**Oral History Interview**

**with**

**Marie Shepherd**

Interview Conducted by

Jason A. Higgins and Tanya Finchum

June 27, 2014

Spotlighting Oklahoma

Oral History Project

**Oklahoma Oral History Research Program**

**Edmon Low Library ● Oklahoma State University**

**© 2014**

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

**Interview History**

Interviewer: Jason A. Higgins and Tanya Finchum

Transcriber: JoBeth Wasicek

Editors: Jenna Neece, Rebekah Spaulding, Trisha Goerlitz, Micki White

The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

**Project Detail**

The purpose of the *Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project* is to document the development of the state by recording its cultural and intellectual history.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on April 15, 2009.

**Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Marie Shepherd is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on June 27, 2014.

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

**About Marie Shepherd…**

Born October 20, 1929, in Parkersburg, West Virginia, Marie Shepherd grew up working on the family farm where she helped with chores, including raising horses. After graduating high school, she and her younger sister joined the United States Air Force in June, 1951. Shepherd trained and was stationed at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and she was the only female in her squadron. For most of her time there, she worked in supply, but she also volunteered to assist burn victims of the Korean War as they arrived on the XC-99 medical transport. Overall, she spent about four years in the Air Force, and although she was deployed to various stations at different times, she spent the majority of her time at Lackland. She then took her honorable discharge with plans to pursue her education. Taking advantage of the GI Bill, she enrolled at Washington University in St. Louis and earned her degree in education. After a short time teaching elementary and junior high school, she went to work at Barnes Medical School where she stayed for thirty-one years as a medical technologist. Shepherd is also quite the car enthusiast, and after she retired from the medical field, she worked nine years for Manheim Auctions in St. Louis, driving cars. She still loves to drive, and she makes trips to pick up or deliver cars for local dealerships in Stillwater, where she has lived since 2006.

**Spotlighting Oklahoma**

***Oral History Project***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Marie Shepherd**  Oral History Interview  Interviewed by Jason A. Higgins  & Tanya Finchum  June 27, 2014  Stillwater, Oklahoma |  |

**Higgins** *Today is Friday, June 27, 2014. My name is Jason Higgins, and I’m an intern with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program. Along with me today is Dr. Tanya Finchum, and we’re in Stillwater at the OSU Library to interview Marie Shepherd, who was a nurse during the Korean War. This is part of the Spotlighting Oklahoma Oral History Project. Ms. Shepherd, I would like to thank you for joining us today.*

**Shepherd** You’re welcome.

**Higgins** *Let’s begin with when and where you were born.*

**Shepherd** When I was born?

**Higgins** *Yes, ma’am.*

**Shepherd** October 20, 1929, in Parkersburg, West Virginia. I think it was St. Mary’s Hospital. We lived on a farm and raised horses.

**Higgins** *What was it like growing up in that town?*

**Shepherd** We lived out in the country, but I grew up feeding horses and cattle and working. I can combine with the best of them. (Laughter) I ran the combine. I mowed. I baled hay, because there was only two girls in our family, and you were the boys. (Laughter) I worked. I grew up working. I knew what it was to work.

**Higgins** *That was during the Great Depression, as well?*

**Shepherd** Yes, it was rough, and my dad always said the reason we didn’t starve to death was because we lived on a farm. You raised everything. I guess we had a good childhood, as far as that was concerned. My mother and father were both—my dad was really smart. He could sit down and figure out anything. My mother, she liked to cook, so we were okay growing up. I learned how to milk cows. I don’t think there’s anything on a farm I couldn’t do.

**Higgins** *How did your family come to West Virginia?*

**Shepherd** My dad brought a horse over on a ship, in the hull of a ship, a stallion for somebody that had bought it. They raised horses in England. He brought it, and he stayed. Somewhere along the line he met my mother, and the story goes. It’s kind of funny. He always said that he married my mother because he was pretty good at doctoring horses and cattle. He knew a lot about veterinary medicine. Her dad’s cows all got sick, and he went over to look at them, and that’s how he met my mother. He used to tell that story, and it’d make her so mad. He said, “He couldn’t pay his vet bills, so he gave me your mother.” (Laughter) It isn’t true, but he used to just get her to fuming over that.

**Higgins** *Kind of a dowry, the opposite way? (Laughs) Growing up on a farm in the Depression, what did you do for fun?*

**Shepherd** Well, you know, the big thing was the people around there would, Saturday nights, they would have the old wind-up ice cream makers. They’d go get a block of ice, and we’d have ice cream. We played a lot of games. We had a croquet set. We played that all the time.

**Higgins** *Was music a lot of your culture in West Virginia?*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Higgins** *Did any of your family play any instruments?*

**Shepherd** Oh, Mom played the guitar. I forgot about that. She was pretty good at it!

**Higgins** *Oh, wow.*

**Shepherd** Yeah. My dad didn’t play any instruments, and my sister didn’t. There was just two of us.

**Higgins** *Do you recall any community celebrations?*

**Shepherd** Well, the big thing was the old-time revivals out in the country. The Methodist Church would have a revival every so often. We could go, but Mom always said, “You can go, but you can’t join the church because that’s not the one we belong to.” (Laughter) It was the only one around, you know, but we never did. She’d, “You can’t belong to that because that’s not the right church, but you can go to the revival.” The big thing was—and they had the benches out there and the tent. They would have a revival every so, but as far as going to town—oh, one of the big things was when they’d go to town shopping, you’d go to the movie in the afternoon for ten cents. You could stay all afternoon and get double features and everything, so we used to go to the movie.

**Higgins** *Do you have any favorite movies that you remember?*

**Shepherd** Oh, we watched Roy Rogers. (Laughter) I don’t remember now, all of them, but that was one of them. There wasn’t a lot, not like they are now. We didn’t have TV. We didn’t even have a radio. Finally, years later, we got a radio, but they had them on the big olʽ batteries. You probably won’t remember that, but you had to take the battery and get it charged up every so often. It was like a big car battery, and you had the radios.

**Higgins** *Was that during the Roosevelt administration?*

**Shepherd** It would have been because I think he was in from ’32 to ’40-something.

**Higgins** *Yes, ’45.*

**Shepherd** Sixteen, he served, well, not quite sixteen, but he was elected for sixteen terms.

**Higgins** *Do you remember any of the fireside chats, or were you too young for that?*

**Shepherd** Too young for that. I can’t remember it.

**Higgins** *Okay. Talk a little bit about your school growing up.*

**Shepherd** I went to a one-room school where all eight grades was in the, one teacher, and we had all eight grades. You’d go up on the recitation seat when it was your class, but you could hear all the others being instructed. I remember I was the only one in the first grade, so I got to go to the second grade because teachers would put you where they had time to deal with you. You’d get put ahead a lot. I missed the fourth grade because that year I jumped out of the loft of the barn and broke my leg. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Oh, no!*

**Shepherd** I still have the scars from that! (Laughs) I missed the whole fourth grade, so I got to go to the fifth grade and skip. My sister was three years behind me.

