

Interviewee: Dame, Margaret
Interviewer: Robin Sellers
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Sellers: Mrs. Dame, do we have your permission to record this interview?

Dame: Yes, actually Miss.

Sellers: Miss, excuse me.

Dame: That's okay.

Sellers: Do we have you permission to record the interview?

Dame: Absolutely.

Sellers: Okay, fine. Why don't we go ahead and start off, then, with your memories of coming to Tallahassee with your family in 1948. Tell me what you remember about that.

Dame: Well, my dad moved us to Tallahassee in the summer of 1948 between my sophomore and junior years in high school. We all thought we were coming to South Florida, really, and of course we came to Tallahassee and that was a little bit of a shock because everybody in school called us crackers because we lived so close to Georgia. That was hard for us kids that were young, you know. But anyway, we survived and I finished high school there in Tallahassee.

Sellers: At what high school?

Dame: At Leon County High School.

Sellers: Where was it located at the time?

Dame: I think it's still there because —

Sellers: In the same place?

Dame: Yes, because I was back in 2001 and we drove by it.

Sellers: You said your dad brought you to Tallahassee. Why did he come to Tallahassee?

Dame: He came to Tallahassee because he was offered the opportunity to be the ... I think

he was called the chairman of the Department of Business Education at FSU, which of course had just recently gone coed and changed the name. So, you know, it was sort of a grassroots thing for him.

Sellers: Was there any thought of you going to the demonstration school on campus instead of Leon High? Do you recall that?

Dame: Not that I can recall.

Sellers: So you graduated from Leon High in '48?

Dame: No, '49. '50, '50, I'm sorry.

Sellers: You came in '48 but you graduated in '50.

Dame: Right, '50. I had two years at Leon High School.

Sellers: Where did you come from?

Dame: We came from a place called Havertown, Pennsylvania. It's right outside of Philadelphia.

Sellers: Had you lived in the South prior to this?

Dame: We lived down near College Park, Maryland, for three years during World War II, but other than that we'd never been south of Maryland.

Sellers: What did you find interesting about the South and Tallahassee? Anything?

Dame: Well, the language was different.

Sellers: [laughs] There was a language barrier?

Dame: Because I grew up in and around Philadelphia most of my life. But, it was nice because people were very polite. They weren't as cold and hard as they are up in the Northeast. It was, you know, okay and we adjusted and I learned to love it. We all gave our winter coats away because we were coming to south Florida, you know, and we had to go out and buy new clothes.

Sellers: So it got cold once you got here?

Dame: Oh, Lordy, I mean the winters ... I remember going to school on the school bus when it was seventeen degrees. So I don't know whether it was unusual or not but I do remember those days.

Sellers: How long did you personally stay in Tallahassee after you graduated?

Dame: I went right from high school to FSU. I went to the summer session of 1950 and then I stayed through my junior year in 1953.

Sellers: What was your course of study?

Dame: I was a bacteriology major.

Sellers: Who do you remember as your faculty? Anybody in particular?

Dame: Well, you know, I was afraid you were going to ask that. I can't remember the lady who was the doctor who was in charge of it. One of the reasons I left was the powers that be had my future planned out for me that when I graduated with my B.S. that they would keep me there and I would get my master's and go on for a Ph.D. and I really didn't want that.

Sellers: If I run a couple of names past you ... Ann Pates?

Dame: No.

Sellers: Mary Noka Hood?

Dame: Yeah, I think that's who it was. Dr. Hood.

Sellers: Yeah, that's typical of what she was doing back at that time. They were trying very hard to get women who would be able to go ahead for PhDs. So you didn't like that idea?

Dame: No, because I got into my junior year and I got stuck in a class of biochemistry that I wasn't doing well in because it was just a lecture class and we had a professor who was German. I didn't understand him too well and I was in a class with premedical students who knew how to get their information from books. I needed lab classes and demonstrations and stuff like that in order to learn. I did very well in all of my other science classes but I did not do well in that class.

Sellers: Did you transfer to another school?

Dame: I decided to change my major because I got tired of looking at bacteria. And water — we had a course in water and sewage and canned goods that got kind of depressing for me. So, with my science background, I wanted something that was connected and I had a friend from high school who was already in nursing school at Johns Hopkins. She came to see me at Christmastime and I decided to apply to Hopkins. So I went off to Johns Hopkins in August of '53.

Sellers: Did you complete your studies there?

