I regret that I inadvertently forgot to include the application form."

[both laugh]

Rowe: And so…That's dated November 6.

Cohen: That's one way around it.

Rowe: So anyway, I thought that was amazing.

Cohen: That is amazing. [laughs] Okay, um, so you were accepted, obviously. So what was your course of study? And how did it work? And where classes integrated both men and women?

Rowe: Okay, so, um… So, first class of women… They had spent, you know, the previous year trying to figure out what do we do. Um, so, I'll tell you the first problem they had is they didn't figure out the uniforms. So, we put on these uniforms, they're called “white works” and we put them on and they were hipless. So, you know it was super narrow in the hips, right, but then everything else was bit… Anyway, so they had to redesign—they had to almost immediately redesign the uniforms. Um, they I don't know why, I mean they had a woman that was a lieutenant that was supposed to be their model and all that sort of thing. But anyway, that was a problem.

Um, but anyway, we arrived there and um, so what they had decided to do was take three women, every other company. There were thirty-six companies. They would take three women, I'm not—I haven't done the math here, but I think this is right. Uh, three women, every other company would get three women. So, the first thing that did was isolate the women, which I think was an unfortunate move. But, uh, I get integrating… right. They were trying to integrate. So, I get that, but I think in the long run that was not a good move, because the women to this day, we still talk about how we never were—we were never as one. The women were competing against each other, heard rumors about each other, um, spread rumors about each other. And so there was sort of a low-level animosity really between the women, which was kind of sad. So, a woman would, let's first say, for example, a woman would go out with another midshipman and then the other women would talk about it, “See, she's wrecking it for the rest of us.” That kind of thing was going on. So, it was very unfortunate. I mean it was very unfortunate. I have a friend um from my company who is, um, African American, and I talked to him about this specifically you know the African Americans they all joined hands. They all became a unit, who they're still today. They're a unit. You know, they get together still. And that's how African Americans figured it out, how do they be a stronger, um, force and protect each other, that's how they did it. And the women could have been that, but, um, I think for many reasons… But anyway that was one of the initial reasons they—they separated us. So, three for every other company. And of course, we're all in the same very large dorm and, um… all the rest of it was integrated. So, you would have I think it was maybe per… per… per two companies, it was like sixty guys and three women, something like that. And, um, so yeah, so it was… It was difficult.

So, you asked me about course of study. So, your first year you're just—everybody's doing about the same thing. Um, you know, heavy math, science. Um, second year I selected electrical engineering. I just wrote about this too. I

selected electrical engineering because it was by reputation the hardest major. So, because of the way that I was raised, I thought now this is what you do if you want a group to embrace you, you achieve whatever is the most difficult thing to achieve and therefore they'll say, “You're okay. Okay, I accept you. You're okay.” Okay, it didn't work that way, but that was my attempt. Anyway, electrical engineering did not like me. So, I did not do well in electrical engineering. So, um about three quarters of the year into it I said, you know, I can't do this. I can't do electrical. So, I changed my major to physics and that's what I— that was my course of study was physics.

Cohen: Well, although maybe electrical engineering wasn't for you. It sounds like in other ways, you were the—the stellar student. And the trident scholar and your senior year, the highest GPA [grade point average]. So, I wondered, like, did that make you, as you're saying, more accepted by everybody or simply more envy, like… how did it work?

Rowe: So, uh, it made me a target. I was a target and uh, yeah. I… Yeah, I had to tolerate a lot of abuse. A lot. Yeah, so yeah, it didn't—It backfired on me. And I would tell you I wasn't the smartest person at the Naval Academy. I… I… Um, I'm… I'm smart, um, but I am a hard worker. I am a hard worker. If anything my parents taught me it was a good work ethic and that's, you know, that's how I was able to do the things I was able to do, was just a, you know, nose to the grindstone. Constantly working, work, work, work. So yeah

Cohen: How did you cope with the, you know, resentment or abuse?

Rowe: Well, um, yeah, I've spent a lot of years thinking about that, how did I cope. I, um, my mom was very supportive of me. My mom always said, “You want to come home, you just come on home.” And I think that was as motivating as saying, “You better not come home, you said you wanted to do this.” No, I think—I think her saying, “You can come home anytime you want honey” was more motivating and—and more helped me stick around more than anything else probably did. I also had a very strong religious bent and uh, I was in the church choir. Um, you know, knew the ministers, knew the chaplains. Um, I sang. I was in the… what they call “the masqueraders,” the musical theater there. I, um, so that was all very, um, uplifting. I would go there—there in the, um, dormitory this very long… Have you ever been to the Naval Academy?

Cohen: Unfortunately, no.

Rowe: You need to do that! It is the most beautiful place. I mean it is—it's one of those things that would, um, warm your heart just to see it. I think… I… Yeah, it's a beautiful campus. What's that?

Cohen: I think so too and I'm kind of intrigued by things on the water in general, so…

Rowe: Yeah, it's just beautiful there and Annapolis is also a beautiful town. Just—it's just a beautiful place. I mean that's—that's a lot of the reason why I was… yeah I fell in love with it. Anyway, um, that was tempered by my going there. But anyway, um anyway, so I would… in this great big dorm that houses four thousand—can house four thousand midshipmen. Um, when you go into the center, great big steps and a very tall entryway and all that sort of thing, you come into a foyer and then more steps into what they call Memorial Hall. Anyway, you can go online and see what this actually looks like, what I'm trying, probably poorly, trying to describe to you. But anyway, go up more steps and you can go into Memorial Hall which is also a beautiful thing. But under those huge steps are two chapels. On the left was Protestant. I think on the right was Jewish, um, but all of that may have changed because we have, you know, opened up to many other religions and all that kind of thing. But at that time is probably, yeah, Protestant and Jewish, I don't know, I think. Anyway, so I would go under the steps on very bad days, and they had a little altar there—a little, um, what do you call it? A lectern. A lectern and I would have this giant Bible they had in there and I would open it to the Psalms. And if you've ever read the Psalms they are music. They are words that are music and many of them are very, um, negative. Right. There are a lot of psalms that are negative, about war, and how am I ever going to make it and all this. But many of them are also very uplifting, the promise of God, I'll be there with you. I will—I will, uh, you know, strengthen you when you're down. That kind of thing. And I would just read those psalms, and, boohoo, I mean I would just stand there and read those Psalms and, boohoo, and then I went back to work. And so, yes, that was also very helpful.

Um, my roommate, Kathy Carlson Osmic. My roommate. She was, uh—she was a perfect person for me to be with there. We both played the piano. We both sang. She was the one that got me sailing. She—I'd never sailed in my life, she got me sailing. And I don't know whether you saw it, but I was actually able to be like a skipper on a little boat and we won a little championship. And so, she got me to do that, that was great. Later on, I started running and so I was on the cross-country team and that was also very—so… so, many things. Right. Many

things. If you—if you spend your time getting involved, you end up with others that are, you know, suffering as you're suffering. You know, dealing with what you're dealing with. So, just getting involved in other things was also very helpful.

Cohen: Um, what was the nature of the—of the word… is like resentment? Um, like among the instructors you know versus the peers? Or what type of things were they saying or doing that showed they weren't, um, accepting the new reality?

Rowe: So, when I was very first there, um… uh… you—example, I'll just give you examples. Uh, one guy walked up to me and said, "You need to shave." Um... you know, but I was seventeen. I mean these are devastating things for a seventeen-year-old.

Cohen: True. That's true.

Rowe: I mean they seem silly. Right? They seem silly, like blow it off. But at seventeen, it was really tough. Um, they um, they—they did what they called "come arounds" where you had to go to and to a midshipman's room and, um, recite memorized stuff, Navy stuff, and so you'd go to their rooms. And so that's free, they can do it as many times or as few times as they want. Um, and they would, you know, just keep coming at me. So, you know you can only memorize so much. You can only keep in your head so much. You can only take so much of some guy screaming in your face. So, all of that happened, but it happened to other mids too. I mean it happened to other mids. Other people were picked on. You know, I was picked on, but I'm sure there were many others who were also picked on. Um, they would, uh—they—I had a uh… we had little slots for our mailboxes and um I found a dead rat in my mailbox. Um, I got a letter from a guy that said, "I hope you're…" something like… "I hope you're cap—," an anonymous letter from a guy that said, "I hope you're happy with, you know, how unfeminine you've become." "How—how you've become so masculine" or, you know, something in an anonymous letter. Um, they would throw pies in my face. They would turn the power off to my room. I would open the door and a pie would come at me and then I just saw a bunch of flashes as they took pictures and they actually pub—published one of the pictures, actually maybe two. No, I think just one, uh, in the school magazine. Um, you know, just as a funny. The school magazine had… uh, you know… like the opening letter. It's called the... the—with the guy where they'd write this article every month, would be this guy called Salty Sam. And so, this was a log magazine and it was

the school magazine. So, there was administration there. Somebody—somebody had it printed, and somebody had… So we're not just talking about the mids, right. They didn't do it independent of the administration. But there would be all kinds of slams of women. Not just me but other women and just jokes about them. And just… I mean just terrible, just awful. You know, making fun of your shape, making fun of your weight, making fun of your uh… You know jibes about, you know, letting you off the hook when somebody else didn't get off the hook just because you're a woman, letting you do stuff, because you weren't—uh… When I was a senior—I was a senior… I was the, um, regimental commander. My sub commander was a guy that had decided he was going to be a marine and he hated me. I mean just hated me and just didn't want to work for me. And, so he, uh, reported me, you know, put me on—put me on report for stuff that was, you know, not real… and complained about me and then I don't know whether you saw the article by, um, Jim Webb. Did you see that article? You definitely need to see that article.

Cohen: Yes, okay, I'll take a look.

Rowe: Yeah um… But Jim, you know, James Webb. You know, you remember him. He was, I don't know, Secretary of the Navy for a while. And he wrote an article while we were still there. Uh, "Can women…"— "Women Can't Fight," that was the name of the article, "Women Can't Fight." And it, uh, specifically named me as a token and, um, you know, said that um, the women—let's see, that the women had come there and that it was a… something like a haven—a haven for horny women... or something, you know, I mean just all these horrible things. And that, you know, that women and men can't fight next to each other. This is a— this is a decorated Marine, a Vietnam Marine who later became Secretary of the Navy for God's sake. So, anyway… so, um, yeah. I—If I thought more, I could come up with more examples. But, um, it was clear that the midshipmen were against us. But, um, there were those in the administration who were very supportive. I mean I would not have been able to be a trident scholar or have been a regimental commander or, you know, those kinds of things if the administration had just stood up and saying, "No way these women…" you know, that kind of thing. So, um, you know, my performance was adequate for certain people in the administration to say, yeah, we're gonna give her a chance. And so yeah, so, I was able to do some things. And again I—I had to live with the idea that the male midshipmen and maybe some of the women consider me a token, right. They had to find some woman that was gonna be successful and they could, you know, go "ra ra," see we're doing what we're supposed to be

doing. You passed the law; we're going to do it. Um, there were many in the administration that were hoping we would fail. In fact, if you look at articles by, um, Admiral Mckee, who was the superintendent when I arrived there. His articles would say things like, “I don't know about this” and “We'll give it a year.” And so even the admiral in charge of the Naval Academy was sort of, pfft, this is not what we want to be doing. And you could—I've actually read articles that said things like, “We're just going to make the best of this...” you know, crap that we've been handed or… you know, that kind of… but it was pretty—it was pretty bad. I mean, it was pretty, yeah, some of it was pretty bad. But again there were those—like my company officer, who I very interestingly, I just got in touch with, he actually lives about an hour and a half from me. Um, so he was my company officer. So, thirty-six company at that time thirty, I think they're only thirty now, but thirty-six companies at that time. He was my company officer, and he was very supportive, very pushy. He pushed and pushed me. Um, but he was very supportive and tried to help me to… um, yeah, do more than, uh, I would have otherwise done. So, yeah, he was very supportive. So, it's not—it wasn't a hundred percent. It was definitely not a hundred percent. In fact, it might not even have been more than fifty percent. It didn't really matter, right?

Cohen: Right.

Rowe: It takes one and it only takes three, you know, and it only takes—so who knows what the percentages were on that. But this… but, but certainly, the percentages that were supportive of women were not willing to be—to stand out and say, okay, you guys aren't going to do this. Right?

Cohen: Right.

Rowe: So. So, doing nothing is complicity. So, they were complicit. Though maybe not actively against women.

Cohen: Like bystanders in a way. Yeah.

Rowe: Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. So, did—I think I was reading that fifty-five out of eighty-one women of the class graduated.

Rowe: That’s correct.

Cohen: And I was wondering whether you knew some of the women who decided to drop out and why they did so ultimately?

Rowe: Well, so the only one… again we were isolated. The only one I can really speak to was my roommate. So, we had three roommates and Kathy and I both did Navy careers and our other roommate dropped out. And she dropped out and, uh, married—uh, married a midshipman that graduated and um… so, you know. I mean it happens. Uh, there was this whole thing where they said, "Oh the only reason women want to come there is to get their Mrs. degree," right. So, again women turn on women, right. I'm sure that at that time I turned on her. I'm sure I did. And said, "See it's people like you that wreck it for the rest of us," right. But that was her choice. Um, I have actually met, and I can't speak to it, um, specifically but I have actually met at least two women, who dropped out before they graduated. And I will tell you that one of them was very damaged by it. She was convinced to do it by the person that she married, who said you shouldn't be here and so, she left and then married him and then they ended up divorcing anyway. But, but, um… That kind of pressure from someone that you kind of fall in love with and who says you really don't belong that would be very difficult. Another woman that left and I think also was damaged by it. Um, she also married later, another Naval Academy graduate. Um, but she still kind of talks painfully about it. I think… I think that—I think the problem is… um, which I've said before, when you go to the Naval Academy—everybody that goes to the Naval Academy they spent the entire first year just making you feel like you are garbage, right. That's their job and then they're supposed to build you back up again. Well, if you leave before they do the build back up, all you've gotten was that dose of you're crap.

Cohen: Yeah…

Rowe: You can't do this, you can't do that, you're never gonna to make it… why don't you leave… blah blah blah. I mean it goes into your head and it sticks and so if you are not able to experience the—the build up, which wasn't that great. [laughs] For me anyway. But—but it is in general. It is in general, you know, you learn that, oh, I do have value. I am okay. I'm standing shoulder to shoulder with this guy and this guy, I'm doing as well as he is. You know, you had that opportunity to, um, to regain the self-esteem and the self-confidence that they kind of took out of you. So, I think women that left, particularly our class, which was so badly treated… Um, you know, I think it does do long-term damage.