**Higgins** *You got to go to the same school?*

**Shepherd** Yes, we went to the same school until we got to high school. They didn’t have junior high then. You went eighth grade, and then you went to high school. There was no junior highs. Then they had school—we walked to school then, but then when we went to high school, you had to go to Ripley, which was about twenty miles away. We had school buses; we got to ride the school bus then. That was a big thing, you know. All the other kids would be on the bus, and it was fun to ride the school bus to school. We’re going way back. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *I understand.*

**Shepherd** You guys, you can’t imagine, and I never could to this day figure out what—the high school we had was just little. I think there was maybe thirty in my class. How I passed the entrance test for Wash U [Washington University in St. Louis]…. Wash U was a hard school to get in because that was in St. Louis after I got out of the military. I’d gone to Trinity University when I was in the military because they had classes on base, but I didn’t think I would. I applied, and I got accepted. I couldn’t believe it because Wash U is really one of the ninth schools in the country, as far as getting into, and I got in. It was the medical—the way Wash U started was, when it first started (it goes back to [1853]), the Jewish students couldn’t get in regular schools.

They started their own school, and that’s how Wash U started. The medical students for the doctors weren’t accepted at the other colleges like Yale and Harvard. They didn’t accept Jewish students. This was years ago. They started Wash U, and it was Wash U Medical School. Barnes[-Jewish] Hospital and Children’s [Hospital] in St. Louis was all part of Wash U Medical School. I ended up getting in Wash U. I got an education degree, but I had a lot of chemistry and biology and zoology. I taught school for five years. Then they put me up on junior high, and that one year, that did it. “This is not for me.” Art Linkletter was making a speech, and I looked down the row at all the teachers sitting there. I thought, “I don’t want to look like this twenty years from now. I’ve got to do something else.”

I went over to Barnes Medical School, and I went in. I told them I was looking for a job. I went to personnel, and they didn’t even take an application. They said, “We want you to go up and talk to our pathologist.” I went upstairs and talked to Dr. Hassan. He was a Arab, but he was a Jewish Arab. It was so funny because he said, “There’s nothing worse than being a Jewish Arab.” (Laughs) Anyway, I left there, and I didn’t know if I was hired or not. Monday morning, he calls me, and he says, “Are you coming to work?” I said, “You mean I got a job?” He said, “Yes!” I said, “Well, what do I wear?” He said, “I don’t care what you wear. Just show up for work.” (Laughter) I worked for thirty-one years there in that hospital.

**Higgins** *Do you have Jewish ancestry, yourself?*

**Shepherd** No! We’re not anything. (Laughter) My dad belonged to the Methodist Church, but Mom didn’t. She didn’t agree with it, so we just kind of grew up as heathens. (Laughter)

**Higgins** *Were you the first in your family to go to college?*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Higgins** *I bet that made your parents very proud.*

**Shepherd** Well, my dad died when I was in high school.

**Higgins** *I’m sorry to hear that.*

**Shepherd** He never knew. My mom lived to be ninety-seven. She knew. She was happy.

**Higgins** *Going back to high school a little bit, did you have any favorite subjects?*

**Shepherd** Yeah, biology, chemistry.

**Higgins** *Did you have any teachers who made an impression on you?*

**Shepherd** Well, I never had a teacher I didn’t like. Most of them I got along well with. We had a couple that was really nice, like Ms. Carpenter, who taught English. She was really nice. Then we had Mr. Jarett, who was the history teacher. I read a lot. I was always reading. Anything I could get hold of, I read. My sister did, too. She’s a reader. She still reads all the time. That’s just about the way I grew up. We were good kids. They didn’t have anything for you to get in trouble with. I mean, there was no drugs. Nobody drank. Mom and Dad, Mom took really good care of us as far as telling us, “You don’t do that. You don’t do this. You always do what you’re supposed to do.”

My dad always said that you always do what you think is right, and if you feel it’s right, then it’s not wrong. You have to do the honorable thing all the time, and that’s the way we grew up. My daughter is the same way. She’s really good. She never got in trouble in her life, and she works hard. She’s in charge of the virology lab over here at the vet school, but she also works nights in the chemistry department down at the hospital. She’s working right now down there. She works from two to eleven, I think it is. She works a lot. My son-in-law is in journalism school over here. He’s a professor. I think he’s been there fourteen years or something like that.

**Higgins** *What’s his name?*

**Shepherd** Stan Ketterer.

**Higgins** *Oh, okay.*

**Shepherd** Well, what happened was, the way he came out here was he used to be the editor of the *San Diego Union[-Tribune]* newspaper, and he got so upset because people couldn’t write decent stories. The young writers couldn’t, so he said, “I’m going back to college and teaching something.” He applied for here. He had a PhD in journalism, and they took him. That was fourteen years ago, and he’s been here ever since. (Laughs) I don’t know if he’s teaching them anything or not, but he’s trying! (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Before you graduated high school, did you have any particularly favorite memories of you and your father?*

**Shepherd** Yeah, we were always going to look at horses. I could drive, and he got where he couldn’t drive or didn’t like to. The day he died, I’ll never forget. He’d come in, and he said, “This afternoon, we’re going to go up here, up the road here, and look at some horses,” for somebody. He said, “Would you go with me?” I said, “Yes,” but he said, “I’ve got a horrible headache. I’m going to go lay down for a little bit.” Mom went to look at him later, and he was gone, just like that. I was in high school at the time.

**Higgins** *My condolences.*

**Shepherd** He’d had an aneurysm and died, and he should have…. He had a friend that was a doctor, Dr. Kessler. Dr. Kessler said he should have known what was happening because he’d had enough medicine and stuff and worked with it enough, knew about animals and symptoms and things. He should have known, but he just… It was just like that.

**Higgins** *Did that influence your decision to go into medical training? Did that influence your decision to be a nurse?*

**Shepherd** No, I always was interested in it. I wasn’t really a nurse. I’m a med tech [medical technologist].

**Higgins** *Med tech, okay.*

**Shepherd** Yeah, I worked in all parts of the lab, but, no, it was just like I told you. I got the job at Barnes, and I really liked it. I liked chemistry and biology and all that, and it just kind of came natural.

**Higgins** *Let’s talk a little bit about how you decided to join the military.*

**Shepherd** Okay, this is just my sister. It was her that talked me into it, more or less, because I had a job. I was working part-time. She came home from high school, and they’d had a recruiter there that day. She came in from school all excited, and she said, “Let’s join the Air Force. What do you think?” I said, “Well, times are pretty hard, and there’s no jobs.” In the ʼ50s, there wasn’t, either. It was bad. She says, “Let’s join the Air Force,” and I thought about it. I thought, “Well, it wouldn’t be bad because I like planes and anything with a motor in it.” That’s how it happened. We went over into the recruiting office, and they took us. (Laughs)

We were the only two girls that they had taken. This was the beginning of Korea. I had trouble getting in because I couldn’t get my weight. You had to weigh at least a hundred pounds. I couldn’t get up to hundred pounds! I drank milkshakes, I ate bananas, I ate everything, and ended up losing two pounds. (Laughter) Finally, they took us for our physicals, and she’s taller than I am. She’s bigger than I am. They said, “There’s nothing wrong with her,” so they let me go. We got shipped to Lackland [Air Force Base] in San Antonio. I passed all my physicals, and she did, too. We were in.