Dame: Absolutely.

Sellers: The information that you've given me, then, says that you went on into an Air Force career?

Dame: Well, I worked for a year at Hopkins after I graduated because I had graduated with a combined diploma and B.S. because of my three years at FSU. I worked there in the Henry Phipps Clinic, which is a psychiatric clinic, and then I moved down to West Palm Beach. I worked as a civilian nurse for a year to get some more experience in general duty. I worked at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm. Then I joined the Air Force at West Palm Beach Air Force Station.

Sellers: What made you join the Air Force?

Dame: I liked the uniform.

Sellers: [laughs] Are you serious?

Dame: Well, I did at that time, but I also knew that it would give me a chance to travel and the opportunities were there. Absolutely. An RN with a B.S. those years in Florida, I made \$50 a week. When I decided to work evenings with no weekends off I made \$65 a week. And, you know, it wasn't enough money really. But I joined the Air Force and I didn't make more basic pay but I had more benefits.

Sellers: And this is the mid to late '50s?

Dame: I joined the Air Force in 1958.

Sellers: Okay, so late '50s. So there's no real danger on the horizon of you being sent into any kind of a war situation at that point?

Dame: Not right then.

Sellers: Where did the Air Force send you?

Dame: To Tampa, to MacDill Air Force Base.

Sellers: Well, you're just traveling all over the world, aren't you?

Dame: They sent me close enough to home to go home but not close enough for my parents to be on me all the time.

Sellers: The ideal situation.

Dame: It was, it was very good. And I liked Tampa - Tampa was nice.

Sellers: Tell me a little bit about being in the Air Force in Tampa. What was your schedule like? What did you do?

Dame: I was a 2nd lieutenant and I worked in general duty, mostly with females and kids in the dependent units until I hurt my back. Then they sent me off to Keesler Air Force Base to have a laminectomy. I came back to Tampa and they allowed me to work on one of the male wards, which was a lot easier. I stayed there until I went overseas.

Sellers: When did you go overseas?

Dame: I went to England in September of 1960.

Sellers: Where in England were you based?

Dame: It was a place called RAF Molesworth. We called it "Moses Hole."

Sellers: Why?

Dame: Well, because it was so similar. And it had been an RAF base during World War II and there was an air field there. But no planes ever landed; we rode our bikes on the runway.

Sellers: So it was just hanging out there as pseudo airfield?

Dame: Well, it was one of the many that was left over from World War II. If you go to England now you'll see a lot of deserted air fields that have never been covered with farm land or anything. They were out in East Anglia, which is the farmer's place.

Sellers: What did you do while you were there?

Dame: I worked in OB for three years.

Sellers: And this would have been military wives?

Dame: Yes.

Sellers: Were there any civilians involved or was it strictly military wives?

Dame: No, we were way out in the country and we were the central location for four or five Air Force bases in England. All of the pregnant ladies come to us.

Sellers: Did you ever have any interesting experiences?

Dame: Oh yeah. We rode a lot of ambulances and delivered a lot of babies ourselves.

Sellers: What did you not like about doing something like that? Was there anything that put you off about it?

Dame: No. I was a 1st lieutenant by then and young and having a good time.

Sellers: So you were perfectly happy about it.

Dame: It was a good experience. I learned all my OB there because when I was at Hopkins, the only OB patients they ever saw at Hopkins were abnormal ones. So all I saw were abnormal deliveries and I was very depressed about OB. But when I got to England I started seeing the good sides of it and learned a lot. Because I did, I delivered a lot of babies. I delivered a set of twins in an ambulance one night.

Sellers: Was that scary?

Dame: A little bit but there was nobody else there? I didn't really deliver them; they just came out.

Sellers: They just arrived and you were there to catch them?

Dame: I caught them.

Sellers: Where did you go from England? Did you stay in England the whole time you were overseas?

Dame: Yes, I was there three years.

Sellers: Okay, so that would have been until —

Dame: 1963.

Sellers: '63. Are you aware at all of anything going on in Southeast Asia at that time?

Dame: Not really.

Sellers: Where do you go, then, in '63 from England?

Dame: I went to Scott Air Force Base, which is in Belleville, Illinois, outside of St. Louis.

Sellers: Was it nice to be back home in the States?

Dame: Oh yeah. It was very nice. At that time my dad went to ... he spent some time as a visiting professor at SIU, which is in southern Illinois, so my folks would come and visit me and I would take the train down and visit them.