Cohen: Was there media celebration of your class by—by publications with a feminist bent?

Rowe: Um… Not that I recall.

Leah: Okay. Okay.

Rowe: No, I would say no feminist bent. No, I don't think we had feminist reporters who came and talked to us. No, it was mostly mainstream media and, um, I did have a… a feminist—this was really weird, because I didn't remember it. It was really kind of painful. I did have a feminist who sent me a letter and said I read your article, blah blah blah, and these are the things you said that were anti-female.

Cohen: Oh, geez. [laughs]

Rowe: So, I wasn't doing good enough from her perspective. And, you know, I have to say, Leah, honestly who knows. I was not—I was not um… I was definitely a teenager focused on me and not thinking what my words might do to other women. I don't think that that was—and I think that's unfortunate. I didn't—I didn't think about it that way and, um, you know if you—if you talk… So, this whole, you know, Black Lives Matter and all this sort of thing that's going on now. If you— if you…uh, read—have read white fragility, all these sorts of things, uh, and listen to others, um, listen to your African American friends when you ask them specific questions about what it is that we white people, who think we're progressive and we think we've you know figured it out and we think that we don't have a racist bone in our body. Can you tell me things that we say that make you feel worse not better? And as it turns out we do. And so, it's very likely that I did the same thing for women. That I did say the wrong things. Probably I did. Obviously not Intentionally, but, you know, what she was trying to do was educate me, right. She was a grown up and I was a kid, and she was trying to educate me and say look you have a voice, right. And they're going to let you speak again and these are things you need to keep in mind that will help others, not just you, but others. And so even though I'm sure forty years ago, when I received this letter, I was just like what—are you kidding me? I'm doing everything I can and you're going to tell me I'm anti-feminist. You know, um, but… but, but in hindsight, here I have to say she was probably right. She was just trying to educate me and help me to be a better voice for women.

Cohen: Yeah. Um, just to shift gears a little bit, like, in addition to the academic program. Could you describe the physical and you know Navy professional training that was required… uh, required of you?

Rowe: Yes. Um, so, um, they have something called PEP, P-E-P, all caps. Hmm… don't remember what it stands for, but you can imagine it's something like, you know, "physical exercise," I don't know. Whatever it is. I don't know what it is, but anyway, they call it PEP. So, you have to get out there at six am every morning and you have to do PEP. So, um, the—one of the other things that the Naval Academy didn't realize is that, because women can't run as fast as men. You begin to have trouble, um, running in formation. So, right, everybody has to keep up, if you're going to run in formation and so one of the big things that happened was almost immediately the women started getting shin splints. Most of—most of us including myself had not—so what happens when you get shin splints, I don't know if you ever had them, but you just have to stop. You just you can't—you can't, like, put a bandage on it and keep running. You have to stop. So, first women couldn't keep up and you already have this environment of men, who are like, [tuts] what are they bringing women in here for? They are not physically capable of being combat officers... blah, blah, blah. The law still doesn't allow them to go into combat, come on. So, you're not keeping up and then on top of that they're sitting in their room while you're out running, because they've got shin splints and they can't run. So, this was not a good—this was not a good call. This was not a good entry place for women. So, um, lucky for me, I was able to manage those shin splints. I was… I, you know, kill me first, kill me first.

[both laugh]

Rowe: But anyway, um, so every morning you had to do that. So that got you into better shape. Um, they taught you how to sail. Everybody got to sail. Um, they had an, uh—they had an obstacle course, everybody had to do an obstacle course. Everyone had to participate in every season. So, there were three. There was fall, winter, and spring, in a sport. You had to have a sport. So, that kept you moving. Um, it's—I think it's much different, because of the wars that have happened Afghan—Afghanistan and Iraq. And you know, terrorism. I think it has changed. I think if you ask now what do they do, they do a much more elaborate… um, you know, rucksack carrying… more—more Army-ish than we did at the Naval Academy. So, I would say, you know, we do these exercises. We did sports. So, it kept us in shape, but it was not preparing us for war in the

sense that you think of boot camp preparing you for war. It was different then. Uh, like I said, today I think it's much different. They put on their camouflage gear, and they wear backpacks and they, you know, do all this sort of thing. So, anyway, so they got us in—in decent shape. Um, and the women, again, they couldn't keep up with the men, but, uh, the women's programs began to develop. And uh, you know, we started having varsity sports, because of Title IX. And, um, so the women were able to achieve and do, you know, win national championships and that sort of thing. I think we did quite well in basketball and volleyball and, um, swimming. We had a—I think we had an Olympian, you know. And so, anyway… So, they did have a lot of athletics that women were able to excel in.

Cohen: I was reading that Title 10 as well prohibited from women to be assigned to vessels and [audio cuts out] like… like were you aware of this restriction when you were a student?

Rowe: Yes. Yes, very aware of it, because that was the big argument against women coming to the Naval Academy. You know, it was to—the Naval Academy was supposed to produce combat officers. So, what's the point of having a woman go there and take a man's slot when a man can go into combat and a woman can't. So, not a bad argument, right?

[both laugh]

Rowe: But I think the—I think the intent of, you know, passing the law was if they— if they build them, it will come. [laughs]

Cohen: That's true. [laughs]

Rowe: So, eventually if you have enough women out there performing well on non-combatant ships, they're gonna go, why are we keeping them off combatants? Okay, we'll let them come on… So, eventually the law changed. So, you know, it was years after I graduated still. I can't—I don't even remember when… maybe it was '85? I don't remember, um, but uh, yeah, the law eventually passed that women can go on combatant ships. So, you know, that's how um… you know, so many women have done awesome things, um, on different kinds of combatant ships. So, um, but I was well aware of it. Uh, so when we graduated, I believe there were five slots for women to go on ships and we had fifty-five women. Five slots for women to go on ships. There were five slots for women to go aviation. There were five slots for women to go up—I'm sorry, pilot. There were, um, five

slots for women to go naval flight officer and there were five slots for women to go Marine. I think—I think that was the breakdown. So, you had thirty-five women who did not go on to even what you would assume would eventually be combatant roles, right. They weren't learning the thing—like if I go on a non-combatant ship, I'm still gonna learn how to drive the ship and work with the combat information center and how engineering works and all the things that you have on a combatant ship. So, I was preparing myself for combatants. But thirty-five—I think it was thirty-five of the women had to go to, you know, sea—uh, shore duty jobs. Uh, they let some go into the supply corps and all that kind of thing. So very non-combatant roles. Um, but you asked if I was aware of it, I was very aware of it, of course. As I did with electrical engineering, I thought, okay what's the hardest one to do? So, my first thought was I'll be a Marine. And then I went to Quantico. You go to—you go to all the places where you're gonna do, you try flying and all—so I went to Quantico and we went in a ditch with the, you know, paint on your face, and I said I'm not gonna be a Marine. [laughs] No way in hell, I'm going to be a Marine. So, anyway I picked what I thought was next best to that and, uh, went on a ship. So, yeah.

Cohen: [laughs] Okay. Um, just out of curiosity, I haven't read it yet, but I became aware of Sharon Disher's book "First Class,"

Rowe: —Yes.

Cohen: "Women Join the Ranks at the Naval Academy."

Rowe: Yes.

Cohen: What did you think about it?

Rowe: So, I was… uh, I—they needed composites. So, I was part of at least two of the composites that she did. So, I was—I was sort of with her the whole time she was writing the book. Um, the book was a little um… well I—okay, so you can't print anything like this, right. You can't—you can't put in print anything like this, because, uh, I… I would never, ever, offend another woman who graduated with me. So, it's very important to me, um, that that would never, yeah, be printed, but, um, I think that… Um… it's very important that each of the women that graduates is, just my opinion, is honored and some of what was printed was embarrassing, even for Sharon. I wouldn't even… I wouldn't even have… it—very personal, very private, um. And yeah, I mean, we—I believe all—all of us suffer PTA. I believe all of us still have bad dreams about this. I think all of us still, um,

feel bad about some things that happened to us or that we chose to do which we wish we hadn't. Um, you know, many of—many of us who went to college, right. Regular college, right. You do things that you wish—but you certainly wouldn't—you wouldn't want it in print, you wouldn't want it in print. So, that's the only, you know—that's the only worry I have, um, anyway. Yeah.

Cohen: Yeah… So, um, would you like to talk about your assignment to the destroyer tender the USS Samuel Gompers?

Rowe: Sure.

Cohen: And the other thing that I found interesting about it, that it seems like it was one of the ships to take women as crew members in 1978 and I wondered if you were aware of this before you were assigned to the ship? You know, just wondering what it was like.

Rowe: Yeah. So, um, I think I was… uh, I—I think I knew very little. Uh, I was aware that they had enlisted and officers on the ship. Um, and I had gone to the USS Lexington, which is out of Florida during my first-class crew. So, I'd already served for, I don't know, six weeks, maybe less, maybe four weeks, something like that on a ship that was integrating. Um, so I was kind of aware of what was going on. But I kind of expected when I went to the ship that I would have the same experience that I'd had at the Naval Academy. I would be treated similarly, and what I found out was the fleet was not having nearly as—it seemed to me, the fleet was not having nearly as hard a time integrating as the Naval Academy. Uh, if you did your job, you know, you—I mean, like any company or anything else you just did your job and so it was much—it was much easier. Now, I will say I spent my first six months on the ship, um, working in the combat information center and I thought the best thing I could do was to kind of be friends with the people that worked for me, because they would, you know, want to support me. So, somehow I missed leadership 101 there. So that didn't work out well.

[both laugh]

Rowe: So, luckily, they transferred me eventually you know just to rotate me around the ship. Anyway, I went down to the auxiliaries and electrical department and became the division head there. A hundred and twenty guys and these were engineers, uh, a whole different breed. You know, the combat information centers is what—what you would call top side. Just sort of a cleaner—cleaner group… I don't know, you know what I mean? Like they're not getting grease on

their hands. So, a different group—these are tougher people, these were tougher people. And I had a great chief that worked for me and he led me through things and answered my questions. He was awesome, he was just awesome. I, uh, yeah, I really appreciated him. But there were those there that did not want me there. Um, on—on these tenders, uh, there are limited duty officers and warrant officers, a lot of them on the—in the… in the officer ranks. So, these are older guys, who were enlisted and then became officers.

Cohen: Mmm…

Rowe: So, it's different than somebody who goes to the Naval Academy or some civilian college and then becomes an officer. I mean that's a whole different, like, breed than a guy that worked in the—worked in the engineering department forever and then became an officer and all that sort of—and is older, is older. But they usually—you usually outrank them. So, I would be a lieutenant. They'd be a warrant officer or—or even an LDO [limited duty officer] that might be below me in rank, so they would have to work for me. They'd be much older than me and were in the Navy before women were hanging out and all this sort… So, it was a much more difficult environment there. Um, but—but still, there was a rank structure. So, that kind of, for the most part, protected you, right. If somebody works for you, they cannot like you. But guess what? They still have to do what you tell them to do.

Cohen: [laughs]

Rowe: So, you know, it's a much different thing than, uh, than the Naval Academy where, um, you were usually outranked by, you know, uh, many… many who didn't want you there. Anyway, so that was a much different—much more difficult environment. But really, very… I learned more about leadership in that job than I probably learned in anything else in my twenty years in the Navy. I mean it was just great. A lot of people working there, a lot of different personalities, a lot of stuff, you know, you had the entire, you know, all the refrigerators and all the, um, the whole electrical system of the ship. And anyway, so, yeah, very complicated stuff you're in charge of. And, um, yeah, I learned more of leadership there than anywhere else. So, yeah, that was a great tour. It was a great tour.

Cohen: What was the function of the, um, three different assignments: the combat information center officer, the auxiliaries and electrical division officer, and then

the operations department head, like what was each, um, you know, unit doing… And then what was your role in leading?

Rowe: Okay. So, um, so… I think what—what happens… Well, I think one—maybe it's everywhere that's—but it's a philosophy, right? If you're gonna learn how to be an officer on a ship, you have to learn all the different parts, right? You gotta know all the—all the different aspects of it. So you—so you need to rotate around the ship. Also, you end up with people transferring, right. They got a new job. Now, you got this opening. Who are you gonna fill it with? Are you gonna fill it with some new guy coming from outside? Are you gonna fill it with somebody who already has experience? Or, you know, that—so that's the captain of the ship to decide how to do that. So, combat information center, uh, that was again a—sort of a clean hands job. A pretty basic, uh begin—I would call it kind of a beginner job, where the auxiliaries and electrical was more of a—a complex, uh, supervising a lot more people and all that sort of thing. And then, they had a department head opening. Well, it's nothing better for your career than to go from being a division officer on your first tour to being a department head. So, when that opportunity came up I might have, you know, um, uh, campaigned to try and get that job, because I think it would have been—I probably felt it would be good for my career. So, uh, the—the operations department head would have the combat information center under it. So, you know you're stepping up one in rank—in position, not rank, but in position. So, and by that time, I was a lieutenant. So, it made sense to—for me to leave that department.

Cohen: Okay, okay. I was wondering if the acceptance of women on the ship was a result of the attitude of the commanding officer. I think it was Captain O'malia when you would have started. Or whether these decisions are something that are imposed from—from above?

Rowe: Um, good question. Good question. Actually, my first captain was Captain Fred Bailey.

Cohen: Oh, okay.

Rowe: And he was a tough guy. Oh my gosh, he was tough. He was the guy—I remember he would yell at me. And I, you know, grit my teeth. But when I left wherever we were I would go back, and I would just boohoo. Like he was tough. Um, but again that, you know, that makes you perform. Um, so, I…I—I would say… I would say the captain of the ship, he is the—he is the, um, he dictates the…the—the climate. He dictates the climate. And so, if the captain was not

supportive of women, you're not going to have anybody supportive of women. If the captain was supportive of women, pretty much everybody toes the line and does what he says. So, I would say the captain had a lot of influence on the, uh, the environment that we lived in. And um, you know, I was the first Naval Academy woman to come there and the two women officers that were there before me, they'd had a—they'd had a pretty difficult time. Um, yeah, and um, yeah, I felt like I— I had a role to… I felt like I had a role to play. I felt like I had the opportunity to influence how the ship, um, accepted women. I—I felt that, because there were so few of us. Yeah, I felt that… but, uh, yeah I would say both the captains that came on the ship were supportive of women.