**Finchum** *Did you discuss it with your mother before you left?*

**Shepherd** Well, we talked to her about it, and she didn’t object because a lot of her family had been in the military. My dad had a cousin that was in charge of the flight line when Hickam Field in Hawaii was bombed. He was out there trying to get the planes off of the land, off of the runway. They’d bunched them all together because they knew they were going to have trouble, and they came in and destroyed them, just went up the runway, destroyed them all. I think they had two that didn’t get destroyed or something like that. His name was (he was a bird colonel) Colonel Lawrence Barnhart. You might find it in some of the things on Hawaii, Hickam Field.

**Higgins** *You mentioned a relation to Jimmy Doolittle, as well.*

**Shepherd** Yes. If I remember right, his mother and my mom’s mother, which I never knew, (I never met any of my grandparents) were sisters. When she was at Ellington, (they lived there for a while in Houston) he came to see my mom. He was at Ellington Air Force Base there for a while, and my sister met him because she was a photographer. She brought him home to meet my mom.

**Higgins** *Wow. Fascinating.*

**Shepherd** We have pictures up there. I was trying to find you a bunch, but I can’t find them. I don’t know where they’re at. They’re in a box somewhere of all those pictures.

**Higgins** *What was the training like?*

**Shepherd** The training, it wasn’t hard for us. A lot of the other girls were having a lot of trouble, passing out from the heat and stuff, but being farm girls and working like we did, it didn’t bother us. We were fine, and at this time, the barracks in Lackland didn’t have any air conditioning or anything. Everybody was really complaining, but we never had any trouble at all. We made it through basic. It was eight weeks of it, and they’d get you up at, like, four in the morning. We had four squadrons at that time from all over the country, and there’s 144 in each squadron. We were squadron 44. We were 44, and then there’s 43 and 42 as they came in. They only had four squadrons of girls at that time, and we didn’t live on the base with the men. They put us down on Kelly [Field] at the end at the officers’ quarters, the barracks down there.

They didn’t mix them up like they do now. The women were kept separate, and we were treated really well. There was no harassment. I can’t ever remember being harassed like they say they are now or anything. I can’t even remember one girl getting pregnant in all that time because we were looked after. Nobody came in the girls’ quarters after ten o’clock. No men were allowed in there, so we didn’t get in trouble. They took good care of us, and the men that did come in were all respectful. We talk about it, Cora and I do, and she said, “You know, they should go back to the way it was when we were in. We wouldn’t have….” We had to learn to fire off—I fired off on a .45. We had to learn how to use a bayonet and how to take care of yourself, but we didn’t have any troubles. I can’t remember anyone getting in trouble.

**Higgins** *What was it like on graduation from boot camp?*

**Shepherd** Well, at the big graduation, we had a big parade on there for everyone, the whole base. The men, theirs was in groups like that, too, forty-four. We were forty-four. Each one had their numbers, like 144, because when you marched, it was a square, twelve by twelve by twelve. Then you had the little short guy on the end, which was me. (Laughter) Back here, you had the one bringing up the rear. Well, you had to run almost to keep up with them because most people were bigger than I was. We all got our first stripe when we graduated. We were PFC [Private First Class]. Everybody got a stripe. I don’t think anybody didn’t. Then you got shipped out to wherever they were going to ship. Well, they kept me at Lackland, and I was the only girl in the 3700 Air Base Group. (Laughs) Why they kept me, I don’t know. They shipped my sister to Lowry [Air Force Base] in Colorado, and most of the rest of them got shipped to different bases.

They kept me as permanent party. They put me in supply at the time, and I was working supply and a little bit of everything. I did a little bit of everything, and we’d go over and order the food for the mess halls. I’d follow this colonel around with my sheet of paper. Then he’d tell us what we wanted. Colonel Cordell I’ll never forget, and I’d end up following him around. He’d inventory the commissary. Well, the way we got into medics, I had a friend, Captain Healy, and they used to bring the burn patients back from Korea. This is where it come in, and we had one plane called the XC-99. It was a B-36 that was converted into a hospital ship, and they only built one. The “X” stands for experimental, the “C” is cargo. They would bring the people back from Korea that had been burned with napalm. They could haul eighty-five at a time, and they put them in litters because when people are burned, you can’t touch them. The skin comes off. It’s really bad. The smell (sometimes I can still smell it at night) would smell so bad, and they’d throw silver nitrate all over the plane and all over.

They’d come back, and they’d be…. It turns black after it’s set to keep them from getting infections. They’d give them enough morphine on that side to keep them asleep until they could come back. Well, Captain Heely and I used to go down and help. They’d line the ambulances up along the runway at Kelly. You could hear the XC-99 coming in, and we’d go. It was volunteer. You could go down. We were the only two that did it, though. Go down and help put them on the ambulances and take them over to Brooke Army because the burn unit is at Brooke Army. It’s huge. If you’ve ever seen Brooke Army, you know what I’m talking about. That’s where it came in that I ended up working. I did all kinds of things, and I was the only girl in the whole male squadron. I used to have to inventory the liquor cabinet because they didn’t trust anybody else to do it. (Laughter)

I can’t drink. Alcohol makes me deathly sick, so I’d have to go to the NCO [non-commissioned officer] Club and the Officers’ Club and inventory the liquor cabinets. (Laughter) They used to laugh. They’d, “Can’t you sneak some out?” I said, “I don’t want to sneak any out. I don’t want to get…. It’ll make me sicker than a horse.” That’s what happened. Then I got sent to [Canadian Forces Base] Goose Bay by mistake. (Laughs) We went to Newfoundland. They needed to put the name of the extra person on orders to go to fill in a vacant spot. They didn’t look to see that it was a woman. They put me on it. (Laughter) I go up there. There’s no one there but men, and it’s nothing but a radar base, so I got promoted. I had to live in the BOQ [bachelor officer quarters], so the only way you can do that, they gave me captain bars. (Laughs) I went from sergeant for a couple of weeks because I had to live in the BOQ with the other officers, and my roommate was a major. We laughed about that. My sister still says, “I can’t believe it. What happened to you?” Finally, they got it straightened out, and General [William] Steele sent a letter and had me sent back to Lackland. I ended up back in Lackland. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Did they demote you?*

**Shepherd** Yeah, I lost my bars. (Laughter) You’ve heard of things like that, though, I’m sure. I did; for two weeks I was a captain. They say you can retire after the highest ranking you ever held, but mine wasn’t official. (Laughs) They borrowed some captain’s uniform, another girl from up in somewhere else, and gave me a jacket because the skirts all fit. We had those blue, straight, wool skirts. I had fun. I did. I cried the day I got discharged, but I’d already been accepted at school. I thought, “I need to do this. It’s something I ought, I should do.”

**Higgins** *After your experiences at Lackland with the burn victims, you decided to volunteer for medic. What was that training like?*

**Shepherd** They didn’t really train us. We just learned on the job. We learned to handle them certain ways, you know, not to touch because when you touch a burn, the skin comes off. We helped, transported them…

**Higgins** *Okay, and you stayed at Lackland that time?*

**Shepherd** …to the ambulances. We just helped. Yes, I was still stationed at Lackland, but we helped them get them on in the ambulances and helped take them over. We didn’t take them over. They took them after we…but they would have to unload them. It takes a while to unload eighty-five on stretchers.