Sellers: Were you doing the same thing, working at obstetrics?

Dame: No, I worked on the dependent floor again. By this time, I was a captain and I was a charge nurse on a unit that had military female dependents and pediatrics.

Sellers: I was about to ask you if dependent included pediatrics?

Dame: Yes, it did at that hospital.

Sellers: Okay. What kind of cases were you seeing? Just run of the mill, standard — ?

Dame: Yes, general surgery patients and we took care of the all the GYN post-op patients. We had all the pediatric patients. Those were the days when they were just beginning to start trying with the concept of intensive care units. Up until that time we never had intensive care units. We had those really sick patients just on a regular floor or in a room or, you know, like that. So they were just starting with that idea. I worked on that floor for a couple of years. During that time, I filled out the paperwork for the Air Force to send me back for my master's. While I was waiting to find out what school I was going to go to, I worked for about six or eight months in charge of the recovery room there at Scott.

Sellers: But the recovery room was not involved with intensive care?

Dame: No, because we didn't have it.

Sellers: You still didn't have it?

Dame: We really didn't have it. They set up the end of one of the wards ... it was the male surgical floor and they tried to start up what they were calling an intensive care unit but it was pretty crude compared to what they are now. But that was the beginning, you know.

Sellers: Do you think that affected a lot of people that might have recovered in a different fashion? Was it becoming obvious that they needed something like intensive care to the nurses?

Dame: Oh yeah, yeah. Because, see, they were doing more sophisticated surgeries and the patients were sicker.

Sellers: They were sicker because the surgery was more intensive?

Dame: Yeah.

Sellers: Okay. When do you start to realize there's going to be a mess over in Southeast Asia.

Dame: While I was there.

Sellers: Okay, while you were in Illinois at Scott.

Dame: Yes.

Sellers: What kind of discussions, if any, are you having with your coworkers about it? Anything?

Dame: Well, not a whole lot, really. But I was there working at the hospital the day that President Kennedy was shot.

Sellers: What was that like?

Dame: Well, we did have a TV and they moved one of the TVs out in the hall so that, you know, we could sort of keep up with it. That was shocking. But, you know, I don't remember us really discussing too much about Southeast Asia. At that time we didn't have patients or personnel or anybody who had been over there.

Sellers: Right. But I just wondered if from an aspect of your future career, if anybody was thinking along those lines.

Dame: Not really.

Sellers: How long do you stay at Scott?

Dame: I stayed there until I went to graduate school. I left there in the summer, about August, of 1966.

Sellers: And went to graduate school where?

Dame: I went to the University of Washington-Seattle.

Sellers: Okay. Why so far away? Was that just the grad school you selected or was that where the military sent you?

Dame: Well, see, when I applied, I had to send all my credentials in and I had asked to go to the University of North Carolina or Catholic U or — there was one other one I put down, because you could make three choices. Well, none of those schools would accept me because of the nature of my bachelor's degree. My B.S., you know, was gotten by matriculation and approval of the credits by Johns Hopkins. But Johns Hopkins didn't have a nursing program, see.

Those were the days they were getting into this B.S.N. business and, you know, you had to have certain courses. So they just kept trying to see what school was going to take me. When I got to the University of Washington, one of my mentors told me that they had petitioned me in. I had decent grades, but it was just the nature of the background that I had. They had just a one-year program with a thesis.

Sellers: Did you feel like you were going to have to prove yourself to them?

Dame: Well, maybe, but you know, I just did my usual thing and I did alright [laughs].

Sellers: Well, that was lucky.

Dame: But I was there with four or five other Air Force nurses who became my friends and we also had some Navy nurses, some of whom I still keep up with. They were all on government sponsored programs from the military.

Sellers: Did the government or the military pay for everything or did you have to contribute some of your own?

Dame: No. They paid everything and they paid us a full salary while we were there and paid our quarters allowance.

Sellers: Okay, that's a pretty good deal.

Dame: The civilian students liked us because we were the only ones that could afford to give parties.

Sellers: Did you give any?

Dame: A lot, yes.

Sellers: Did you live on the campus or off?

Dame: Well, no, I didn't live on campus at the University, no. All of us lived off-campus.

Sellers: You said there were several other Navy nurses and Air Force nurses there. What about the average age of the students? Were you a lot older than some of the others?

Dame: No, I was right probably in the middle.