Cohen: You were talking before about the difference between the officers who had gone to academies and graduated and the other trajectory. So, it made me wonder how the two other women officers were trained in that they would have been trained prior to the acceptance of women at the Naval Academy.

Rowe: Yeah, I have no idea. I have no idea. So, um, yeah. I was—you know, I was working for one of them. And, um, I… um, I—I honestly… I don't… I… I…

Cohen: It's okay.

Rowe: I have no idea. I don't… I don't think I—I'm sure I had that conversation, um, eventually down the line like, how did they prepare you? But I… I don't recall. I don't know how that happened. I don't know. Sorry.

Cohen: Well, that's okay. So, I was reading that the USS Gompers was deployed I think from April 1981 to September—September 1981 to the Indian Ocean and I believe also the Persian Gulf and I was wondering what that was like. I know you mentioned you'd spent some of your growing up time in Germany. But was this your first time, um, overseas aside from that?

Rowe: It was awesome! It was absolutely awesome! We did—while I was on the ship, we did two deployments. We did one that was over Christmas. So, the one you're quoting was probably the first deployment and the second deployment was over Christmas. And, uh, yeah it was awesome. I mean, I thought that was the, ah... again, my ship tour—my, my only ship tour was just… it was phenomenal. Two six-month deployments. I got to see lots of different places. I got to visit Australia and… Singapore and, uh, the Philippines and Hawaii several times and… yeah, I think—and honestly it probably, um, it probably triggered my

lifelong love of travel. I mean, my husband and I have until COVID traveled many, many places. And I loved it. I just absolutely loved it.

Cohen: So, were you able to go offshore fairly regularly? Or…

Rowe: So—so, the one thing I—I regret is that I didn't… I didn't go the places I could have gone, because of money, you know. I mean, I had—I thought I had no money. I should have spent it all. I should have just spent it all, just gone everywhere I could have gone. So, the, uh—the restriction of going places was of course your job. Um, but also when you pulled into port, you would almost every time you would have some free time. So, um, I did do a— an excursion in Sri Lanka. Um, where else did I… Yeah, so, uh, yeah. And I think I went out in Australia. But, anyway, I was limited by money. Like I thought—it felt like I couldn't afford to, you know, pay the money to go on these trips and all that sort of thing. But there was opportunity, there was definitely opportunity.

Cohen: Well, I completely, on a personal note, I completely relate. I also really regret the fact that when I was living in Israel on a dime I didn't take that hundred-dollar boat trip to Greece. Or, like you said, like somehow, like part with the money and I would have gone…

Rowe: Right, like find it—find it someplace, because in the long run… right? It's just nothing, but you're gonna miss that opportunity, yeah.

[both laugh]

Cohen: So, I was wondering if, um, you were aware of the purpose of why you were serving the fleets, um, at the time, where you did. Like to put it in a very primitive way, was there a suspicion of, uh, Soviet submarines in the Indian Ocean at that time? Or were you even given any knowledge of why you were located where you were?

Rowe: So, so, the uh—so the boring part of this is that we were a destroyer tender and what a destroyer tender is, is simply a ship that is there to help take care of the other ships and submarines who need help. So, we wouldn't be informed or involved in—I mean the ship got messages. So, we got news, you know. We got news like, you know, by message, by letter. Um, but uh… we were never involved in any of the discussions or at all about what these ships were doing. So, we would follow along with the carrier group, right that had destroyers and submarines and the carrier and the planes and they—we'd follow along. We

might pull in the same port as them and all that kind of thing, but we weren't really privy to any of those discussions because we were just a tender.

Cohen: Okay. So, when you were not deployed where was the ship based?

Rowe: So, we were in San Diego, and we would just be pier side in San Diego. We might go out to do an exercise or something like that for a week or something like that, but, in general, we were at pier side in San Diego and what happens pier side is they get the ship ready for the next deployment. So, you know, whatever repairs and, uh, you know, modern modernizations or any of that kind of thing. You just sit pier side and, uh, and uh, you know, facilitate all that happening for the next deployment. I think they moved her actually. Eventually, they moved the Gompers up to Alameda. But, at that time, it was in San Diego.

Cohen: Okay, did that change the nature of your duties? Like when you were offshore versus on deployment?

Rowe: Um, well, not really. I mean, um—I mean generally when you're… when you're… when you're, um, pier side you're going to be involved in these, you know, repairs. Painting things and, you know, that diesel generator that never worked during the deployment or whatever. And so, you're going to be involved in all of that. Um, but, you know, officers—you know, officers' jobs are generally leading. So, managing, you know, you're just managing. So, you're managing, uh, what the other members of the crew are doing. So, if the electricians are working on this piece of equipment or whatever you're just a supervisor. So, in that way, your job stays pretty much the same. You're just supervising, you know, supervising.

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: You stand a lot of watches too, you know. The ship is, you know, open twenty-four hours a day, so you do stand a lot of watches as well.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah, throughout their duties. I was reading that the ship also received the Humanitarian Service Medal ribbon in 1983. What was that for and how did that affect you?

Rowe: So, well, we were—we were coming back home from deployment. I think we were coming back home. And we were supposed to go to New Zealand, I was so excited to go to New Zealand. And then… and then, uh, was it a hurricane? I guess they don't have hurricanes out there. What would it be called a… [voice off

screen] A what? Chili-willies? What did you say? [voice off screen] What? Willy-willies. Well, anyway… well was it like a—my husband's helping me—is that like a, um, typhoon, Don? Is it a typhoon?

Don: This thing called “willy-willies.”

Rowe: But I'm sure there's a more technical name than willy-willies. Well, anyway, he says it's a willy-willy. Anyway, whatever it's called—[voice offscreen]—okay. Anyway, whatever it's called it hit, uh, the Fiji Islands. So, we had it—we had doctors, we had dentists and we—you know, we had a repair department. So, we were, um, taken from our normal deployment schedule and sent to the—to the Fiji Islands to help the people there that were, um, you know devastated by this and so, um, actually I never left the ship. Um, uh, my job was to take care of the ship. But the doctors and the, um, yeah the dental crew and I'm sure there were supplies. They would go—the supply officer would go over there and the repair officer would go over there and so and try to help the islanders for a time. So, I—I think that's why we got the humanitarian medal.

Cohen: Okay, just reading about the USS Gompers, it seems like it was almost like a self-contained town with four hundred and fifty people working repairs from electronic to electrical systems and a barbershop and so on… So, I guess I wonder like, what was it like? And what particular aspect made an impression on you or was it the cutting-edge technology or the mission… Or, like what made an impression on you personally?

Rowe: So, um, you know to be perfectly honest I was on a destroyer tender so I felt like I had been sent to, you know, the worst— you know, the lesser part of the Navy. I was not on a combatant so that was really my initial reflection on it. You know, uh—you know, the way you describe it sounds pretty awesome. But I don't think I appreciated that very much, uh, because I was so focused on, um, you know, just how, how it appeared to others as far as me being, uh, you know, a naval officer. But the ship was cool, because the other ships that we serviced loved us, right. We came and we gave them what they needed. So, we were the folks that, like, they'd had the same movies for the last three months and we were able to bring them new movies or we'd have a supply of milk, and they hadn't drunk milk in forever or, you know, any number of things that we could provide them. And uh… and really having a dental, a dental—we had a captain, I think, dental officer, um, a, uh, yeah, a medical officer, all that sort of thing, you know, for the— [voice offscreen]—What? Oh, yeah, yeah that's the other thing the USO

[United Service Organizations] would come to our ship, right. We'd have the USO come to our ship, and they would bring the—they had the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders who came, and so, you know, we were *that* ship. So, yeah, so, the folks on the other ships loved when we came—when we came into their area so they could share in all that stuff. Yeah, funny.

Cohen: [laughs] Did men and women sleep in separate quarters or how was that handled?

Rowe: Yeah. So, um, yeah, this is sort of a sad thing, after you remember. Um, so at the time of course—um, there was a… So, they had separate quarters, to answer your question. We had the women's quarters; we had the men's quarters. But they were all down on the same level and so I'm sure there was a lot of mixing going on. Um, officers like me… I had my own stateroom. I didn't have to share with anyone, I had my own stateroom. Um, but at the time it just brings up to me at the time, um, there was the, um, the drive to ensure that homosexuals weren't on ships and so they held boards, um, and so I was required to be on one. I—I can only remember one board and I honestly have to tell you, Leah, that I don't remember… all I can—I just have a flash in my head of sitting on this board, but I'm sure this board was after some poor woman who they were driving out of the Navy. And I'm sure that I did not stand up and say, "This is crap!" You know, I didn't, you know—I didn't—I'm sure I was part of the problem, which makes me very sad and disappointed in myself, so. But I kind of remember that that was going on and that as an officer I would have to participate in that sort of thing. So, um, it doesn't really answer your question, but it does reflect on the whole idea that, you know, men and women were gonna to be in their own separate quarters and they were gonna mix. And, you know, things—women were gonna get pregnant and, you know, things were gonna happen and so yeah… But, uh, but a ship is a—is a crowded place. If you're all in the same place for six months, it's a crowded place. So it… it is a—it is a um—it is a more difficult, um, situation for enlisted members than it is for officers, you know, because they give us state rooms. And so the enlisted have to live in bunks and live with each other and, you know, they—they just have a harder time.

Cohen: Yeah, it's hard to change in the middle of a process going on also, you know.

Rowe: Well, I don't know, I don't know I— I think that, um, you know, we all have to own our past. So, it is mine and I—while I can't really remember it, I'm… There's

no doubt, because they would have given me a really hard time if I'd stood up to them and I would remember that. So, no doubt I was part of the problem, unfortunately. Yeah.

Cohen: Well, how did you communicate with the outside world? Like, was the phone something that people could use on the ship? Or was it strictly for, you know, ship or intraship communication?

Rowe: Yeah. So, yeah. So, things were so different then. So, um, along—alongside the shore when you were in port in San Diego was just like—like being in a house. But, um, when you deployed they used satellites and they would have a satellite access in one room, one radio room on the ship and you would by appointment try to reach your family and the connections were not often good and I probably didn't do it, you know, two or three times an entire deployment, because it was just too difficult. It was so different than now. And then when you got to a port right, you could try and use their phone system. But I remember the stories of people racking up phone bills that they couldn't afford to pay and all that sort of thing. So, in general, you stayed pretty isolated except for mail. So, mail was really, you know, you watch your, uh, your old —your old MASH episodes and mail was really still the thing. For the most part, you had to mail letters back and forth. So, yeah.

Cohen: Would an aircraft pick them up from the ship?

Rowe: Yes. Yes or you'd pull into port, right, generally you'd just pull into port and then they would—yeah, then they would pick up the mail. I…I—they wouldn't come to our ship. An airplane wouldn't come to our ship and pick up our mail. You would just wait till you got to a port and then pick up mail. Yeah…

Cohen: Who would you write to?

Rowe: So, I was married at the time. And, um, to my first husband and, uh, and of course I had my mom. And probably my baby sister. I'd probably write to my baby sister and my grandmother, my grandmothers, my two grandmothers. That's who I would probably write to, yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Um, okay. So, you mentioned on the questionnaire that when you had a little bit of spare time you would study in order to be promoted. Now did this come into play on the ship or more late later on in your career?

Rowe: What did I write?

[both laugh]

Cohen: Maybe I'm not quoting it correctly. I don't know. [laughs] Maybe I didn't write it and read it correctly, but I think the question was that if you had some down time how would you spend it? So, I think you actually mentioned letter writing, but I think you also mentioned, like, studying, you know, with the objective of promotion and then I see indeed later on you studied for two master's degrees, but I guess I wondered whether something in the nature of formal study came into play when you were on the ship?

Rowe: Honestly, I don't remember that at all. [laughs]

Cohen: Okay.

Rowe: I don't remember. I mean—I mean there's nothing I like better than school, trust me. I feel like when I was on that ship I just worked. I just did, you know, and… and, you know, when you're on a ship if you're… if you're not—if you break, if you need a break, you lose sleep, which you don't get enough of anyway. Or you actually go walk around your space.

Cohen: Yeah. Oh, one second. [short interruption in video and audio]

Rowe: Am I back?

Cohen: Yes.

Rowe: Okay, what was the last thing you heard me say?

Cohen: About walking around the ship.

Rowe: Yes, so walking around the ship. I would um… I would… uh, okay so as an officer you have a lot of admin to do. Always you know filling out forms and passing stuff up the chain, and blah, blah, blah. So, you can end up spending all your time in your room. You know, writing and doing what you got to do, so you, you want to make sure that you're in touch with your people. And so, I would, like I said, if I had free time, I'd either be sleeping, eating, on watch, or wandering around my spaces. That's about—that's about—

Cohen: So, there wasn't any more time, basically?

Rowe: There really wasn't. I mean there really wasn't time. I mean you didn't… I mean you kind of… Well, when you pulled into port, if you didn't have to stand and

watch, that's when you had time. And then you would go out in town and you know try and see stuff.

Cohen: Yeah. So, did you get married during this time that you were on the ship?

Rowe: So I got married three days after I graduated from the Naval Academy.

Cohen: Okay, got it.

Rowe: Another bad move… another bad move. Don't print that either. Yeah, so, yeah. I got married three days after I graduated from the Naval Academy. Um, he had graduated in 1978 and uh, so we both ended up in San Diego together. Um, that was one of the reasons we got married quick. So, at the time, and maybe it's still the case, if you wanted to end up getting orders to the same place, the only way you can ensure that or pretty much insure it is to marry the other person and say, okay, well, we—we need to be stationed together because we're married. And so, a lot of people did that to try and help themselves get stationed together. So, anyway, so, that's what we did. Um, yeah, so anyway, so we ended up in San Diego together and he was, uh… he was an aviator and, uh, assigned Miramar, Miramar Naval Air Station.

Cohen: Okay, so. So, now, we'll jump back to you're finishing up the time on the USS Gompers and do you want to talk about what happens next? And how that came about at the surface warfare officer [echo]?

