

Jerimarie (Jeri) Hozey interviewed September 7, 2007  
E-4, US Air Force, March 1980 – March 1984

After High School, Jeri began attending college, but soon decided she wanted to travel. In town, she saw a poster with a jet and jet stream with the caption saying “See the world.” The recruiter said she could



choose where she wanted to go so Jeri signed up for a four year enlistment in the Air Force in March of 1980.

Boot camp was at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX. Jeri said it was like gym class every day, complete with yelling and ridicule from the Drill Instructors. In addition to physical fitness, there was plenty of marching with orders to “not look down at your feet.” A clip board was sometimes shoved under the nose to keep a recruit from looking down while marching. There were 22 people in Jeri’s group and the floors of the barracks alternated between men’s floors and women’s floors. Some of the training was coed: Classes

such as initiation to military life, the uniform code of military justice, how to conduct yourself as a soldier and how to relate to the opposite sex in the military.

After graduating from eight weeks of boot camp, Jeri was sent to Denver, CO to learn procurement and supply for another eight weeks. One of Jeri’s specialties turned out to be product retrieval. This was a situation where a part had been ordered but not received. Usually, these were parts for aircraft. Tracking down the parts involved intuition and common sense. Sometimes, the problem was that the part had been received and placed on the shelf, but not properly recorded as having been received. Sometimes, it was an error with a similar part number as a different item.

#### A Natural Disaster...

Jeri’s first assignment was to Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane, WA. Jeri recalls the surrounding countryside as gorgeous with plenty of lakes and skiing. The base was also near Mount St. Helens. In May of 1980, Jeri was in town in a store when an announcement was made over the store’s PA that the volcano had erupted and a dust cloud was heading their way and everyone should go home. Half way home, it became as black as night. Jeri had to cover her nose and mouth with a handkerchief and kept driving until she was back at the base. Everyone on the base hunkered down for 24 hours until the air cleared, then the hard work began.

Fairchild was a Strategic Air Command base with B-52 bombers with nuclear weapons and these all had to leave due to the fine volcanic ash that coated everything. Clean-up was manual. The flight line had to be swept by hand because the dust was so fine. The entire inventory had to be cleaned too. Jeri remembers this as difficult and seemingly un-ending work.

Otherwise, Jeri had enough time off to enjoy the beautiful location and was happy that her enlistment was fulfilling her desire to see a different part of the country. After two years, she requested a transfer to Europe and was hoping for Germany. Her orders came back saying she was to report to South Korea instead!

Suffering from jet lag, Jeri landed at Kimpo Airport, a civilian airport in South Korea, and now had to navigate her way through a strange country where very little English was spoken. A taxi and bus got her to Osan Air Force Base where she reported to the 51<sup>st</sup> Supply Squadron. The base was located one and a half hours south of Seoul and three hours south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The barracks there were from the Korean conflict and were infested with roaches which could be heard crawling on the walls at night and would also crawl over her. The weather was boiling hot in the summer and snowy in the winter. In the fall, there would be torrential rains.

The base had A-2 training planes as well as U-2 spy planes. The spy planes took off at night or in the very early morning so Jeri only saw them twice while she was there. Jeri continued to work in supply and did well enough that she received a plaque of appreciation for her time there. There were also numerous calls made to her commanding officers complimenting her on her abilities.

Recreation on base was limited to the movie theatre and swimming pool. Jeri responded to an ad on a bulletin board on base to learn to be a life guard. After completing the course, she worked as a life guard at the base pool. Jeri also recalls that it was difficult to stay connected to the outside world while on base.

Jeri took many trips into Seoul and toured numerous temples. She also recalls being treated very well. There was a 9 to 1 ratio of men to women on the base. Off the base, the South Koreans wanted the Americans to be there. She made many friends and the veterans would encourage others by telling about their experiences and how things would turn out OK and how she should appreciate her time in the service. Jeri was also fortunate to enjoy good health during this time and only became sick once while in South Korea. Many of her comrades were not so fortunate. One of the most unusual scenes she witnessed was the line for shots at the base clinic that ran around the block and down to the barracks.



Jeri was impressed by the culture of the Asian people when it came to taking care of each other. They were very WE oriented as opposed to ME oriented. Simple things like seeing a grown son helping his father cross the street, a family living in the back of the store and working all day in the front, the whole family banding together to send the eldest son to college.

Baptized...

There were religious services available on base and the Methodist Church was active in South Korea. Her mother encouraged her to be baptized so she took the classes and was baptized Catholic and confirmed on the same day while in South Korea.

After one year in South Korea, Jeri was transferred to Andrews Air Force Base, MD. This is the base where Air Force One is located and a security clearance was required to be chosen for the base. The President would come to the base about once a week, but Jeri didn't work near where Air Force One was kept so she didn't get to see him. The base was very modern, especially when compared to the

conditions in South Korea. By this time, Jeri had less than a year to go in her enlistment and she began to prepare for the future by taking college courses and getting her EMT license.

Jeri had a feeling of maturity upon being discharged. Her time in the military had given her the opportunity to travel that she had been looking for and it gave her the motivation to go back to college. One surprising thing about the military was how normal one's life could be in the service when there wasn't an active war. For much of the time, being in the Air Force was just like a regular job and she had time to have a life outside of the military. She is also proud of the fact that while working in supply, she was able to recover millions of dollars worth of equipment and parts that otherwise would have been lost and the crews on the planes were very grateful because her efforts kept the planes flying when parts were needed.

Jeri says that being in the military is forever weaved into the person you become. She has relied on lessons learned in the military many times in her life as a single parent, homeowner and employee. She has a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for those who have served in the US military. It is difficult to fully appreciate the sacrifices and difficulties that our service men and women have endured and she is extremely grateful for all that they have done to protect and preserve our freedom.