**Higgins** *Did they wake up after they arrived, any of them?*

**Shepherd** Some of them did, and some didn’t. Some would be awake. It depended on how bad they were, but they would take them. They tried to keep them asleep bringing them back, but we could hear the XC-99 coming in. He could only land at three different places. They could land at—they picked them up in Tokyo. Then they could go to Clark [Air Base] in the Philippines and refuel, then come back. Sometimes it’d be Midway [Atoll] or Guam into Hickam Field in Hawaii and then into Edwards [Air Force Base] in California, and then on in to Kelly. This plane was huge. They only built one, and it’s at the museum in Dayton, Ohio. They still have it out there, but they only built the one. Captain Jameson was the pilot. That’s about all I did. I mean, I didn’t do a lot.

**Higgins** *How long did you do that?*

**Shepherd** I would say we did that for a year. Then I went back to supply. When I worked in supply, I put in a lot of overtime, if you got paid by overtime, just because I wanted to.

**Higgins** *Were you able to save up a lot of money during that time?*

**Shepherd** We didn’t make a lot of money! We only made twenty-nine when we went in. We didn’t get paid like these people do nowadays. When we were in basic, we got twenty-nine dollars a month, but things were cheaper then, too. You could stretch it out and make it. If you didn’t smoke or anything, you could make it last. We weren’t allowed to go off base that much, so we didn’t spend a lot. We’d go to the PX [Post Exchange] and get ice cream at night and stuff, but you could make your twenty-nine dollars last a long time. When I got out of the military, I had staff sergeant, and we weren’t making that much then. Now, then, they get a lot of money, and they complain! My sister’s always said, “Golly, what we could have did with that when we were in, if we got half of what they get.”

**Higgins** *How long were you in the military?*

**Shepherd** From June 19, 1951, September 1955. I can’t remember the exact date.

**Higgins** *How many different locations were you deployed?*

**Shepherd** Okay, started out at Lackland, went to Springfield, Massachusetts. From there to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, and then we went to Newfoundland. Then I went over to Goose Bay and went to Alaska, and then they sent me back to Lackland. I always came back to Lackland. I was discharged from Lackland.

**Higgins** *They just couldn’t get rid of you.*

**Shepherd** Couldn’t get rid of me; kept getting me back.

**Higgins** *Did you stay in supplies that, your whole term?*

**Shepherd** Most of it. That’s what I was attached to was supplies, but being the only girl, you’ve got to do a lot of other stuff, like I said, inventorying and work and, oh, sometimes in the office. You’ve got to be transferred around. Somebody would need somebody to cover here or something like that. They’d send you over there, but I was kind of free to do…. It wasn’t a whole lot of restrictions.

**Higgins** *What did the only girl on base do for fun? (Laughter)*

**Shepherd** Well, we went to the base theater a lot because they always had good movies, and you’d go to the…. They had the swimming pool and NCO Club. We played bingo about every other night. You could play bingo. You could go into town. A bunch of us girls, we always kind of went together, and that was about it. Take little trips. You could go over to Randolph [Air Force Base] and hitch a ride and get to go somewhere sometimes on a plane because that was a training base for the pilots and the navigators. My friend and I, who was a captain, would go over, and we got to go when they were…. When they set up the C-47s and they’d had the tables in there for doing the sextants, for studying the stars and stuff, they used to take us and give us a table, too, so we could watch what they were doing.

Randolph was just across town from the air base, and we’d go over there and hitch a ride. Some nights, they’d go to New Orleans. I’d fly across the Gulf. You just had to. That was the way. (Laughs) The pilots had pretty much free rein. First, there was flights where you could go study, you know, like that. You could go across the bay to New Orleans and land and then come back. We would be gone maybe three or four hours and come back. We had a lot of fun doing, riding. I hitched a ride all the way to Langley [Air Force Base] one night and came back, and then we went to Chanute [Air Force Base] in Champaign, Illinois, on those flights, those training flights. If they had a extra seat, you could go. We’d go over there and ask if we could go with them.

**Higgins** *Did you maintain any friendships?*

**Shepherd** I’m not good at that. A few I did, but now, then, I don’t remember. I don’t know any of them. When I leave, I usually just go. I never was much for being somebody that had to have somebody all the time. I had friends, but you know what I mean. I never got real, real close, where that was my best friend, and Mom always was against that. Everybody’s your friend, but you don’t pick out one certain person and make them your…. I still don’t. I’m pretty much a—I don’t need somebody to help me make up my mind. I can do it, and usually I’m okay.

**Finchum** *Did you stay in touch with your sister while she was serving?*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Finchum** *How did you do that?*

**Shepherd** Oh, we would talk. She’d write or something like that. My sister was an aerial photographer, and she had top security clearance. She would be a good one for you to talk to, but there’s a lot of stuff yet today she can’t tell you because she was in both Korea and Vietnam. She retired after twenty-three years. She’s a happy person. She’s like I am. She’s a loner. She does her own thing, and she lives on a farm. You’re going to laugh, but her thing is cats. (Laughs) She got out of the military, and she went to nursing school. She has all these cats. We laugh at her, but they just tend to come to her. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *She made the decision to make it a career?*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Finchum** *You made the decision to just….*

**Shepherd** I figured I should go to school, yes. I don’t know. Sometimes I think, and I wish I would have stayed in, but then I don’t know. You can’t ever go back. I’ve thought about it, if I would have went back. I think I would have went into some kind of training, or I’d probably have been their next pilot. I do have a pilot’s license, but it’s for a Cessna. I got it when I was working in chemistry at Barnes. I don’t know if it’s an interesting story or not.

**Higgins** *Do you have a favorite memory of your time during the Air Force?*

**Shepherd** I remember the time I never had to march again. (Laughter) We were out—the general’s quarters was up here, so we had this big parade field. They were having a base, forty-four, men and all the groups, which probably was about twelve. They put me in the 3700Air Base group on the back of the men. I couldn’t keep up with them, and I’m running, trying to run along behind. The general happens to be looking out the window, and he said, “I never want to see that woman marching again.” (Laughs) He came down and pulled me out! I was so embarrassed, but I never had to march again. That really happened. (Laughter) It was General Steele. I can remember. “I never want to see that woman marching again.”

He should have known better than to put me on with all the men, you know, but that was all that belonged to Air Base but me. They said everybody had to be in the parade. They put me on the rear back there. Then the day I got discharged I cried. I go up to get my discharge, and Captain Wilkins, he’d been my boss for a long time because I worked in the office with him. I’m standing there, and there’s tears rolling down my cheeks. He said, “Marie, if you feel so bad about it, why don’t you just re-up?” I said, “I can’t, Captain Wilkins. I’ve already been accepted at Wash U.” (Laughs) He said, “Well, I guess you better go to school then. You can always come back.” I can’t say anything bad about the military. I can’t say it, that there was ever a day that I didn’t find something that I liked.