Rowe: Yes. Yes, so, I think… um, uh, yeah I—I try to—I'm trying to remember so I—I think I wanted to stay in San Diego and so I found this job, uh, working at the Surface Warfare Officers School. So, I could stay in San Diego. I wanted shore duty. And, um, yeah. I don't—I don't remember. Maybe it was just what was available. I don't—I don't honestly remember what that decision-making process was, um, but shore duty. So, shore duty really doesn't help your career, you know. Going back to sea is always what helps your career. Shore duty is sort of… I suppose there are some short duties that make a difference. But, in general, yeah, usually you're just—you're just giving yourself a break before you go back to sea. So, anyways, yeah. So, I—so I chose… uh, yeah, to go to the Surface Warfare Officers School there in San Diego, actually in Coronado, which is right there in San Diego, so I could stay in my house and, you know, stay where I was.

Cohen: Which courses did you teach at the school?

Rowe: Oh, good question. Uh, I think it was—I think it was "combat information center." I think those were the courses that I—it was… it's a little crazy, because I was not a—I was not on a combatant ship, but I think it was— I think it was—I taught, uh, CIC, combat information center. I think that's what I taught.

Cohen: And how did you find the students there?

Rowe: Um, you know, honestly I… draw a complete blank. I mean I don't remember. I don't remember—I really don't remember the students. This is a really tough time in my life. So, this is when I got divorced and this is when I had my—when I had my first child, got divorced and had my first child. It was sort of a…and met my—and met my future husband. I was busy! So I'll tell you the other thing is that, um—that, uh, Surface Warfare Officers School was not hard duty. So, you taught—it was like being a—it was kind of like being a college professor. You went and taught. You, you developed your courses, but you had a lot of spare time, a lot of free time. I mean a lot of free time. And I think I was just very focused on my personal life at that point.

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: I had some troubles.

Cohen: Okay, well, that makes sense. So, the article, I think that's called "Women's Service Grad's Dilemma—"

Rowe: Yes.

Cohen: "—Resign or Re-up." It does talk about the pull between raising a baby and the naval demands and… and it sort of sounds like you yourself were at a crossroads within which direction to take in the navy career itself. So, would you like to talk about this?

Rowe: Yes. So, I reread the article. You sent it to me, and I reread the article, you know. And, uh, of course, the… the most interesting thing of course is that in the article I said I was leaving the Navy and then I didn't. So, that's really, you know, I thought, yeah it's good to talk about that article because what I said didn't happen. Uh, the one thing I found sort of, uh, what… off-putting about the article was that they said I was… I was a flurry of thoughts and ideas and I thought that sounds like I'm a ditz. [laughs] Like a flurry of thought—well and so when I'm talking to you about it and you asked me a question about, "Do you remember

the students there…" and I'm like, uhm… students I taught students… I—I probably was a ditz. I was probably completely a ditz. I don't know. [laughs]

Cohen: [laughs] I didn't think that, and I don't think we can recall every detail of our life. Uh, I'm a similar age to you and I don't know if I would remember a question of what I did in detail in 1993, necessarily, you know.

Rowe: Yeah, but anyway, so, um… So, so, I will… I'll tell you a story of what happened. And that's the other thing, in addition to baby, divorce, meeting next husband, trying to decide what I'm going to do with my life, I decided to leave the Navy. So, that was also a big decision, right. And I had said that when I graduated the Naval Academy, I'm like okay, I'm gonna do five more years, but I'm outta here. I mean I was exhausted. I was tired of fighting men. I was just exhausted. So, my intention always was to get out of the Navy. So, at the five-year mark, um, they have all kinds of, um, recruiters, who come to see folks that are at the five five-year mark. You can imagine, right? You have a bunch of Naval Academy graduates. You're in San Diego, which is Navy town, all that kind of thing. So, anyway, so I went to all these you know interviews and all this sort of thing with all kinds of companies. I interviewed with Michelin Tire and Hallmark Cards and who else did I interview with? Anyway, which was kind of cool. So, I interviewed with all these people. [Uh, oh… hang on a second. Don, are you listening to something?] Oh sorry, sorry, he turned something on and I couldn't—I couldn't concentrate, anyway. All right, so anyway, so I interviewed with all these companies, and I found a company named Secor, which was in North Carolina. So, you know not too far from home and, um, anyway and I thought okay I could… I could work there. Um, and so I interviewed with them and actually flew out there and, uh, and accepted a job with them. And um, so then a message came to the command where I was working at the Surface Warfare Officers School and, um, it said Elizabeth Belzer and my social security number—Elizabeth Semkin is my social security number—and it said, uh, you know, we have this opportunity for you to go to MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]. So, anyway, this out of the blue. And so, my commanding officer called me into his office… J. J. Hogan called me into his office, and he said, uh, you know here's this message and I read the message and I thought, okay, I'm getting a divorce. I have a child. I'm going to be a single parent here and they're telling me they're going to send me to Massachusetts Institute of Technology on the Navy's dime. How else am I ever going to get a graduate degree?

Cohen: Yeah, wow.

Rowe: Well, it was really a total no-brainer. I mean, it was such a no-brainer like, of course, I want to do this. Of course, I… I remember thinking that if I was going to go and work for Secor, I remember thinking I'm never going to get married again. This was this little tiny town in North Carolina. This, this company—there was…there was nothing else. I remember going to breakfast with this recruiter guy in this town in North Carolina and thinking, oh my God, I'm never gonna…. I'm never gonna meet another person in my… Anyway, it was so funny. So anyway… so when that message came into the command I was like, of course, I'll pull my papers. I will stay in the Navy and please send me to MIT. So, it was crazy.

Cohen: Wow. So, um, what motivated you to study ocean engineering, like in particular?

Rowe: Yeah, so, I think I had two choices. You can either study ocean engineering or you can study oceanography. So, ocean engineering sounded harder. So, of course, I picked ocean engineering.

[both laugh]

Rowe: But if you went back—the funny thing is if you went back to high school and the articles that I did for high school where I made all these broad statements about what I was going to do with my life, I always said in these articles that I was going to be an ocean engineer. Go figure. So I ended up at least getting the degree, so yeah.

Cohen: [laughs] Wow. As being part of the Navy were you required to show up at naval stations and do exercises or was your obligation you know to succeed in your studies? Like did you have to do other things?

Rowe: Um, so, when you say exercise, you're talking about like they're gonna go out to sea and they're gonna move the ships around and so you have to join them, is that what you mean?

Cohen: That type of thing, like some kind of, um, I guess I'm thinking a little bit about, uh, people like in the reserve forces that, I don't know, have one weekend a month they have to do something.

Rowe: Right, right. Right, no, it's like a job. Whatever your job is, you do your job and you know that's it… Um, I will tell you that what—what is required is that every six months you have a physical test that ensures that you stay in appropriate shape. You know, and they—and they check your weight, make sure you don't

get fat. Um, yeah, so—so, there are some requirements, but no, it's like a regular job. It's like a regular job. You just do your job.

Cohen: Did you like living in Boston? Like being in the city after…

Rowe: Um, it was—it was awesome! I mean it was awesome. The drivers, hated the drivers. And it was when I learned what roundy-roundies, I call them roundy-rounders. What do you—what are they actually called? What do we call them, actually? What are they called?

Cohen: Roundabouts.

Rowe: Roundabouts. Yeah, I call them roundy-roundies, like I learned roundy-roundies in Boston. Yeah, the drivers, they—they were crazy. They—they were mean and crazy. Uh, but the town, loved the town. Um, I lived in several different places… So, this program that I was in, you would—during the year you would be in Boston and then in the summer you had to go to Woods Hole [Oceanographic Institute].

Cohen: Okay.

Rowe: Isn't that crazy? I mean doesn't it sound like, uh, like a—an arranged, yeah, an arranged like...frou frou life?

[both laugh]

Rowe: In the summer, we're going to make you go to—during the summer, we're gonna make you go to the beach. Okay? [laughs]

Cohen: Okay! [laughs]

Rowe: Yeah, right, but the problem with that is here I am a single parent, right. So, you gotta keep changing daycares. And daycares then… I don't know if you had kids during that period, but daycares then were not what daycares are now. It's not like you just, like, pull out the phone book and find, you know, half a dozen or a dozen daycares and just, you know, pick one. It was hard to find daycare. And so, I kept having to switch Rebecca during, you know, every other—nine months you'd have this and then I'd have to get a new one. Then, I'd have nine months of this… And anyway, it was really hard. Rebecca was in so many different daycares. And I've told her on many occasions some of them are not what I would consider the best.

[both laugh]

Cohen: Not too many choices, you know…

Rowe: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, anyway, yes. So, um, yeah… So, uh, yeah, the program was ocean engineering. You're getting your sort of hands-on stuff during the summertime and the academic part during the year.

Cohen: I don't know if this is a—if I'm just, uh, grasping here. But I was wondering how the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, you know, signed in 1987 by Reagan and Gorbachev might have influenced, I don't know, your—your career? Or was the thinking, okay, well, we'll be preparing for a new navy now? Or the Cold War will be ending…? Like, did that have any influence whatsoever?

Rowe: Yeah, unfortunately, again women were not where they are now. Women were, you know, shore duty… tenders, all of that and we were not… I'm sorry to say, we were not in the day-to-day, um, you know progress…

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: …of the military overall and so I was not—and again during that period of time I was in school.

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: So I wasn't even—I wasn't even at a command, you know. I wasn't—I was wearing civilian clothes; I was going to class. So, I was really out of the loop as far as the—the Navy as a whole was. So, yeah. It's embarrassing to tell you that. That's kind of…

Cohen: Well, I don't know. I would think that MIT would require everybody's—you know, being an elite institution would require all your efforts to go towards these studies—studies and other requirements.

Rowe: Yeah… yeah. But you know it's—it'd be better as a naval officer, too, I've been more aware and, yeah, a little more invested.

Cohen: So, after your graduation, uh, what was your next assignment?

Rowe: What was my next assignment? You know, what I did before you—before you, uh, before you called, I…

Cohen: So, sorry.

Rowe: No, no, what I did before you called was I—I pulled this again, so I can remember. Hard to remember in twenty years, where was I? Okay, so, the next thing after that was, um, oh right, okay. So, I went to, uh, Naval Base Norfolk and I was, uh, current operations there. And, um, oh, well… okay, so now that you speak to that, so, uh… uh… I had the opportunity as current operations officer to, um, host… a Soviet ship that came in.

Cohen: Oh.

Rowe: Yeah, so that was kind of cool. So, when you talk about, you know, the nearness of, uh, the end of the U.S.S.R. and all that sort of thing, you know, I felt like—reflecting back on that, oh yeah, I was kind of a part of, you know, cooling relationships or warming relationships between the U.S. and—and the Soviets. So, yeah, so, anyway… So, I was current operations and then I was current operations for probably, you know, a year and a half or something like that and then they moved me up to flag secretary. So, I worked directly for the admiral that was in charge of this naval base, which controlled, um, you know, the ships and the aircraft there in Norfolk.

Cohen: Um, oh. So, what were some of the responsibilities of the admiral that you had to help execute?

Rowe: Well, he was—he was… the—he was the guy that was essentially, um, public relations. So, keeping the community, um, in—um, you know, keeping the relationship between the community and the military that was there, uh, on the base, um, you know, cordial. And so he did a lot of talks and, uh, yeah, we were out and about quite a lot. Just going and seeing people from town, uh, having the military meet with civilians and all that kind of thing. So, yeah that was kind of—he was kind of PR [public relations].

Cohen: Yeah, yeah, also my sense of timing is a little mixed up, but at what point did you get married a second time?

Rowe: Yeah, so, uh, I got married, um… in ’87. July of ’87. So, I would have been, um, just uh… let's see. Yeah, okay, so. So, at that time, my husband was still in—my present husband, was still in the Navy and he, um, he had gone out to department head school in ’87. And I was still at MIT and so we lived between Newport, Rhode Island, where department head school is, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. So, we lived halfway in between there and then we got married in July of ’87. And he then after department head school, went to Norfolk and I

stayed still at MIT until I finished and then I joined him in Norfolk, when I got this job as commander naval bases, uh, current operations officer.

Cohen: Oh, okay. Okay, um, so I think your next assignment in 1991 was the executive officer at the armed forces, like, staff college. So, sounds like—you know, executive officer sounds like a lot of responsibility. And would you like to talk a little bit about that?

Rowe: Yeah, so I loved being—I loved being an executive officer and I like to think that I was sort of that, uh—when I, all the sixteen years that I worked at York Lighting, I was kind of like an executive officer, because the executive officer is the person who sort of sits, uh, behind the scenes and, um, you know, makes sure everybody's doing everything they need to do… So, that the commanding officer can be in front of the microphone and, you know, say important things. So, so, I—I've always liked being in that supporting role even as flag secretary for commander naval base, I was sort of the admiral's second. So, I could, you know, support him, make sure everybody was doing what needed to be done so that he could, uh, you know, communicate all the good that was going on with the Navy. And, uh, yeah, so I kind of con—continued that as the XO [executive officer] at, uh, Headquarters Support Activity. I really—yeah, I really like that job.So we were responsible for—there was a big base and it had, uh, the commander of the Atlantic fleet. It had the, uh, Supreme Allied Commander, which is an international, um, position that—that coordinates people from other countries. Officers from other countries, who come here and work, NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and all that kind of thing. So, we—but we were responsible for the base. So, that all the stuff stayed working and clean, and we had the gym and we had the—you know, the chapel and we had… Anyway so we were just responsible for the—for that entire base. And, so, yeah, that was a great job. It was a great job.

Cohen: What was one of the biggest challenges that, um, you might have had as the XO?

Rowe: Um, well, you know, biggest challenges are always people.

Cohen: [laughs] Yeah, that's true.

Rowe: [laughs] So, my job was to, um—to administer discipline. And so, we had a lot of people and, um, you know my job was to assess the character, the behavior, and then the character, then figure out between the two things what do we need to do with this person to you know protect the organization. But also make them

be all they can be and all that kind of thing. So, and of course, you have to work with other people, right? Other people who are also within their chain of command and all that sort of thing so, anyway—and so you're—and then the sort of the top of that job is, for the commanding officer, you've got to present to them, because the next day they're going to actually, you know, be the king and you know pass judgment, you know, that kind of thing. So, all I'm doing is trying to make their job easier, right. Make your boss's job easier and, uh—and take care of the people that are working with this person, who has done whatever they've done. So, anyway—so that was very challenging and, um, had some—had a civilian that worked there. That was a—very difficult and we had to figure out how is it that you take this person that's worked for you for so many years and then figure out what you, well, what's going to happen to them so that they're no longer working for the organization anymore, because they're just not, you know, producing what we need. Anyway and… we had some, you know, discipline problems with, uh, men and women. Um, uh, we had difficulty with, you know, stealing… Anyway, all kinds of personnel issues that was my responsibility and I felt like that was—yeah, that was probably the hardest thing—the most challenging thing I had to do. And, uh, yeah. Yeah.