Sellers: When you got your master's, when was it?

Dame: I got it in May of '67.

Sellers: What exactly was it in?

Dame: It was just called a Master of Nursing. But it was — my electives were all taken in supervision, but you had to have a clinical, so mine was medical-surgical nursing.

Sellers: What did that qualify you basically to do as far as the military was concerned that you couldn't have done prior to your master's?

Dame: Well, to go on into supervisory positions. But you see, at that time, there were still a lot of the old-school who were the full colonels and the leaders in the Air Force Nurse Corps. When you came to them with a master's, you had more education than they did. Some of them, they didn't even have bachelor's degrees. So we were very careful about how we talked about it because we were a threat to them. We just sort of stayed and did our little jobs and whatever.

Sellers: That probably was a problem, was it not? I mean, now you have the training.

Dame: For some people it was. But if you got a progressive chief nurse, some of whom did have bachelor's — and I was even lucky enough a couple of times to have one that had a master's and they had a full understanding and would support whatever you were supposed to be doing.

Sellers: So there were some others who were

Dame: There were some, but it was — see, when I joined the Air Force, I was a rarity because I already had my B.S. So, by coming up through the way I did, I just came a little bit before a lot of the others and so, you know, it was alright. It worked out.

Sellers: So you didn't really run into any occupational hitches or anything like that?

Dame: Not really. I just had another nurse who had a master's come to see me one day on my ward and I was a charge nurse and I was helping some of the technicians make beds and she informed me later that I shouldn't have been doing that because I had a master's degree.

Sellers: Okay. Did you plan on going to Vietnam?

Dame: Not really.

Sellers: How did it happen that you went from what you were doing with your master's now, and seemingly content with it, that you got involved over there?

Dame: Well, see, in 1965 I had taken a six-week flight nurse course down here in San Antonio, so I was qualified to be a flight nurse. So, when I left the University of Washington, one of my peers had a friend who was helpful in getting people assignments. She wanted to

know, since we had just put in a year in graduate school, where we wanted to go. So I said I wanted to be a flight nurse and I'd like to go to Japan because I had some friends there. Well, instead, she got me an assignment to Hawaii. I went to Hickham Air Force Base for three years. I wasn't there very much but that was my home base.

Sellers: Why were you not there very much?

Dame: Because I was in Vietnam and in the Philippines and Japan and Alaska.

Sellers: So that was just your home base and then how did it happen that you went to these other places? Was it part of your duty?

Dame: Yeah. There were eight nurses ... that was the headquarters for the PAC-AF, which is the Pacific Air Force. So eight of us, we mingled with the rest of the squadrons. There was a squadron in the Philippines and one in Japan and we set one up in Anchorage, Alaska. There were 125 flight nurses, all told, and we all flew together all around the system. I would leave Hawaii, go to the Philippines and get assigned for a flight into Vietnam, out of Vietnam either back to the Philippines or to Japan and to Alaska and to the East Coast, so it was all a long round-robin thing.

Sellers: What were your duties on these flights?

Dame: Well, you took care of the casualties. Usually half of our patients were ambulatory and half were litter patients. You know, we carried various combinations because we were in a cargo plane that was converted. Once it got to Vietnam it was converted for patients and we would be assigned to the flight and we would get on the flight with anywhere from fifty to 100 patients and fly our missions with those patients. They were at all levels. Some were quite ill and others, of course, were not. There were two flight nurses and three med techs on each flight.

Sellers: Were they being evacuated from the actual battlefields?

Dame: No. The battlefield evacuations were done by helicopter and mostly by Army. Then they were brought into casualty staging facilities that the Air Force had. We had them in Cam Rahn Bay, Danang, and Saigon. We would go and see the patients in the holding units when they were assigned to our flight. We'd go to see them the night before and decide where on the aircraft we had to place them. Then we made out a load plan and then in the morning we would go to the aircraft and we would load the patients. When they were all on the planes we would take off for wherever we were going.

Sellers: Did you have to do the evaluation on them to decide if some stayed and some went with you?

Dame: No, the doctors usually determined that.

Sellers: So you were given a patient and it was just a matter of you deciding on your flight he would go.

Dame: Exactly because we knew what his destination was.

Sellers: Did you have any problems with some of their injuries dealing with them? How did you feel about them?

Dame: Well, when you're evacuating GIs who are glad to get out of the war zone, you don't have too many problems. They just want to get gone.