**Higgins** *What was the most difficult about it?*

**Shepherd** I think the most difficult about it was in basic when they were so strict on you, and you didn’t get much sleep. You had to get out there and march in all that hot sun. I remember one night I was sitting on the barrack steps, and I was thinking, “Golly, I don’t know if I can do this or not.” I was talking to myself, and I thought, “I don’t know. This is more than I bargained for.” Then I thought, “No, you can do it.” I was homesick. I wanted to go home. I was sitting there, and I said, “No, you don’t give up. You can do it.” You know, after that, it changed, and I was fine. I was talking to myself, sitting there. I was sitting in the hot fatigues there on the corner of the barrack steps, and I was really down. I thought, “No, I can’t do this. I never gave up on anything in my life. I won’t do it.” The next day, after that, it got easy. It really got easy for me.

**Higgins** *Well, you definitely seem like a strong-willed, perseverant, independent woman.*

**Shepherd** Well, I knew if we went back home, my mom would…. I thought, “If my dad was here, he would be really upset over you giving up,” because he never would let us say, “I can’t do” anything. We could get in really trouble for saying “I can’t.” I sat there, and I talked myself out of it. I was feeling really bad that night. It was about seven o’clock in the evening, and just sitting there all by yourself. You’re thinking, “I can’t do this,” but I did. It was hard. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *You mentioned that only you and another person volunteered with the burn victim units.*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Higgins** *How did you deal with that? That seems like that would be very hard to deal with.*

**Shepherd** It was, but I was okay because growing up with animals and seeing horses put down and stuff that happened to them, I was probably better at that than you would think because I’d seen a lot of things happen. It was hard. The first couple of times we went down there, and it would be—there’s nothing that smells worse than burns. It’s bad. After a while, you kind of got over that, but you’d see them. I remember looking down at one, and he’d been hit with some shrapnel plus the burns. His sheet was slid back, and there’s a big hole here in his side. I looked, and I thought I was going to be sick. He was asleep. They had stopped the bleeding and that, but you could just see right down into…. I remember that, and then I remember the bones, the burns that go all the way to the bone because when that napalm hits you, it don’t stop burning. It’s got the phosphorus in it, and it just burns right down to the bone. There’d just be holes where the napalm had splashed. Then they threw that silver nitrate all over them, and they turned black. It turns everything black it touches.

**Higgins** *Did you ever see any of the victims ever again?*

**Shepherd** No, we never went over to the hospital after we helped unload them. We never went over there. We just helped get them on the gurneys and covered them up and looked at. You saw it. You could see a lot of it. They tried to keep them when they brought them in there. On the plane, you don’t want anything touching them. They’re open, but they would cover them with sheets. Then when I worked at Barnes, (we have a big burn unit at Barnes Hospital where I worked) used to have to go up and see the burn patients. I’ve been up there a lot of times because sometimes they couldn’t get a IV started, or they couldn’t get blood on. I’d have to go up. I was pretty good at doing that because I’d seen a lot of burn patients. They used to send me up to the burn unit, and they would have one of these pipes and webbing so you couldn’t touch anything. There’s nothing worse than burns, and when you see these guys come back all scarred like you see them, you can’t imagine what they looked like before they was scarred.

**Higgins** *Whenever you got out of the military and you started going back to school, what was the most difficult about adjusting back to being a civilian for you?*

**Shepherd** I can’t say that it was that hard. I don’t remember. I used to have this reoccurring dream (this happened for years) about going to school and couldn’t find your classroom, but I think everybody’s had that. You’d be going up and down the halls looking for your classroom, and you can’t find your classroom. Up until just a few years ago, I used to have that reoccurring dream all the time, where you couldn’t get…. I’d think, “I know I’m in Brookings, but I can’t find my room.” I don’t know why it happened, but then it went away. I used to have those up until just a few years ago, and used to sometimes think you smelled. You’d wake up at night, and you’d think, “Hmm, I smell….” You’d smell like that plane. I’m over it now. It’s gone.

**Higgins** *When did you join veteran organizations?*

**Shepherd** I’ve been in American Legion since 1963.

**Higgins** *Did that help, having other veterans to be able to relate to?*

**Shepherd** You know, it’s odd because I really get along good with them down there. You know, the other night, I stayed and helped them clean up. Everybody else left, and I couldn’t do it. I went back and helped Gerald wash dishes. I always do, and the rest of the people eat and get up and leave. I never have. I go back and help them. We get back there, and it’s just like I’m one of the guys. They treat me like one of the guys. We were talking about different things, and I remember Lawrence Roy, the tall guy that dishes out the food, he said, “Marie, are you still pressing your jeans?” I said, “Yeah, I can’t wear a pair of pants without a crease in them.” He said, “My mom always did that. She always creased her pants.” (Laughs) This was the other night down there, and Gerald says, “I just take them out of the laundry and wear them.” Lawrence, I’m surprised that he noticed that I had creases in my jeans. That’s the kind of conversation we were having back there. (Laughter)

**Higgins** *Did you go to school on the GI Bill? Can you talk a little bit about how that helped you?*

**Shepherd** Well, it didn’t pay as much then as it did now, and the tuition at Wash U was really high. Back then, it was forty-five dollars a credit. The GI Bill only paid, they wouldn’t even pay half of it, I don’t think. They didn’t pay very much. I’d end up working and paying the rest of it. A long time ago for Vietnam veterans and Korean veterans, they didn’t pay a lot of it. Wash U was really expensive. Now, then, I think they pay all of it. I don’t know. It sounds like it when you hear them on TV talking, that most of their GI Bill is paid. That’s the only thing I ever used on the GI Bill was my school. I never used it to buy a house or anything like that. I always just did that without the GI Bill, and I never used FFA [federal financial aid]. I just went through conventional loans.

**Higgins** *Can you talk about your first impressions on campus whenever you got there? What was that like?*

**Shepherd** Well, I felt a little out because I was a little older, but after a while I fit. I got where it didn’t bother me because then there would be more GI veterans coming in to go to school. First, it was a lot of younger kids, and I’d think, “Oh, they’re so much smarter than I am,” and everything. After some of the classes and I found out that my grades are okay, then I didn’t feel so bad. I used to think, I’d look over, and I’d think, “I wonder if my answer’s right,” you know how you’re thinking about…. I thought, “Now, he’s probably wrong.” (Laughs) I was always afraid to copy off anybody. I don’t know if you’ve ever felt like that or not. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *I’ve never copied. (Laughs)*

**Shepherd** “I never copied.” (Laughs) I never did, either, because I didn’t trust them.

**Higgins** *I would have felt bad, too.*

**Shepherd** You know, they had a bunch—that happened here on campus this semester. It’s a secret, but in the journalism school they had eighteen of them that was thought copying or cheating. Stan’s had a horrible time. They had to go back and interview them and make them sign some papers that say “never do it again.” They didn’t publicize it, but he was worrying about it because he was telling me, he said, “You wouldn’t think they would, but we caught eighteen of them over in the journalism school that was really cheating.”

**Higgins** *Did you have boyfriends, or when did you meet your husband?*

**Shepherd** I met my husband in the military. He was an instructor. We were married for fifteen years and then divorced.