Cohen: So, after this role, um, I see that you became the XO of the Atlantic Fleet, Headquarters Support Activity from 1991 to 1993.

Rowe: Okay, that was the job I was just talking about.

Cohen: Oh, oh sorry.

Rowe: So the one—well, the one—the one that you have that you kind of skipped was the Armed Forces Staff College, Norfolk, Virginia. But that's not interesting. That's just a school. And you go to school for like three months or four months or something like that and work with other officers and talk about, um, you know, uh, strategic issues—strategic issues. And honest—and you play softball. [laughs] So, one of those things, like—it's one of those things that you, like, have to—like put an X in a box.

Cohen: Check off—yeah, like do what you need to do, kind of thing.

Rowe: Yeah, yeah.

Cohen: Um, yeah. Um, so, I believe that the next step in 1993 to ‘94, you decided to study for a master's in security and strategic studies at the Naval War College in—in Newport.

Rowe: Yeah.

Cohen: So, what, uh, motivated you to do this master's degree?

Rowe: Okay, hang on just a second, because my battery's gonna die. [Don, would you do me a favor and just pull the plug from my, uh closet, and uh, and bring it to me so that I can plug this in, because it's gonna—the battery's gonna die. Thank you. No, I mean you can—that'd be fine too, that would be just fine.] Okay, so, um, so the cool thing was… [What's that, Don? No, I got nothing. I got nothing.]

Um, the cool thing was that they let me, um, investigate women's issues. So, I got to do that for two years. Um, I actually got to do a little, uh… I don't know, like—like a thesis kind of a thing on enlisted women in the Navy… um, and women's opportunities in the Navy and so, um, yeah, that was good. That was, uh—that was a great opportunity. So, I just got to study, you know, look—look at historically at women and all that kind of thing. So, that was a—that was a great opportunity.

Cohen: Do you recall… I mean, I know again it's been a while, but do you recall any highlights, um, from the studies that stood out? Like oh, gee, I don't know women, blah, blah, blah, blah…

Rowe: Yeah. Honestly, it—I draw a blank. I draw blank. It's just been too long. And I—I wish I could pull it and read it and go, oh yeah, I remember that. I could probably find it, if you gave me, you know, two weeks. I could probably find it. Yes, perfect.

Cohen: [laughs] No, yeah…

Rowe: Yeah, but I just don't remember. I just don't—it just doesn't… Yeah, I just don't remember.

Cohen: Um, okay…

Rowe: That was it, I'll get it.

Cohen: Okay, so I think… were you, um—sorry, okay, so your next role is the—is the joint doctrine division head or the chief of staff at the U.S. Atlantic Command in Norfolk, is it…?

Rowe: Yes, yes.

Cohen: And, um, would you like to talk about that role, please? Or, um, what it was like being part of the Atlantic command at that time, which it seems—it strikes me as sort of a little bit momentous, right there after the fall of the Berlin Wall and it was—it was in the process of a lot of change.

Rowe: Yeah, so. So, what was actually, um, in my memory, anyway—um, so what's happening with the military was the services were becoming joint. So, where everybody thinks of the services now as joint they were not. They were very, very, you know, split. Separated. Very, you know, fighting for money and, you know, all that kind of thing and so um…

[Why would it be—hang on, I'm just checking my plug here. Why would it be red? Hang on. Why are you red? See if that does it. Why is it red? I don't know what that means. Oh well, we'll see—if it dies, it's because my computer died. I don't—I don't… It should be a green light and it's a red light. I don't know why it's a red light. Just we'll—we'll worry about it later. We'll see if it dies, it dies.]

Anyway, so, um, oh, maybe—no, anyway. Um, so, um… So, the joint doctrine division was—had just been formed and, um, what they did at the same time was they started building a building in Suffolk, Virginia, which is still there today. And it, um, this, you know, massive building with the latest technology and all that sort of thing to support, what was it called, the joint training… analysis and strategy center…? Task—joint training… anyway—I can't remember what it was exactly. Did I write it down? No. Anyway, so they were building this building. So we started out over there in Norfolk and we moved over and, um—and, and we started doing briefings… about drones and what drones were gonna do for the military. And so, I became one of those briefers. I was doing those briefings—before I was… so, so, when I wrote, uh, division head and then slash chief of staff—as a division head I started doing those briefings. So, I was doing briefings for senior officers. It was me and another officer and we were doing these briefings and at the same time we were bringing in contract—I mean it was just an amazing… things were moving really fast, and we were growing really fast and, um, yeah it was a—it was… uh, yeah, it was it was pretty cool. So, anyway, um, yeah, so I was doing these briefings about drones and, uh—and, um, eventually then I was promoted to the chief of staff. So, then I was responsible for everybody that was doing all this stuff, contracting and, um, you know, working with the other services and all this sort of thing. So, it was a—it was a pretty—it was a pretty good job. I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed it.

Cohen: This job, um, joint in the sense that it was some cooperation between the US forces? Or was it also a joint in the sense that it was working with NATO forces as well?

Rowe: So, uh, so the staff was, uh, US. The staff was US. But definitely the exercises that we were doing were totally international. Yeah, and we worked with the, uh—we worked with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. And, uh, and with the Supreme Allied—the Supreme Allied Commander, which was an international job as well. So, yes, the exercises were International, but the staff was US.

Cohen: So, what prompted you to move to the afloat data analysis division at the US Naval Safety Center in—also in Norfolk.

Rowe: So, before I did that I was the, uh, EA [engineering aide] to the deputy commander-in-chief at U.S. Atlantic Command. So, that was, um, sort of an interim job. I had this interim job in the front office for the—the deputy sink. Just, you know, um, helping—helping him do what he needed to do over there at Atlantic Command. But the afloat data analysis was just my last job. So, I wanted to stay in Norfolk. I was, uh, you know, I knew—I made a decision to get out of the Navy and so that was simply my last job, and I actually did have to campaign for that job. I remember, um, actually having to drive to D.C. and then actually going to the safety center and going to the head of the—of the, uh, of the I can't remember who, but anyway, one of the head guys and had to ask him. I—I wanted this job because I thought it would be a good last job, so.

Cohen: In general, like, how did it work? Like were the—were the choices often your own, like, you became aware of an assignment or assignments, and you would—would you apply for one or were you—or were you assigned you know to another role? How do these transitions work?

Rowe: It's a good question. So, um… so, um, job changes, uh… usually come out of Washington, D.C. And they are done by what's called a detailer and so they have a whole crew up there that are responsible for assigning officers and enlisted to jobs. And so generally it's the detailer. So, you call the detailer when you're up to transfer and you talk to him and he says, “Oh we got three jobs. Which one do you want?” and then his job is to fit you, hopefully, where you want. Or if you don't like any of the jobs, maybe go back and look again. But it's generally the detailer. This was the only job—this last job was the only job that I campaigned for myself. Ah… that's not exactly right. Within a command, right, once you get to a command and you have a job, if there's another job opening, yes, I might

have gone to my boss and said, “You know, I'd really like to have that job.” Within a command… but in general, when you're going from command to command, it's the detailers that do that work.

Cohen: Oh, okay. Well, the other thing that you mentioned on the biographical survey, um, is that you'd have an MOS [military occupational specialty] of general unrestricted line officers. So I'm a little confused, like, at what point of time would that’ve been in relation to the various positions?

Rowe: So, the way that happened was that I spent my first three years on a—as a… as a surface warfare officer in that community. So, on the ship on the Gompers and then I went to Surface Warfare Officers School and then they sent me to MIT. While I was at MIT was when I transitioned. I had a child, I was a single parent, seemed like the right thing to do and the other problem was that at that time there were still no combat jobs for women. There was no way that I could go from MIT to a combatant ship job or to a more challenging job than I'd already done on the Gompers, because I'd already been a department head on the Gompers. So, see, it made sense to just say the surface warfare community is just not ready for women at my—at my rank… yet. Right, the women that came behind me there was opportunity, but my—at my rank where I was in the navy there just wasn't opportunity.

Cohen: Oh, okay. Okay, um, so one thing I'm wondering about, like, being a leader in different commands etc., did you hear about women who were bringing forward, uh, sexual harassment complaints? Or… or would this not have been part of your—your role?

Rowe: Um, I… I would tell you… I never had a job where a woman came to me and said she was sexually harassed, um, I think as—as the executive officer at Headquarters Support Activity I was very, um, sensitive to that. So I was watching for it all the time to find out if someone was accused of something, whether it had to do with their gender rather than just, uh, you know, something more straightforward. Um, so, I would say that I… I would say that I hopefully ensured that the climate there was that you don't mess with women. You know…

Cohen: Preventative.

Rowe: Yeah, I—I think… I… I remember there was a woman that said, you know, “He's only doing this, because I'm a woman,” and so I kind of investigated it with her

chain of command and discovered that no… she wasn't doing her job, I mean I—you know, that kind of thing, so.

Cohen: Yeah, yeah. What was your—

Rowe: I will—oh, I will tell you that I was in the Navy during the whole Tailhook thing… the whole Tailhook…

Cohen: Oh, that was my next question. Yeah.

Rowe: Yeah. So, I was very aware of that, um, of course, my husband was an aviator. My first husband was an aviator. So, I knew about that stuff that went—the gauntlet and all that stuff that went on. Uh, out in Las Vegas and, um, I… I—I had… I had little faith that the system would take care of women appropriately. I mean that… you know, I mean… I… I also had little faith that the men surrounding that woman were doing the right thing—

Cohen: Yeah.

Rowe: —from before it happened, through what happened, through what happened afterwards. I think women are very—women at least, well, I would say still—women are very, um… susceptible to, uh, bosses who are nice to them with ulterior motives and it's very hard for women. I—I, for myself as well, I mean… I—I went through that. I… I have gone through that. So, you have a supportive boss, but you eventually start feeling uncomfortable. And then eventually the light bulb comes on. You go, oh.

Cohen: …that's why they're supportive. [laughs]

Rowe: Now, I get it. [laughs] Yeah, a little slow on the uptake. But you know… um, yeah and I think that she was—she was unfortunately, um, caught in all of that. And yeah, a very, yeah, sad story.

Cohen: Do you think that now in 2020 when obviously there's a lot of reflections as to what degree there is equality, etcetera, etcetera.

Rowe: Yes…

Cohen: Do you think that there's been progress of the… of the treatment of women in the Navy since 1976? Or is that just too big, too huge a statement?

Rowe: No, I mean… I mean… I think there's no question, because of the accomplishments of women. Because they have shown that they can do everything. Um, that there has—there has been progress, but you have… you know, you have the, um—the successful few who are treated well and respected well, but then you have what nobody sees and I think what nobody sees continues to be a problem for women. I think… I—I think this is—you know, I think it's everywhere, right. We all know it's everywhere. So, it's not just the military, but I think they're still—for example, here in Virginia our congressman Elaine Luria just turned around and said, you know, "I was wrong last year when I said only the military should invest [investigate] military cases of sexual harassment and sexual abuse." It is time for an outside agency… to get involved and participate in this process to ensure that women are protected. That took her a long time and she's a retired military commander. So, I kind—I'm kind of going back to what I told you before when I was at the Naval Academy. Women end up being against women. Women end up saying, "Wouldn't happen to me. If you would just have done this, wouldn't have happened to you." So, rather than supporting just because it happened and they are the victim, we tend to look at the women and say if you had just done X, Y and Z, it wouldn't've happened to you. So, you kind of got what you deserve. And while that—that may sound a little bit too harsh, me saying, "This is what women do…" I think there's a lot of that. So, women need to line up with each other and say we are over fifty percent of the population, and we would just back each other. We would all be better. We would all be better. So, um, so, so… So, men have come some distance and women have come some distance, but I believe and I… I would—I believe this very strongly. We still have a long way to go. A long way to go. You know, a long way to go. Just past the ERA [Equal Rights Amendment], huh? Why can't we even pass the ERA?

Cohen: Really… [laughs]. Yeah, this is true.

Rowe: Yeah.

Cohen: I think you wrote on the biographical questionnaire that you're involved in mentoring and offering support to two women naval groups: the USNA [United States Naval Academy] Women's Shared Interest Group as well as the USNA Women's Network. Is—is this your way of giving back or… or offering support...? Or…I don't know, or something like that?

Rowe: Um, I would say, um, my—my, uh… okay my involvement is not, um… I haven't given enough to— to make that statement that you just said my—my giving back. I mean, I haven't given back enough to actually say that. Um—I, um, I support the women from my class who continue to try to, um—to learn how to support each other. Um, I'm involved in, um, like email support, but I have not taken… Let's, for example, I have not taken women under my wings and, you know, mentored them through their careers. Uh, that's not me. That's not me. I, um, when I left the navy, I—I got involved in our business and I… that was—that was where I focused my energy and, uh, since I've retired, I have become very invested in my extended family, trying to make sure that they are taken care of.

Cohen: Yeah…

Rowe: So, um. So, I do some, I do some. But I don't—I don't do enough to say, "Yes, that's my giving back." Um, yeah.

Cohen: Okay. Very nice, um, how do you think that your military experience prepared you for your civilian life? Like as either as a chief financial officer or otherwise?

Rowe: So, uh, so my navy career completely, um, prepared me for working with my husband. Completely. Uh, you know, it made me a leader. It made me a hard worker. It made me a, um, a detail-oriented person. It helped me be organized. Um, uh, yeah, so… so it completely—yeah, yeah, it—yeah, it made me—well, it made me who I am. So… and I think that, uh—that, uh, you know, that has helped me to be—helped me to be a better support to my husband in the business. So, like I said, I was just another executive officer. I was just being the executive officer again.

Cohen: [laughs] I think you also mentioned that you have two other children and—and maybe this goes back to a more general question of how did you balance family life and, uh, and either a naval career or a civilian career?