Sellers: What about your own personal feelings? How did you feel about the war? Were you a supporter of it all the way through?

Dame: Well, no, I just had a job to do and somebody had to do it and so I was getting my experience as a flight nurse. It was very good experience. But, you know, I didn't have any strong feelings about it.

Sellers: So you were looking at it more as this is the job I have to do and it doesn't matter if I like it or not?

Dame: Well, you know, we knew from the beginning when we joined up that the President was our boss. Whatever was going on, if we didn't want to do it, we just needed to get out.

Sellers: So you went into the service with that attitude?

Dame: Oh, gosh, yes.

Sellers: And it stayed with you?

Dame: Absolutely.

Sellers: Did you ever question experiences over there while you were being — ?

Dame: Not while I was doing it, no.

Sellers: Okay. You said you were stationed at Hickham for three years?

Dame: Yes.

Sellers: When did you move on from there?

Dame: I left there in August of 1970.

Sellers: Were you glad to be moving on? Was it by choice?

Dame: Oh no, that was a three-year tour.

Sellers: So it was an automatic rotation.

Dame: And I had never really asked for anything except to be a flight nurse and so when I left there with my master's degree and my flight nurse experience in the war zone, I knew that there were jobs teaching. So the colonel who had been my boss at Hickham was then down here at Brooks at the Aerospace Flight Nurse School and I wrote to her to see if she had a position. She did and so I moved to Brooks to teach flight nursing for four years.

Sellers: How did you feel about leaving the combat area?

Dame: Well, it was all right. I loved Hawaii; I didn't get enough time to spend there but my mother came to visit me while I was there. My dad died while I was there so I brought my mother to Hawaii with me for a while. She really enjoyed it and I went off flying all the time and she stayed there and enjoyed Hawaii. It was all right because I was tired. You know, we lived through some Tet offensives and we did a lot of flying at high altitudes. So, you know, it was time to change.

Sellers: So you came back stateside, and what did you think about the reaction of the country, what was going on in the United States about the Vietnam War at the time?

Dame: Oh, it was terrible.

Sellers: You were absolutely opposed to the opposition to the war?

Dame: Yes, because I came home and we were always encouraged if we flew "space available" to wear our uniforms, but there came a period when we were told, "Don't wear your uniform." Well, not on civilian airplanes.

Sellers: Was it demoralizing?

Dame: No, it was just sort of an insult.

Sellers: Okay, so you considered that you were being insulted?

Dame: Well, not only me but the patients we were bringing back. See, because it was even evident when we flew into Andrews Air Force Base outside of Washington with a whole load of battle casualties, to see even the reaction of the people who had to get up in the middle of the night to come out and meet the airplanes. You know, even the military and the civilian people – some of them, not all of them – it was obvious that they were far removed from the war zone and they really had no appreciation of what these people had been through.

Sellers: Really? Even the people that were coming and helping?

Dame: Not all of them but some of them. You know, they didn't like it that we came in at these odd hours.

Sellers: Well, it's too bad you couldn't have made it more convenient for them.

Dame: That's right.

Sellers: When the war ended, what were your interests? How did you compare what you were doing in the States to what you had been doing as far as a flight nurse and evacuation and things like that?

Dame: Well, I enjoyed teaching flight nursing.

Sellers: So it wasn't tame and boring after the exciting experiences?

Dame: Oh, no, no, because they wanted to know; they wanted us to share our information. Half of our students were Reserves and National Guard and the rest of them were active duty. But anyway, when my four-year tour of Brooks was up, I was told that I had sixteen years in the Air Force and had never had a short tour and so where did I want to go? I said, "Well, I guess you better send me back to the Philippines." So I went back to the war zone.

Sellers: What is a short tour?

Dame: A short tour is like a year or fifteen months and it's usually in a hospital or a dangerous area. All of my tours had been considered good tours and so they were longer, either three or four years.

Sellers: Okay, so now you're going to get put somewhere that's not as fun to be and they're not going to let you stay there as long.

Dame: Well, I went for a fifteen-month tour to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines.

Sellers: What kind of experiences did you have there?

Dame: I went there as an educational coordinator; I worked for the chief nurse. That was orientation, continuing education, in-service training, and whatever – CPR training and any kind of training that was done with the nursing service personnel, which were nurses and technicians.

Sellers: What was dangerous about that that they made it a short tour?