**Higgins** *You got married while you were in the military, or you just met him?*

**Shepherd** Right afterwards, yeah.

**Higgins** *Did he stay in the military?*

**Shepherd** No, he came out. He went to University of Illinois at Chanute. He was an engineer, electrical engineer, because he worked on airplane engineering, the wiring and stuff on that. He ended up dying. We were divorced, and then he remarried. He didn’t live very long after. He lost a leg, but that wasn’t during the military. That was because of a blood clot. Then it just kept getting worse, and he ended up dying about, maybe fifteen years ago.

**Higgins** *That’s terrible.*

**Shepherd** Yeah. He was all right. I can’t say a bad thing about him. We were fine. He just met somebody else, somebody else that wasn’t crummy, that was more needy than me, that wasn’t sitting there, that wasn’t always working or doing something.

**Higgins** *Besides educations, what plans did you have after exiting the military? What was your career plans?*

**Shepherd** I thought I’d teach. That’s why I ended up with a teaching certificate at first, and then when I had second or third grade, I was fine. There’s six years I taught that, but when they looked at my teaching certificate and they got more picky, it put me on junior high. Six months, the first semester, I didn’t sign a contract because I thought, “I don’t think I can do these junior highs. They’re too wild for me. I can’t do junior high.” That’s when I went to Barnes and put in my application for med tech and got hired. It was a lot better, and it paid a lot more than, back then, teaching. Teachers make good now. They didn’t when I was teaching back in the ʼ60s. It wasn’t a whole lot.

**Higgins** *You’ve expressed your interest in history. You taught history, and you participated in the Korean War. What was your ideas or your impressions of the war in general?*

**Shepherd** What was my impression? I don’t know. It was bad, and I don’t think there was a lot of recognition for the Korean and Vietnam veterans. They were more or less…. It was like, we did it. I mean, you know, nobody praised them like they do nowadays and gave out medals. I can’t remember getting medals. I think they weren’t appreciated because it was more like it was our fault that we were doing it. They blamed the veterans a lot, and, you know, Vietnam veterans, they booed them and everything when they came back. They weren’t much better to the Korean War veterans, and yet they were sent over there to do that. It wasn’t their fault, and there was a lot of them killed. There was a lot of them, and it was bad, the wounds and the people that were left, amputees, and head injuries and stuff. It was bad.

**Higgins** *Has anyone ever expressed their appreciation to you for your service?*

**Shepherd** I’ve had a couple of people say, “Thanks for your service,” but I’m not sure they really meant it. With Korean, I think maybe nowadays they maybe, they mean it. I’m not sure. I don’t know.

**Higgins** *Well, I’d like to thank you for your service, personally. I usually do this at the end, but you’re right. I don’t think the Korean veterans or Vietnam, especially, got much appreciation.*

**Shepherd** They didn’t. We didn’t get all the things that they get now. Now, then, they get better housing. They get everything better than we did. We hurt. We didn’t have a lot, and we didn’t have a lot of money to spend, like I told you. We didn’t spend a lot of money because we didn’t have it. You got nine dollars a day per diem if you got shipped out, and you had to buy food. We were allowed nine dollars. They would give us vouchers for nine dollars for food. I remember coming from New York City to Lackland the last time they shipped me back. We didn’t get paid on that end. I came all the way back from New York City to Lackland on fifty cents and vouchers for meals because we couldn’t get…and you couldn’t get any money on the way. If it hadn’t have been for a couple officers—I remember their names. Captain Gray and Captain Weir were traveling with me, and they had some money. They sprang for lunches a couple of times because they knew we didn’t get paid, and they knew we didn’t have any except food vouchers. You could only use those when nobody else was eating on the train.

They shipped us back by train, but when they were feeding the regular customers, the military wasn’t allowed to go in and eat with them. We had to wait until they cleared the dining rooms out to go eat, and then they talk about Vietnam veterans and Korean being treated well. We weren’t. We were treated like secondhand people or something. I remember coming home. It took us three days to get back, and we stood up some of the time because it was during Christmas rush. The regular paying customers got all the seats. This is true. I remember standing. Then when they would bunk, they had the Pullmans, but they were so crowded that they were all filled up. We couldn’t have got one, anyway. I came back, and there was a whole bunch of us that come back. That’s when we came back from up in Massachusetts. They brought us down to Grand Central Station in New York and shipped us back to Lackland. Was about thirty of us on that, and I think I was the only girl.

**Higgins** *Do you receive any benefits today for your service?*

**Shepherd** No. No, I don’t because I was never wounded. I never had any reason to get benefits.

**Higgins** *How did the military build your character or affect your personality?*

**Shepherd** I think it made us survivors. One time they said, “If we go down, stick with Marie. She’s a survivor. She’ll get us out of this. She’ll survive.” (Laughs) I remember that was one of the sergeants. His name was Hubbard. He said, “Stick with her. She’s a survivor.” (Laughs) It was true. I wouldn’t have give up.

**Higgins** *Well, perseverance definitely seems to be one of your qualities.*

**Shepherd** It is, and I’m good. I work well with people, but I’m good by myself, too. I love going and getting cars all over the country and getting to drive all kinds of neat stuff with big motors in it. I should have been an engineer. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *When did you buy your first vehicle?*

**Shepherd** When I was in high school.

**Higgins** *Really?*

**Shepherd** My dad, we’d had some cows, and it was a 1941 Ford Coupe with a bad clutch. They weren’t making cars then. He had gave me so many calves. I sold my calves, and I had enough to buy a used car. Well, the only one you could find anywhere was a ’41 Ford Coupe, so I bought it. I learned how to drive. Back then they had started driver’s ed. I had started driver’s ed, and I’d taken a little bit, just a couple of the classes. I brought my car home, and I took it out in a pasture field. The clutch was bad, and you had to learn to let the clutch out real slow because if you put it out too fast, it would [go] down through the field, jerking. I don’t know if you’ve ever driven a clutch or not.

**Higgins** *Yes.*

**Shepherd** Okay, you know how they jerk. Okay. After a while, I learned how if you let it out real slow and don’t give it too much gas, it’ll take off and don’t jerk. You couldn’t get parts to fix them, so I learned how to, I learned on that. I had it for a couple of years. Then the ’46 Fords come out, and I was still in high school. Fred Sayer had gotten in a ’46 Ford, yellow convertible with the wooden sides. You remember those? (Laughs) I kept looking at that, and I’d go down there. I’d look at it every day, and I’d look at it. Finally, I had a little bit more money. They didn’t cost very much money then. I had some money saved up, so I finally got nerve enough to ask him if he’d trade, if I could trade my ’41 on that. We worked out a deal, and I ended up with it. That was my first two cars. Then from then on, I think I had a ’49 Ford Coupe, one of those pea-green ones. Kept building up, and I had a couple others or three.

**Higgins** *You’re a Ford woman, huh?*

**Shepherd** Best cars made. Finally, the Mustang came out. The first one I saw was black, red interior, white top. I just knew I couldn’t keep from looking at them. I just knew I was going to get one of those, so I was working. I forget where I was working at. I bought it in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Dill was the dealer and traded for it. Then from then on I kept trading them. I ended up with a Thunderbird, a ’55, and kept going up. I traded a Mercury Cougar for the one I’ve got, and I had a Thunderbird I’d sold before I come out here because somebody wanted it. Then I ended up with that Mercury Cougar, which is really good, and I didn’t have very many miles on it.