Rowe: So, so, Rebecca—Rebecca, my oldest, she had the toughest time, because until I remarried and came to Norfolk and our life stabilized, which took till '88. So she was born in '84. So, the first three years of her life were pretty, you know, here and there and everywhere. And I can remember running through an airport holding her like a football. I mean that kid… she went through it for about three years. Um, but honestly after Don and I married. Um—and um… he got out of the Navy in, uh, '90… '89-'90. Um, and he, you know, started our family business. So, he was very stable. I was here in Norfolk, but I worked some really long days.

But he was the guy, you know, he made sure Rebecca got to her ballet lessons and he made sure he got—she got to her gymnastics, and they got to take piano and so he filled in a lot for me while I was working these crazy hours. Um… and, um, I actually in addition to him, as my gift. He was my gift, but in addition, the family business was also a gift. So, you know I completed my naval career. Um… and started in the family business when my two youngest were maybe five… and twelve, something like that. So, um, well, Rebecca—Rebecca, again, you know, she—she had the rougher part. She had to live through my whole navy career, but I was able to, you know, walk my kids to the bus stop. I was able to be a room mom. I was able to be in the PTA [Parent Teacher Association]. I was able to do things that, um, you know, many career women are not able to do, because it was a family business. So, I could dictate my own hours and work, you know, work when I wanted to and so... Anyway, um, so balancing career with the military, really hard. I mean, family with the military, really hard. Um, but my second job, working the family business, it was—like I said, I was able to have a real job, um, but still be able to raise my kids and have that freedom, so. Um, but I—I do think that for the most part, you need a partner. You know, you just need a partner. You know, if you're going to do a military career and raise a family you need a partner. If you—if you try to do it… I—I don't think I could have. I know women that have as a single parent, but that's really hard. I think if you—if you do it as a single parent, you're gonna need a really solid network, right? You know, some people have networks, that's one thing. But—but having a partner, um… you know, I think for a military career, that makes all the difference.

Cohen: It's true. Um, now I'm kind of jumping around here, but I realize I forgot to ask you about the medals, which you received? And—and do you want to talk about them or is there a particular one or two that you are most proud of?

Rowe: Um, well, um… yeah, medals. So… you get medals for being on a ship, you just happen to be on that ship and like that Humanitarian Service one, you get those medals. And, uh, I was proud of… uh, I had to shoot guns. I was decent enough to get a ribbon shooting guns. That was kind of cool, but that was when I was very young, very young. But that was—I was probably… yeah, I was proud of that—that I could learn how to shoot again. Um, so, yeah, anyway… I mean I'm totally anti-gun person. I would never have a gun in my house for all the tea in China. But… but it's—It's a… I guess it gives me sympathy for those who protect their guns, because if you do it recreationally, it is a fun thing to do to shoot a gun anyway. Um…

Cohen: Yeah…

Rowe: Then you get personal medals. I—I got a Navy Achievement Medal. I got a couple of, uh, Navy Commendation Medals. I got a Meritorious Service Medal. So, those are the ones that you really are the proudest of, these are personal medals and they have to write you a—an endorsement and, uh, you know, it's for specific things and all that sort of thing. So, I would say those I'm probably the proudest of is those personal medals.

Cohen: Is there an experience that you had during your time in the Navy that you feel exemplifies your service?

Rowe: Wow. Well… I don't know. I don't know if this exemplifies my service, but, um, when I had my last job I was, uh—I was leaving the Navy and I, um…This gets me upset just talking about it. Um, so this is my last job and I—and I, um… I, you know, I was focused on moving on with my life. And, you know, my career was over and all that sort of thing and um… So, when you work at the safety center you take care of accidents, accidents that happen. And there was a young man, he fell down an elevator shaft. And, so, we went out to the ship. Uh, it was a carrier. We went out to the ship, the Theodore Roosevelt. We went out to the ship to investigate his death.

Cohen: Oh…

Rowe: And I felt like I really… I really needed to change the—the Navy, change how they… um, he, he—he fell, because they didn't have, um, proper safety… devices in place to make sure that no one could—it was, it—it was during a, um, —a, um repair. They were repairing, uh, this area in the ship and they had, um, you know, they had put tape over the space, but the tape had torn. And, so when you went in there, it was dark. It was pitch dark. You couldn't see anything. And he'd gone in there. He was not a good guy, you know. He was a kid and he had broken rules and he was restricted to the ship and all this. Anyway, so, he went in this dark, dark space and smoking a cigarette or whatever and he just walked until he… there was nothing under his feet, right. This was an elevator shaft they were working on and so… Anyway, so I felt like that was my job. That was my job and the person that was behind me and the person that's behind me is to protect that poor kid, you know, who… again a dumb kid and did a dumb thing and he knew he wasn't supposed to be there, right.

Cohen: Right.

Rowe: But that's normal. That's a—that's a kid. You, you—you enlist these guys at eighteen years old and, you know, it's our job to, you know, I think—you know, as a mom I'm just like that's our job. And, you know, like I said, when you—when you talk about the most important things you're doing, the most difficult things you're doing, all of that. It's all about people. And so, how do I make sure that that—that kid's life is not just written off, because he was a bad kid anyway and he knew he wasn't supposed to do that—that we don't, you know—that we don't write off in people's lives. That we ensure that that never happens again. So to me that—you know, that's… what I hope is what I did throughout my whole career is to take care of everyone that worked for me. Everyone that I came in touch with. That they were, yeah, protected and taken care of and allowed to be the most that they could be.

Cohen: Wow, wow. Yeah. Um, is there something else you would like to talk about that we missed?

Rowe: Um. Well, I think I spoke to you about it—I think the women in our class need to be honored. I think they, each one of them, they did something really hard and… And we all—it's still in our heads and you can't clear that out for the rest of your life and so I think they deserve to be honored and, um… And I guess—I guess the other thing is…I—I hope that we don't pretend that time passing, simply time passing means that problems are solved. Whether you're talking about women or race or gender or any of it, but time passing doesn't mean problems are solved. So, don't kid yourself into thinking, because we have changed some laws and we have provided more privilege and we have put bad things that happen on the news, and we've formed committees… That that somehow means that we've ensured that women have equality in the military and, um, you know, that's—that's what I hope to fight for… for the rest of my life. If I have opportunities to continue to focus on inequalities and opportunities to make women more equal. Um, yeah.

Cohen: Yeah. Wow. Well, on behalf of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, really, I thank you for your fascinating interview, and in a sense, being a role model for women. And we will mail you a challenge coin from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library as a token appreciation.

Rowe: Thank you very much. Thank you.

Cohen: Thank you, thank you. [END: 02:06:44]

Elizabeth Anne Belzer Rowe
Part 2

Sept 7, 2021
Interviewed by Ginny Narsete
Transcribed by Sonix
Edited by Leah Cohen and Elizabeth Anne Belzer Rowe[1]
Web biography by Leah Cohen
Produced by Brad Guidera and Angel Melendez

Narsete: I'm Ginny Narsete, and I'm on the board of directors here at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and been around forever. So I, you know, let them know that I'm here to help when whatever they need besides going to board meetings, so. Right. This is one of the things that I'm doing and and I'm really glad you're here today.

Rowe: Well, thank you.

Narsete: I'm also the founder of Operation HerStory, something I started about eighteen months ago to recognize and honor women in the state of Illinois that seem to be invisible. So I'm trying to make more women visible because they don't join the VFW and--

Rowe: Right

Narsete: --Whereas the American Legion...And out of the military and they became homemakers and that's about it. So I took this project on thinking it would be easy, but it's I found it to be fun, but very challenging. Sure.

Rowe: Sure, sure. So thank you for doing that, thank you for doing that. Thank you.

[1] Rowe edited this interview to facilitate readability after reviewing the initial, near verbatim transcript but has not changed the content

Narsete: It's, it's been fun so far... So I'm with Commander Elizabeth Anne Belzer Rowe Correct? Okay. At the Pritzker Military Museum & Library here today on September 7, 2021. Yeah. And this is a follow up interview that took place on a virtual platform in August 12th of '20, right just before the COVID really hit, right?

Rowe: Or maybe in the middle of it, yeah.

Narsete: When it first hits probably. Yeah, it's like March or February. Commander Rowe served in the U.S. Navy from 1975 until her retirement in 2000. When, when did you serve in 1975?

Rowe: So I did not serve in '75. I started in July of 1976.

Narsete: That's what I thought? Yeah, Okay, yeah, that's when you went to the [Naval] Academy.

Rowe: That's correct. Correct. July 6th.

Narsete: That's what I thought... So I'm going to ask about ten, eleven questions. And if there's anything you feel uncomfortable with, you don't have to answer that. This is all about your oral history. And what will happen is once you give your history, you'll get a transcript, and you can keep it forever and pass it down to your great grandchildren or even further. That's -- my father-in-law. Do that. We did this before he died.

Rowe: That's wonderful.

Narsete: So we've got his whole history.

Rowe: Yeah, it's wonderful.

Narsete: So you were a groundbreaker. I'd like to call it a trailblazer, but you were a groundbreaker from the get-go. On March 7th, 1976, you were one of the seven women who were the first accepted to the U.S. Navy Academy in Annapolis after President Ford passed Law 94-106, requiring that military academies accept women. You talked about this in your first interview, but you later clarified the

timeline of the chain of command chain of events in your email. Would you like to recount this here?

Rowe: Okay, so as I told you, I don't, I can't keep all that in my head. But to me, the timeline is interesting because change was happening as I was a senior in high school and trying to figure out where I was going to go to college. And so in September of 1975, my mother found an article in our local newspaper. I lived in Westminster, Maryland. And the article said that Goodloe Byron, the congressman from our district, was accepting nominations to the [US] Naval Academy [in Annapolis]. My mother said, "What do you think?" And I was like, "Well, you know, I got to pick a college, the Naval Academy sounds pretty cool." So in September, on September 21, 1975, I sent a letter to Congressman Byron requesting an application for a nomination into the Naval Academy. And on the 26th date of [that month] the 26th, he sent a letter back to me that said [that] they don't allow women at the Naval Academy. So as you can tell, I was not well informed and was, actually, as in my memory, what I remember was that it was surprising to me. I grew up believing that women could do whatever they wanted to do, and it seemed to me...going to any college for any reason, for any purpose would be open to all women. And so anyway, so in my ignorance, I received that letter and said, "Well, I guess that's not going to happen." And then, as you said on the 8th of October, the same year, public Law 94-106 passed and allowed women to the Naval Academy, and within three weeks, the 27th of October, I got a letter from Byron's office that said, "Sorry, we didn't do it the first time, but now I'm going to send you an application for nomination." And so when when that happened, then he – Byron, also sent a letter to the Naval Academy that said I was a pre candidate because I asked him to do that. And on the 14th of November, I received a letter from the Naval Academy stating I was a... Pre candidate on the 29th of November. Byron's board met and on the 4th of December I got a letter from Congressman Byron that I had been nominated by him. So to me, that is a crazy timeline, like how did I? How was I in the right place at the right time in that moment that that happened that way? So that's December of '75. In February of '76, I got a letter from the Naval Academy saying, "Look, we passed the law in October of '75 so we don't have time to get appointments out as [early as] we do with the male candidates. And so you're going to have to be very patient with this." So you can imagine, even today high school seniors waiting to figure out what college they're going to go to, should they wait? By April, usually they've already made a decision. So anyway, in February, they said, "You may have to wait till April for this to happen." And so

as you also said -- oh, and during that time, I received an appointment from the Army for an ROTC scholarship, an appointment from the from the Army for an ROTC scholarship and appointment from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy… So I got all of those opportunities and was still waiting for the Naval Academy. And so, as you said on March 5th, I received my appointment. So that was the timeline of, yeah, of what happened to me, my senior year. So if a high school senior today looked at that, they'd say, "That's unusual." That would be very unusual.

Narsete: Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I mean, when I went in, there was no such thing as a woman going into the military academies at all right or being a pilot. So yeah, that was -- congratulations.

Rowe: Thanks.

Narsete: So I was reading that you were one of the eighty-seven female mid midshipmen that -- excuse me -- I'm Air Force -- inducted at the United States Naval Academy. How does one do the count?

Rowe: Ok, so it was eighty-one. I don't know where eighty-seven came from, but it was eighty-one. And the count is, as with any other college, there were eighty-one appointments that were accepted by eighty-one women and that's how that number eighty-one came. So… I was appointed one of the first seven on March 5th of '76. So somewhere between March 5th '76 and July 6th of '76, eighty-one women received and accepted their appointments. That's all I can tell you.

Narsete: And how many men?

Rowe: Well, our class was a thousand, approximately a thousand. So what nine hundred and twenty men? Eighty-one women? Something like that?

Narsete: So interesting. Were they accepted continuously or given points during the year of '76?

Rowe: So again, just like any other college, no, that's not how... It works like any other college. You get appointed, you accept it, or you don't. So…if you have eighty-one slots and you appoint eighty-one women, if eighty-one women accept, then you're done. But generally some will say yes, and someone will say no, as with

anything else. And so then those open slots for whoever said no, then they'll put another woman in there and keep going until they come up with their eighty-one women. I think that's the same way it goes with most colleges.

Narsete: Is it that way now? Do they have the same amount of women or no?

Rowe: No, no. So when I went, there was our percentage. It was what is that?...Eighty-one out of, let's say, let's say if it was one hundred? Yeah, so less than 10 percent. Now it's about 25, 25 five percent.

Narsete: That's actually the ten percent back then was maybe two percent was in the military, enlisted.

Rowe: I don't know. I don't know those numbers. I mean, not off the top of my head.

Narsete: Yes, I remember in basic training in 1973, we were told there were never more than one percent of military women... How did the graduation work? And were you cited as a first graduate?

Rowe: Okay, so the way graduation worked at my time, and I couldn't tell you how it works today, but you have-- I'm sure it wasn't a thousand that graduated. Whatever number graduated, the first hundred are graduated in order of merit. So if you were number one in your class, you graduated first. If your number one hundred in your class, you graduated one hundredth, then everybody else they did by company. So I was 30th, and so that's why I was the first woman. I was the highest-ranking woman at the Academy.

Narsete: That's amazing. I read that. Yeah, oh man. Does that mean that you completed your coursework and other requirements just like the men did?

Rowe: Yeah yeah. We all did, though. Everybody who graduated meets the same requirements. Yeah, everybody meets the same requirements.

Narsete: Okay? Were there a few who graduated on the next term?