Earl, up at Thomas Ford, wanted it for his daughter. He said, “Why don’t you sell me that Cougar?” It only had sixty-thousand miles on it. I said, “Well, I don’t see anything I want.” He sent me to Denver (that’s how I ended up with the one I’m driving) to bring back a Mustang convertible. By the time I drove it back from Denver, I knew that one was mine. (Laughter) I walked in. I said “Earl, you can have my Cougar.” That’s how I ended up with that one, but it was fun. I took it home with my daughter, and Stan just had a fit. Linda said, “Mom, what’d you buy a Mustang for?” I said, “Because I wanted it.” (Laughter)

**Higgins** *Did your mom stay in West Virginia throughout most of her life?*

**Shepherd** No, my mom came to St. Louis when I was working at Barnes. She finally came to St. Louis and lived with me, and she took care of my daughter because Linda was little when we were divorced. Linda was only four years old. She needed a place to live. Then when my sister got out of the military, she came to St. Louis. She still lives just north of St. Louis.

**Higgins** *Your sister spent twenty-two years…*

**Shepherd** Twenty-three.

**Higgins** …*twenty-three years in the military. How had the military affected your family situation, or did it?*

**Shepherd** It didn’t because we all, my dad had nothing wrong with military, and my mom, they were all pretty military adjusted. They knew what it was all about. They approved, they did. They didn’t give us a hard time. They pretty much let us decide what we were going to do. They didn’t say, “Oh, you can’t do that,” or, “That’s no fit job for you,” or something like that. They didn’t do that. They let us decide what we were going to do.

**Higgins** *Well, you definitely break a lot of stereotypes for the 1950s, being a female.*

**Shepherd** Yes.

**Higgins** *Can you talk a little bit about that at all?*

**Shepherd**  You mean, being the only…. Well, you know, it wasn’t a problem, really, after a while. There wasn’t that many women in, but being the only girl in the whole squadron had its benefits because it kind of let you float around. You got to do a lot of different things and learn a lot of stuff, where usually the men would be tied to one thing. If they needed help somewhere and being in the office or being there, if they had a vacancy or a job they needed done in another part, you could get to go do it because I guess they thought, “Well, we better get rid of her or do something else today.” (Laughs)

**Higgins** *What was it like being a career woman during that time?*

**Shepherd** Well, you know, we didn’t have any—I don’t remember ever having a problem. Of course, I’m easy to get along with.

**Higgins** *That’s a refreshing story.*

**Shepherd** I can take a problem and see both sides of it, and I’m not biased. I’m not going to argue with somebody. I’ll turn around and walk away before I’ll argue with them. Sometimes I know I’m right, but I’m not going to say anything. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Yet another fine quality of yours. What brought you to Oklahoma?*

**Shepherd** My daughter. I only had the one, and I lived all by myself. I had a house. It was a big, a pretty good-sized house, and I bought it. I had it built. I had the plans, and I asked them to build me that house. That’s when I was working, and they did. It was three bedrooms, a living room, a great big living room, a family room, a full basement, two baths, and a double garage, and it was mine. Well, Linda kept saying, “Mom, sell that house and come out here.” I thought, “Oh, I don’t want to sell my house,” because I’d built it. I’d been in it thirty-some years, and it was mine! She said, “Go ahead and put it up for sale.” I put up the sign, and I kept saying, “Nobody will buy it. Don’t anybody buy it.” Second day, it sold. (Laughs) I cried, and I cried. “There goes my house.” Would you believe it, when it sold? All the rest of them are sitting around there, and…mine sold. I didn’t put a great big price on it because I was trying to be fair about it.

I knew what I had in it. I knew how much it cost to build. They were going for double or about three times what they built. It was forty years old, and I’d built it in ’67, I think it was. They’d gone up, and they were nice houses. They were good ranch-style houses, long. They were on big lots off of the end of the golf course, and it sold. Here I am. I had to get out. Linda wanted me to come out here, and I got one of those storage places where you pack it yourself. What do you call them, Pods? That’s the way to go. Let me tell you. Put everything in a Pod, and they moved it out here. We stored it for a while until I found a place, and I rent a duplex over on the corner of Sixth and Willis, that white, brick duplex. It’s got one bedroom, a big living room, a kitchen, and a garage. It’s enough. It works fine, and I’ve got my dog, Chase. Chase is my best buddy. Chase is a yellow Labrador retriever. I’ve had him for fourteen years, but it’s not going to be too much longer. He’s getting old.

**Finchum** *What year did you move to Stillwater?*

**Shepherd** [In] ’06. I was working. I had retired from Barnes, and I went to work for Manheim Auctions. I worked nine years for Manheim Auctions in St. Louis, driving cars. I worked on the Ford line, and then when I wasn’t working the Ford line, we’d finish with it, I’d go and work the GM line. We would run twelve lines a day. It’s a big auction. It’s there in the river bottom. Tuesdays was always the big auctions, and then we’d do the high lines on Wednesday. The high lines are the high-dollar cars like the Mercedes and the Jaguars and all the high-dollar cars. I always worked that line, and then Thursdays we’d do the Chrysler line. They would have maybe a thousand Chryslers run on the line. That’s how I got to know the dealers here in Tulsa and Stillwater because they come to St. Louis to buy their cars.

When I came out here, Nichols in Tulsa, the Chrysler dealer…he’d come out there and buy maybe thirty-five or forty cars off the Chrysler line. His name was Wayne Patterson. He knew me because he’d always come out. I always drove those lines, and he knew who I was. I told him I was coming out here, and he called Dathan Wilson out here at Wilson Chevrolet because he was…. That’s when Wilson had the Chrysler line and told him that there was a person from Manheim coming to Stillwater. He gave me a letter, and the next day I came out. I went to Dathan. Next day, he sent me to Dallas to bring back a car. I was so lucky. Then from then on, I started working for Ford. I worked for Ron Shirley. Yesterday, I worked for Barry Sanders, but usually about every day I work all the time. I get to sit and drive, so I don’t get so out of breath. I have trouble. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Well, you’ve certainly traveled a lot.*

**Shepherd** I’ve had a good life.

**Higgins** *You’ve experienced a lot, too. What advice would you give to future generations? In other words, what would you like history to say about you?*

**Shepherd** Well, what I would say is you always do the right thing, and you work. It doesn’t matter what job you’re on. Do it the best that you can, and I always have. If I’m going to drive, I’m going to be the best. If I’m going to do something, it’s going to be the best I can do. I think that’s the main thing. I think you have to have a good attitude about it. It don’t matter what you’re doing. You can always find something good in it. I’ve never had a job I didn’t like, and some of them have been kind of crappy. (Laughs) I worked in a bakery one time icing cakes, and I got pretty good at it! This was high school. There was a huge bakery, and they made—do you remember these little round pies, and you’d get them for ten cents? Well, they come around on a great big table, and they put the little pans here. There’s somebody else over here rolling out the dough on the machine. You flop that on the pan. Then somebody has to dip the dipping into them, and you’ve got to be fast. You’ve got to get so many cherries in the cherry pie. That was my job, ice cream dipper, and you can’t spill the cherries. (Laughs) I got promoted from that, up to doing the lemon meringue pies, which is the eight-inch ones that come around. They’d scoop the meringue on it, so you got to get in on there. You go around the edge, and then you smooth it out like this. You get pretty good at that, too. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Dr. Finchum, did you have any questions you wanted to ask?*

**Finchum** *When history is written about you, what would you like for it to say? How do you want to be remembered?*

**Shepherd** That I was always fair and did the right thing. I’ve always been fair. I would never take somebody over another person or anything like that, and the same way with teaching. I was always fair. I can’t think what I would say. I hope I don’t have to go down in history saying anything!

**Higgins** *Is there anything that you wanted to discuss that I haven’t asked throughout this interview process?*

**Shepherd** I can’t think of anything, and I hope I haven’t bored you.

**Higgins** *Not at all, not even a little bit.*

**Shepherd** I hope I’m okay. I don’t know how the rest of the people interview, or…

**Higgins** *One of the greatest.*

**Shepherd** …how they do or what they’ve done, you know.

**Higgins** *Well, everyone has a unique story.*

**Shepherd** For a woman, I would say that I probably had a lot of experience. A lot of sad things happened, but I never let it…. I’ll think about it. Sometimes at night I think about things that have happened that don’t feel really, not that I did it, but things you’ve seen that you wish you hadn’t have.

**Higgins** *Well, I tend to ask this question particularly to veterans, and you’ve seen a lot since 1927 in your life. What are the worst facets of humanity that you’ve personally experienced? I also like to ask about the greatest.*

**Shepherd** The worst that I’ve seen, probably the wounded. Like I was telling you, the guy with the side, the hunk out of his side where right down to the, you could see the rib bones and everything, that kind of set me back that day. It was so unexpected. I’d been used to looking at burns and stuff like that, but I hadn’t seen the shrapnel wounds like that and what they’d done. I always wondered how they did about it, I mean, how they managed to fill that in or how they…. I never knew the outcome of it. I guess he lived, though. As far as I know, he did, but how they reconstructed it, because medicine has advanced so much over what we saw in Korea. We were still kind of antiquated. I know some of the machinery and stuff they were using were…. It’s so advanced now. Some if it I don’t even know how to use. Things like that bother me sometimes.

**Higgins** *Do you have any regrets from your experiences?*

**Shepherd** No, and I’ve always said this. Some people have said, “Would you trade places with somebody?” No. There’s nobody I can think of that I would trade a place with.

**Higgins** *On the other hand of that first question, what’s the greatest aspect of humanity that you’ve personally experienced?*

**Shepherd** I think the knowledge and the feelings for other people that you’ve gotten out it. You can almost put yourself, somebody that’s having a real bad day or something like that, in their place and know how they’re feeling. I know you see somebody, and I look at people out. I think, “I wish there was something you could see….” I went to the community thing last night (I don’t know if you did) down at the community center where they had the orchestras last night. There was a real old man came out of there, and I’m looking at him. He was having so much trouble walking, and I thought, “I know just how he feels.” I imagine he was a veteran because he was a lot older. He looked older than me, and he was having a hard time making it to his car. I wanted to go help him, and I thought, “No, I might embarrass him if I do,” and I’m almost as bad off as he is.

I watched him for a while, and I knew how he felt. You see a lot of people that you wish you could help. See, what I do, (this is at night) I knit and crochet all the time. The teachers at school tell me the kids that come to school that don’t have hats and scarves. I made fifteen sets of hats and scarves for them last year and sent the school for little kids, and the same with the Legion. When they had their pancake [event], most of those crafts over there, I’ve made for them because I had a roommate that was a major. She was in World War II, and she’d lost her best buddy in Italy. A tank crushed her up against a wall in Italy. We were up in Alaska, and we shared a room. She’d sit there and knit socks for the colonel and everybody else up in Alaska, and she taught me how to knit and crochet.

We’d sit there at night. She was alcoholic, and she’d sit there and sip her gin and crochet or knit. She was good at knitting, and she wouldn’t even have to look at it. She’d just rattle those socks off. Things like that, places you’ve been and people you’ve met, and there’s an awful lot of good people out here. Like her, you’d never think she was putting in for—she was ready to retire, and she was just kind of sitting back, you know, waiting to retire. She’s supposed to retire in a couple of months, and she’d come back from overseas. She was in the barracks where I was when we lived in the BOQ, and she was nice. She sat there and knit, crocheted. She made the colonel of the base socks, and they appreciated them, just things like that. Most veterans you get haven’t probably knitted socks. (Laughs)

**Higgins** *Unless it was their own. (Laughs)*

**Shepherd** Yeah, or something like that for people, or sit and knit, you know. They’d probably be up at the club drinking or something like that. She’d just bring it home with her. (Laughs) Of course, she’s safe because I can’t drink. (Laughs) It just hits, and up it comes. I don’t know. I don’t think I’ve talked this much for a long time because I don’t talk a lot.

**Higgins** *I’ve certainly enjoyed it. What should people consider before going to war? You’ve served a lot of time in the military. What would someone who’s about to join the military need to consider before they make that decision?*

**Shepherd** They need to think if they’re strong enough to handle it because I think some people get in, and they don’t really realize what they’re getting into. I think you’re going to have to stop and think like I did and talk to yourself and think, “Can I do this?” Some people can’t. I think that’s probably what happened to that one that walked away, that’s in trouble for deserting. I think it just finally got to him, and he walked away because if you go back and look at his background, he shouldn’t have been in there in the first place. You know who I’m talking about.

**Higgins** *The guy recently in the news?*

**Shepherd** Yeah, they got back and traded the five prisoners for him. I don’t think he should have been there in the first place. I don’t think they can totally blame him, but I think he got in there ,and he wasn’t strong enough to handle it. He’d been in the Coast Guard before, and they had let him go for some reasons. It didn’t say exactly why, and you know they don’t let you go unless there’s some reason because I’ve been in where they’ve let them out on adaptability discharges. I know some girls that got out on it. They just couldn’t adapt to military life, and I think that probably happened to him. They blame them for things like that, but I don’t know if it’s really the right thing to do or not. Maybe they should do some kind of testing or something before they take somebody in to see what they can handle.

**Higgins** *Absolutely.*

**Shepherd** They don’t. There’s no kind of testing for that. There may be now, but not that I know of.

**Higgins** *Well, I’ve think that we’ve gotten your two great aspects to your character: perseverance and empathy.*

**Shepherd** I couldn’t not. My dad wouldn’t have allowed it. He would have came back. (Laughter) He wouldn’t have allowed us to say no. (Laughs) It’s like riding a horse. You either ride it, or you fall off of it. I got spanked for letting a horse kick me one time because I was supposed to know better! (Laughs) I don’t think there’s anything else I can tell you. I hope I haven’t….

**Higgins** *Well, I think that you’ve shared a lot, and, again, I’d like to thank you for your service to your country.*

**Shepherd** Well, you’re welcome. It was all right. It was to my benefit.

**Higgins** *There is great weight behind those words whenever I tell that to veterans, and as an oral historian, I’d like to thank you for sharing your story with us. I hope that others can learn from your experience. Thank you.*

**Shepherd** You’re welcome.

**------- *End of interview*** *-------*