Rowe: No, no I mean, I mean, I say that, you know, as with every university out there, there are problems. So who knows if there was a student that was held back because they got really sick and we're out for six months? But these would be

minor exceptions, but it wouldn't be any different for the men or the women would be the same if anybody got held back.

Narsete: And how did the U.S. Navy structure its training?

Rowe: At the Naval Academy? Yeah. Well, Okay. So the Naval Academy, when you arrive, you have plebe summer. You do six weeks of this essentially boot camp and then you start your academic year, you go through your academic year. The first summer -- afterwards, they have you go out -- today, all the women would go out on ships as the men do and live and work in the enlisted section of the ships…Yeah, they all go out on ships at my time. But because they wouldn't let women on combatants [combatant ships such as destroyers], we did not have that summer [experience]. So they picked, I think, four of us. Maybe I don't know. I ended up going to a naval facility in Bermuda. But the vast majority of the women went on what are called yard patrol craft on mixed crew of men and women on these small boats. Maybe there were fifteen on the boat or something, ...very small numbers, and that's how they got their summer training. While most men went on to ships and practiced how it is to be an enlisted person on board a ship. Then your second academic year, you do that. Then the summer after your second academic year, you go to each one of the combatant platforms. You go to the Marines, you go to aviation, submarine, and surface and you spend a week doing what they do. This is to help you choose what you want to be. So what do you want? Do I want to be a pilot? Do I want to be on ships? Do I want to be a Marine? That kind of thing. So the women did the same thing, except we could not go on submarines because women weren't allowed on submarines. So they did something else with the women. I don't remember what it was…Then you do your junior year and after your junior year, you go back to ships. And by this time they found enough ships for women, and we were able to go. You get to go in the officer's quarters and practice what an officer does on board a ship. Then you do your senior year and graduate... Now I guess the other primary thing you do is …march; we do parades. So you do learn how to carry a gun, you learn how to march all of that kind of thing, stand in formation, all that kind of thing. We, you know, [do formations before] breakfast, lunch and dinner. You go…outside your outside your quarters and stand in formation. You learn that and then you also have to do sports. You do fall, winter and spring sports. And so you're required to participate in those, you know, all four years. So you do that as well. And they test you every six months like they now do in the Navy. They didn't at the time in the Navy, but at the Naval Academy, they tested you

every six months in your physical fitness. Well, I would say that's, you know, pretty much the gamut of the training.

Narsete: Yeah, I think it's a lot more physical fitness today than there was when I, you know, in the early years.

Rowe: Yeah, I would say also because of the wars, the Afghanistan and the Iraq wars. Today, I believe they do a lot more like an obstacle course kind of stuff, combatant, maneuvers kind of stuff, that kind of thing. They didn't do any of that then.

Narsete: Yeah, a lot more strenuous. Yeah, yeah. Would you like to describe the student magazine of the U.S. Naval Academy? "The Log"? Well, there's the anti-female jokes, the images found in them.

Rowe: Yeah, so. So this is a morale thing. It has nothing to do with alumni. This is just within the school itself. "The Log" magazine was something that was published. They had an administrative staff that was midshipmen, and then they had the approving authorities who were somebody from the administration that signed off and let the thing be published. So they did it every month. You had this publication. And when women arrived, it has cartoons in it. It has funny stories in it. It has commentaries in it. All that kind of thing trying to lighten things up. You know you're talking about Bill Mauldin, what he does? That kind of an idea, but they targeted women and you know, in cartoons, in articles, all these things, they would mention enough that you would know who it was. And, you know, just make fun of women. And I think I already described that in particular for me, they had a picture that was published in the magazine of me with a pie in my face because the midshipmen had turned off the breaker to my room. And when I opened the door to find out what had gone on, [I got a] pie in my face and then cameras taking pictures. And then they published it in the magazine, and they put a caption. Under that picture, it was something like what the uniform regulations are about makeup on women and that I had broken that regulation.. whatever it was for them, it was supposed to be funny, but for me it was humiliating. And yeah, made me feel a part. Didn't make me feel any--

Narsete: --Part of it. How did you handle that?

Rowe: Well, I think honestly, you just put one foot in front of the other and keep going. You just keep going because it's not just the midshipmen, it's somebody else from the administration who let that happen. And so you are alone, you're alone. So you either want to do this, you want to get through it or or you just quit. So I wasn't going to quit. So you just get through it.

Narsete: Wow. Could you elaborate on the administration's approval of this publication?

Rowe: I cannot. I mean, I was never on... Obviously, I was never on the staff of the magazine, so I don't know who that would be. I don't know who that. I don't know who the approving authority was. But the midshipmen didn't have a have a printing press. Okay, somebody else had a printing press. So they didn't send it out in town. Somebody else paid for the publication of the magazine, so somebody said it was okay.

Narsete: Wow, that's a that's a story I haven't heard. I mean, I've I thought I heard 'em.

Rowe: There were more. There are more stories, but it's all the same. It's all the same. And I was not the only one. And again, I will say, certainly women are not the only targets of any institution, not just the Naval Academy. So I won't say that everyone else was treated fairly and I was the one; that I as a woman, was the only one treated unfairly. Obviously, there were other people made fun of, picked on and all that sort of thing. But to me, it was the responsibility of the Naval Academy at that point to figure out how you integrate women and how you protect them? And I don't think a whole lot of time was spent figuring out how to protect this commodity. We were going to be naval officers. We were going to serve in the force. Wouldn't you want that group to be quality, loyal, believing in the organization? All of that. And if you do, you've got to figure it out better than that. So anyway, any minority could tell you similar stories. Anybody who's different could tell you. Just different. Mm hmm. Doesn't even have to be a minority or a woman. Anybody who's different has experienced that kind of thing.

Narsete: Wow. I've I've I know what you're talking about. I was around it. In your previous interviews, you said that women who had dropped out of the program before the third and fourth year tended to have experienced more trauma than those who graduated.

Rowe: Yeah. So yeah, so what I would say is that they didn't experience more trauma. What they didn't experience was the opportunity to have some authority, to have some ability to be the person on the other side. So the the senior midshipmen are tasked with taking a the plebes during their first year and saying, take this person and form them into a naval officer. That's your job. Form them into naval officers. How do you do that? You, you push them past their limit, and you remind them of what? What is the military? What is their responsibility? Make sure they fulfill that responsibility if they don't measure up, make sure that the next time they do measure up. That's your job. So that first two years, you're getting yelled at disciplined talk down to over and over and over and over again. Do you feel pretty bad about yourself? Like, why can't I be better? So it takes a lot of, you know, internal self-confidence building, belief in yourself and all that sort of thing. But that third and fourth year, now you're the one asking the plebes the questions, now you're the one helping that plebe put his or her uniform on. Right now, you're the one telling them, make your room upright, so you get the pride and the satisfaction of knowing that you're forming new naval officers, too. Well, if you stay the first and second year, you never have that opportunity. All you got was, "You don't measure up. That's all you got. So if you don't finish, you don't get that. And I can't say it's balance, but something closer to a balance between the two. And so, you know, women that leave earlier, I think they have a harder time. They have a harder time psychologically processing this and figuring this out and reminding themselves that they are worthwhile. They can do something else. They don't have to do the Naval Academy; they can do something else and they're good and they're worthwhile and they are everything that they need to be and they are enough. They don't get that which they would have gotten if they'd stayed. That's all.

Narsete: Wow. So. Could you explain the process? I mean, you kind of explained it, but you want to add that breaking down and building up? Yes. So it was like a...

Rowe: Yes, so it was like a... I was trying to explain that again. Take you to your breaking point.

Narsete: Yeah.

Rowe: Tell you how to wear the uniform. How to make your room right. How to repeat whatever you're supposed to memorize. Repeat how to do that. How to march. And when you don't measure up, be reminded that you're not measuring up.

And it's continuous about two years of continuous, "You're not measuring up. You got to do better than this", you know, just that's what it is.

Narsete: Four years, we had that basic training that was six weeks.

Rowe: Well, the worst of it is that first six weeks, Okay, but the worst of it is that first six weeks. I mean, you are in the academic year, so it's not the same, but it still continues. And you get demerits, and you have to march that off on the weekends and you get restricted, and you can't go home. And you know, there are all kinds of rules to keep you under their thumb. And knowing that you're not, you're not there, you're not there. So wow.

Narsete: So I got a couple more well, I got a few more questions. How did you meet the man who became your first husband at the Academy?

Rowe: So we were in the choir, the church choir. Yeah, and he was two years ahead of me. And when you go to choir, when you go to church, you're in a safe environment. At least, that was my experience. You're in a safe environment.…Yeah. So the church is a safe environment and so you you can go there and laugh and relax, and you don't have to worry about people yelling at you and all that kind of thing. So that's how I met him.

Narsete: Was he accepting of the women [in the Naval Academy]?

Rowe: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Narsete: How did he react to the jokes about the women?

Rowe: So he was very supportive of me, completely supportive of me. It was such a relief to have someone who was on my side, a more senior midshipman who was on my side and supportive. And yeah…he never did anything to put me down or put me in my place or say that women didn't belong or that I should quit. He was always very supportive and, you know, quietly. I mean, he didn't. He? He didn't t take anybody on or anything like that, either, but he was very supportive of me.

Narsete: That's great. Why did you two marry right after graduation?

Rowe: So we were told the only way that you could be stationed together was to be married. So if you got married and you could say we're engaged and we're going to be married when they chose your first duty station, when you left the Naval Academy, you could ensure that you would be stationed in the same place or pretty close to ensure. So yeah, that was the big reason why we got married immediately.

Narsete: Yeah, I guess your story is so familiar to me. When [did] the two of you have your first, when did the two of you have your first child?

Rowe: Nineteen, eighty-four. So four years after I graduated.

Narsete: Okay, Okay. And when were you divorced?

Rowe: Eighty-six.

Narsete: Eighty-six. Was he ever threatened by your rising naval career?

Rowe: Not at all.

Narsete: Not at all. That's good to know. Well, I know that I just want to tell you a little story about myself. I was one of the first women that had a child thirty days after women were allowed to stay in, my daughter.

Rowe: Wow. Good for you. Good for you.

Narsete: I had to fight to keep it. I had to fight to stay.

Rowe: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Narsete: The law changed June 30th, 1975. She was born August 1st, 1975, and...

Rowe: I think my sister-in-law, she got out. But I think at the time that she got out and I don't remember when that was now, but maybe '77 or something. But I think at the time what she said was that you could choose. If you wanted to get out, you could get out. That's true. But if you wanted to stay in, you could stay in. So she had that opportunity that women, like you said before that time, weren't even given the opportunity. They were just told "You're done."

Narsete: Even if you married a man with kids, the woman had still had to get out. I don't know if you knew that.

Rowe: I did not know that.

Narsete: Yeah, because you're still a mother.

Rowe: Right, right.

Narsete: You got to go…He could stay.

Rowe: But how about that? [Laughter] I know crazy, right? It seems so crazy now. [Laughter]

Narsete: All right. All right. In your first interview, you indirectly referenced frustration that you felt about women in the Navy being not having the same avenues as an opportunity as men. After graduation, you were assigned to the USS Gompers, a destroyer tender, as a woman could not serve on combatant ships. In your email from June 17 [2021], you talked about the circular logic at the time. Should women? Women should not have been admitted in the U.S. Naval Academy due to the fact that they could not serve on combatant ships. Would you like to elaborate on this type of bind and limitations for women at the time?

Rowe: So the deal, it was one of those. If you build it, they will come. Well, either let women on combatants [ships] and then there's no argument. Let them in the Academy. But if you never let women on combatants, then women can never go to the Academy. So I think Ford's philosophy was, if we allow them [at the Academies], they're going to have no choice. But that didn't happen until '93. But that's the truth. If we're trained to be on combatants, well, eventually you got to go, why not? Why not? They're measuring up, they're graduating. They're being sent out in the fleet; they're doing their job. Why?... It's just illogical…So again, the best way to keep women off of combatants is to say we're never going to let them in the Academy. So Ford did us a huge favor by saying, "Okay, we have this product, it can fill a slot, open the slot." And so eventually they did, particularly because women performed. Women performed. They saw 'em out in the fleet, [it] didn't make any difference. They could do the job. So the argument

weas -- the holes in the argument became too large, and they just had to say okay.

Narsete: Yeah, sometimes they could do a better job because they could type fast. That's what they used to tell me, because I could type fast. How do you deal with yourself, how do you feel the woman's acceptance and combatants?

Rowe: You mean today or then?

Narsete: In 1993.

Rowe: Yeah, so so that question, first of all, I didn't end up on combatants. I had already changed my designator. So I don't have any personal experience. But to me, like anything else, you put them on combatants. They do the job and just keep going. Now, we've got them on submarines. You know, eventually they can do [Navy] SEAL [Sea, Air & Land Teams] training as long as they can physically do it. I mean, again, the whole argument, the only thing the only argument you can make is this job requires this physical requirement. Without being able to do this physical requirement, they can't... I don't know. I don't know. Hold their breath. I mean, even that's a very difficult requirement. But if you look at any job in any field, anywhere man, woman, Black, White, Gay, straight. Can they do the job? If they can do the job get out of the way.

Narsete: That's it. There you go. You also mentioned in the email Navy Designator General Unrestricted Line, which is GURL. How do you pronounce that, as is a--

Rowe: Good question, good question.

Narsete: -- were later called the Fleet Service support. Could you explain why you found it offensive?

Rowe: Okay, I found it offensive because it's pronounced *gi*rl.

Narsete: That's what I thought,

Rowe: And I find that offensive. Yeah. And I believe there was some group of guys that thought, "Perfect." Now I could be wrong. I'll admit that. I'll admit that for some things, maybe I have a chip on my shoulder. Maybe I'm oversensitive. But the

truth of the matter is you could come up with a lot of ways to designate what the majority of women are doing because you haven't let them on combatants yet. But you didn't have to use that one. And they did.

Narsete: That's what I said. I don't know how to pronounce that acronym, right. Wow. So would you explain the difference between restricted and unrestricted?

Rowe: You know, Don [Rowe, husband] will tell you, I spent some time today trying to answer that question. I looked it up. I googled it. I, you know, restricted. So my first thought was unrestricted line means that you can go on combatants. You can go on a ship or fly an airplane or whatever, whatever those jobs are. The definition is that there are no limits to the job you can do, unrestricted line. But there are always limits. But I think what happened with women, this whole eleven hundred designator was created to imply equality while still remaining unequal. So it was a restricted, eleven hundred community was a restricted, unrestricted line because they couldn't go on combatants. Eleven hundreds, you know, they don't. They're not aviators. They're not surface warfare, they're not submariners, they're not Marines. They're something else. So I think what they did then was they said, "Oh yeah, it is restricted". So we're going to change that eleven hundred designator to seventeen hundred, which is what I eventually became, which is called fleet support, which is restricted because fleet support can't command ships... Well, I think since then what they've done is they've married the two together. Again, the idea is to make everybody happy and feel equal. But the reality is you're either going to be a warfare designated officer or you're going to be a non-warfare designated officer. So you can't be both. So anyway, so very good question. I'm not sure what the right answer is.

Narsete: I've never heard of restricted.

Rowe: Oh yeah. Well, okay, so your standard restricted line are people like supply, corps medical officers, dental officers, staff corps. What else? Anyway, so those are fields that do specialties. They do specialties, right? These are specialists as opposed to somebody who flies airplanes or drive ships or whatever are their standard combatant roles. That's unrestricted line. That's generally how you'd think of it. But this whole woman thing here you have the vast majority of women. I think today's Navy, they have figured it out. Most women are in warfare designators or they're in these specialty fields. So these eleven hundred

and seventeen hundred things is less populated than it was when I was in and we couldn't go on combatants.

Narsete: Hmm. It's interesting how all these new words pop up when women started playing leadership roles.

Rowe: It's a problem.

Narsete: It is. Okay, describe the two papers that you wrote at the Armed Forces Staff College in 1994. How was your work, “Homosexuals in the Military: A Proactive Approach” informed by the concurrent development of President Clinton's “Don't ask, Don't tell policy."

Rowe: Okay, so let me start with the enlisted women article because you were less specific about that one. So the enlisted women at sea article was really about the --let me just call them for today's reflection, conspiracy theories about women on ships. The idea that they'll be raped, that they will be pregnant, that men won't be able to fight wars because of them. All of those. There are certainly exceptions and there are bad things that happen and that's admittedly true. However, these arguments were made to keep women off ships. So you need to solve the problem of rape, assault, harassment, pregnancy. They're all problems to solve. But they are not a reason to keep women off ships. So what my purpose was then to statistically see the performance of women on ships. Statistically, look at pregnancies, what the percentage of pregnancies are, what that means to readiness, what it means to getting the job done, how it interferes with the ability to accomplish missions and do it by numbers rather than by rumor or theory. And so that's what the purpose of that article. The paper on homosexuals in the military. That that was done at the same time Clinton was doing what he was doing. So this was about the same time. And my three options were: keep it the same as it is; no gays in the military. Or open it up, LGBTQ - welcome. Or third, do what? Essentially, what? What Bill Clinton did, something in between. And so of course, my recommendation was to open it up. It's going to happen anyway. My argument was, look at what has happened with races. Look what's happened with women. How does it work best? You allow them to be part of the military and then you solve the problems that crop up because you can't solve the problems that are going to crop up until you get them in. You can't do it. You can prepare the best you can prepare. But you are not going to be able to address all the issues that are going to come up. Nor can

you make the argument that because these issues may come up, don't let them in. Don't allow it to happen. So it was essentially the same argument. So I I tried to use my experience as a woman in the military to apply it to the LGBTQ community.

Narsete: That's wonderful. But you did, that's great. Thanks. Thanks. It seems to me that your academic interests that the Academy took a different direction, then your study of ocean engineering for your master's degree at MIT. I'm impressed. Or your undergraduate degree in physics? Did you find it more meaningful to research humanitarian issues in the military rather than pursue science? And was this a result of your treatment as a woman?

Rowe: Okay, it was not as a result of my treatment as a woman, okay? It was because my being was to try to figure out a way to be most accepted as a naval officer. So I think I said this in the first interview. Take the hardest major, take the toughest combatant platform. Try to be what the Navy was really looking for; the majority was looking for me to be that male naval officer. And I did my best to do that. That wasn't my heart.

Narsete: Oh, I see.

Rowe: My heart is in social issues. My heart is in equality. But to make that be what I did while I was in the service, what I did as my profession I felt would harm my ability to be what I wanted to be as a naval officer, which was successful, accepted, you know, part of the mainstream.

Narsete: Well, Commander Rowe, which inequalities do women in the Navy face today?

Rowe: Okay, so it's been twenty years since I was in the Navy, so I can't answer that, the answer to that question I can say to you, you probably have the opportunity to know about as much as I do about how the Navy works. Once you're out, you don't get informwd, you don't get letters that say this is what's happened in the Navy. They don't do that. So all I can do is watch the news like you watch the news. And I would tell you that the same problems I faced in 1980 still exist today. Are they less? Maybe, maybe. I just read a book called *Jet Girl* by a lady named Caroline Johnson, who was a 2009 Naval Academy graduate who went into F-18 jets as a naval flight officer and went to Iraq and Afghanistan and fought in an F-18. And her reflections sound about like mine. Her

disenchantment with the military, with the Navy. Sounds about like mine. I think it's sad that we haven't done more for women. I think it's sad that we haven't gone further than we have for women. The culture still remains. I would tell you the culture of the Naval Academy still remains. Have we made progress? Absolutely. We've made progress. Absolutely. We've had Michelle Howard who retired in '17. She was a four-star admiral, so we have made progress. But for the majority of women, they're still dealing with the same issues that we dealt with when I went. How many years ago now, forty years ago? Crazy!

Narsete: So why do you think that sexual harassment and assault are ongoing? I have my opinion, but I like to hear yours.

Rowe: Well, it's cultural. I mean it's cultural, and it isn't. The Navy doesn't own that. It's the culture. So you go to any college campus, you go to most large companies, they're dealing with it. You know, it's everywhere still, it's international. And you know, I think it has to do with the judicial system to some extent. I think it has to do with failure in social programs to address the ability for a woman to be able to share what has happened to her without retribution, without fear that she will be ostracized not only by men but by women, without fear that she'll be judged. So you need an anonymous ability to say, "This is what's happening, and this is who's doing it.", in some way to protect women. And we can see in recent Supreme Court nominations that all it does is humiliate and embarrass women who are trying to speak their truth. And so it's yeah, it remains rampant in our culture.

Narsete: As a young woman or a young officer, did you have to be vigilant about protecting yourself against assault?

Rowe: Absolutely. But when I say assault, assault is assault. So all assault is not sexual assault, you know, and maybe this is sixty-two-year-old me talking here, but staying sober. Using a buddy. All the things we know at my age that young women think, "I should be able to do this, I should be able to have fun, do what I want to do and feel safe." The truth just isn't that. Wish it were. But it isn't that. So when I was at the Naval Academy, certainly I was, I was susceptible to sexual assault. I experienced assault pies in my face, being carried out onto, you know, outside by a bunch of guys, being pushed into a bathroom, by God, you know, those kinds of assaults. But one on one, I believe I kept myself safe by practicing

those kinds of things. I think my experience in my youth taught me that before I ever got there, sexual assault is everywhere.

Narsete: It had to be tough.

Rowe: I know, for everybody…And…again, I don't in any way point fingers at the Naval Academy. This is the world.

Narsete: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Would you say that some progress has been made in accepting women has been made better since 1976?

Rowe: Certainly no question. No question, of course. Of course, progress has been made. Absolutely.

Narsete: Well, that's good, too. I see that. But yeah, I just, you know, because you're an Academy grad. Yeah, it's good to hear that.

Rowe: Yeah. And and the increasing of the percentages, which is done by senior naval officers who decide that we're going to have more women, we're going to have a higher percentage of women. You know, if you're trying to integrate a minority smaller number versus larger numbers, the larger that small number becomes, the more that group is able to integrate. Have a little bit of of push against whatever negative forces are working. And so, yeah, the increase from less than 10 percent to 25 percent, I think, I believe, has made a big difference at the Naval Academy.

Narsete: Mmhm. That's wonderful. I just I'm glad things are. It's taken a long time, too long, long time. But it's it's slowly progressing. I know commanders used to say, "I don't want to know, not in my backyard. I just want to make my next star." That's what I used to hear. "Not in my backyard. This isn't happening here. Don't tell me." Not all of them. Some of them were. My commanders were all great, but --

Rowe: That's good.

Narsete: --but I used to hear these stories. Yeah. So how do you think the Me Too movement affected the military?

Rowe: Yeah. Again, I'm not on the inside. And while I could comment on it, it would be again about as much as you could comment on it. I just don't have the information, but I could imagine that it would make a difference. And again, the idea is to have women speak out, speak their truth, be able to to come forward. And I think the Me Too movement would have helped not just at the Naval Academy, but in any organization, helped women to say, "Oh, I'm not alone." Speaking out can help. So if they have a safe environment, they can speak out. So I would think the Me Too movement could have helped at the Naval Academy.

Narsete: I think so. You wrote that women are uniquely qualified to solve problems of racism and prejudice toward the LGBTQ and people? And how so?

Rowe: Yeah, so I think I kind of already spoke to that in these articles that I wrote when I was at the Naval War College. The idea is that my experience as a woman, as a minority at the Naval Academy, as rejected by the majority, rejected by the majority, which you can apply to race as well as LGBTQ, you know, makes you more sensitive. I hope it makes you more sensitive and perhaps gives you some ideas about how you think things could change. What kind of policies might be helpful? What could make a difference? And so, yeah, just from my own experience.

Narsete: Okay, so which policies would encourage retention of groups that in the past were treated as second class citizens?

Rowe: Yeah. So I think it still goes back to providing a safe environment to be able to share what's really happening on the ground. So as long as what you described here, you know, "Not on my watch", you're never going to find out exactly how things are within your command. So if you want to know you're going to have to have a way for women, for Blacks, for Mexicans, for LGBTQ, for any group that has been mistreated to be able to share what is going on and then have the higher ups be open to change and be willing to look at themselves hard and put in place policies that will actually make change, but that’s really hard. I mean, that's really hard.

Narsete: That is hard. It's a constant. It's a constant commitment to trying to improve things, yeah.

Rowe: Well, one of the things I think I mentioned before Elaine Luria, who is the congressman from my district in Virginia and went to the Naval Academy and commanded a ship. She had been adamant that on sexual assault, sexual harassment cases that the military should do it internally, which is what the policy has been always in the past. The whole thing is internally, and there's been a movement to say we want to, we want to make sure that this happens through an outside agency so that, let's say, military members who've been abused, assaulted, harassed, whatever; - they know, if it's done internally, that there's a chance of retribution of, you know, taking it out on them through just not getting promoted or just not getting the job they want or any number of ways. And also, they're not sure they're going to get justice because the good old boy network still exists. And so an outside agency makes sense to me, but it didn't make sense to her. And again, she was a commanding officer. I'm sure she took care of some of those kinds of cases as a commanding officer. But in the last year or so, she came around and said, "Yeah, we need an outside agency". That can make change. If a senior manager in the Navy knows that at the end of the day, it's going to somebody else and they're going to look at all the words in the statements and the evidence, maybe they'll think about what policies they want to have in place that will protect their command from these kinds of cases happening, to turn them out to the outside world and say, "This is our dirty laundry".

Narsete: Mm hmm. Well, if they didn't have dirty laundry, they wouldn't have to worry about it. So if you have a crystal ball, what do you envision men or I'm sorry, vision for women and other groups currently suffering from inequality in the armed forces ten years hence...?

Rowe: Yeah. So I guess because of Black Lives Matter, because of the abortion issue today and what's happening in Texas and perhaps other states, because the LGBTQ continue to be attacked and certain judicial cases that tried to put forward to make change, but instead are going backwards, to restrict, to try and turn back time and make it that way. I have to tell you ten years from now, it's not going to be that different. [whispers] I don't have confidence. It's going to be that different. You know, baby steps, I guess. I mean, I guess you hope for baby steps, and you hope for inspired leadership. And, you know, maybe that will happen. I mean, I know that at my age and with my experience, I know I'm supposed to have a very positive outlook and everything's going to be great, Okay, I accept life is good. Women have come a long way. We have today. Most

groups who have been suppressed, mistreated, it's better than it was. I think it'll probably be better than it was. But significantly, ten years, ten years is a really short time, you know, ask any African American. I mean ask any woman who is trying to have equal rights. I mean, it just doesn't move very fast so...

Narsete: You know, it's one of the things I've always heard is the women have cleaned up the military because men can't be like they used to be. They can't do the things they used to do, the things they used to do when it was an all-man's force. So that's one thing I have heard recently is, yeah, "You girls are making us clean up our language and all of this"

Rowe: Some, you know, I spent a lot of my time in the Navy trying to be one of the guys. And women are often not kind to other women, so women can be their own worst enemy. And while yes, I would say, you know, many men because there are women around behave differently and many men, because women are around, don't behave differently. You play the game; you play the game my way. That's how it is. I'm senior to you. I can say what I want to say. And again this isn't just Navy. This is everywhere. If you want your career, if you want to succeed, if you want to get ahead, you know, getting along, sometimes that's what women choose. So again, women have to stand up for themselves too and deal with the consequences. And that's very hard. That's really hard. Yeah.

Narsete: So I have one last question, but before I say that I just want to say I could talk to you for hours [laughter] Just like I met someone who was in when I was in.

Rowe: Yeah, yeah.

Narsete: You just can't carry that around. And and it's hard to talk about it. but it's getting easier because the younger can't believe the stories that went on.

Rowe: That's right, that's right.

Narsete: Oh, yeah, there our commanders' calls...

Rowe: And that's what tells you that things have gotten better.

Narsete: Yeah, I mean, our commanders calls did bring in the prostitutes, "Have a keg of beer," and I'm like, "Oh crap," So, but thank you. You've been great. But I have

one more question. Yeah, would you want your grandchildren to serve in the armed forces?

Rowe: Absolutely. Because *they* would make the change.

Narsete: There you go. With Grandma behind there saying, "Okay, I didn't get it finished. You got to keep it moving forward. Good for you." Well, that's all I have. Thank you so much. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Rowe: No, but I really appreciate Pritzker. I've loved the Bill Mauldin display. And, you know, taking us around and showing us this has been just a real pleasure. I want to give credit to Ellen [Meyers, friend]. Ellen was everything about this. She's the one that approached you all originally. She's the one that mentioned me. She's the one that made this happen for me. So I'm really grateful to Ellen for everything that she did.

Narsete: Oh good, good. Well, thank you so much.