Dame: Nothing was really dangerous, it was just that it was in one of those third-world countries. The Philippines was not, you know, considered to be a very elite tour. In other words,

we didn't go off base very much and we didn't go to Manila and places like that.

Sellers: So it's not that it was a dangerous position, it was just that it wasn't one of the better ones.

Dame: Well, of course, the Philippines even then had a lot of rebellion. You know, there were people that were doing all kinds of risky things and trying to challenge people. Some people didn't like Americans there.

Sellers: Gee, how times have changed [laughs].

Dame: Yeah.

Sellers: So you only stayed for a year?

Dame: No, fifteen months.

Sellers: Fifteen months, okay, I'm sorry.

Dame: But it was while I was there that Saigon fell. So we got all the Vietnamese on the base. We also had the baby lift - all of the orphan babies. They came over, stayed over in the Philippines. We had all kinds of setups there for the adults and the children and we, as nurses, staffed all of these hangars and places where we put all the refugees up. That was quite an experience.

Sellers: I guess it was. What did you do with them? Did they need treatment or were you simply — ?

Dame: No, we were just a stopover place for them. See, when they were evacuated with the fall of Saigon, they would bring them to the Philippines and then they would sort of classify them and interview them and different things. They would decide there where to send them. A lot of those people were sent to Guam to refugee camps and stuff like that. We didn't keep them there; we had a tent city. But, you know, that was quite an interesting experience.

Sellers: I guess it was, yeah. What was the thinking or the reaction of the people that had been evacuated that you were keeping in the tent city? Were they totally lost or confused?

Dame: No, it's just a lot of them didn't speak English but they were very appreciative. They were happy to be gone out of Vietnam.

Sellers: So it wasn't as if we were yanking them from their homeland or anything like that?

Dame: No, no, no, no - they went very willingly. In fact, some of those babies really

weren't – they called them orphans, but they weren't orphans. They were children of some of the higher-ups who had cooperated with the Americans. But they were put in the Operation Baby-lift because it was a safe place.

Sellers: And it was a good way to get them out of danger.

Dame: Yes.

Sellers: When you came back from the Philippines where did you go?

Dame: I went to Carswell in Fort Worth.

Sellers: Are you beginning to feel like a nomad yet?

Dame: Well, yeah, but that's the way you are when you're in the military.

Sellers: So that was okay with you?

Dame: Yeah, because people used to ask me when I was growing up if my dad was in the military because we moved so much.

Sellers: So it was the same thing that you'd always known?

Dame: Oh yeah. And it was always a new place and you made new friends. The military was wonderful.

Sellers: So you didn't have any problems at all with the moving, you didn't feel like you were being shoveled around?

Dame: No, I wanted to come here to Wilford Hall, but I was a lieutenant-colonel by then and the chief nurse was a friend of mine and I wrote her a letter and she said she had too many colonels so I had to go somewhere else [laughs]. So I went to

Sellers: Or get busted, right?

Dame: No, well, I only had a couple more years, so I went to Ft. Worth.

Sellers: What did you do your last couple of years there? Do you feel like you're just waiting out a retirement term?

Dame: Oh, no. I was educational coordinator again. I did the same job I had been doing in the Philippines.

Sellers: So you stayed very active.

Dame: Absolutely.

Sellers: Do you have to retire at a certain point?

Dame: No. Well, if you stay for thirty you usually have to retire, but I had always intended to retire at twenty.

Sellers: Okay, so this was twenty coming up and you were going to follow through with that?

Dame: Yeah.

Sellers: Were you happy about it when it happened?

Dame: Oh, sure. I've never been sorry.

Sellers: So you were completely prepared for it and looking forward to it and all those kinds of things?

Dame: Uh-huh.

Sellers: What did you do then?

Dame: Well, I took a year off really. I lived up at Ft. Worth and I stayed up there for a while. The government has a thing that you can take a year to decide where you want your belongings moved for your retirement. So I took that year and I, of course, had intended to come back to San Antonio because I liked it when I was here. So that's what I did. While I was up in Ft. Worth that last year I started making trips down here looking for a house to buy. Finally, when my year was almost up I moved down here.

Sellers: So you let the military do things for you?

Dame: Oh, every time I could.

Sellers: Did you continue with a nursing career after you were out of the military?

Dame: Yes. When I got down here I was fortunate enough to be interviewed and got a job working for the Dean at the University of Texas Health Science center here in San Antonio in the School of Nursing and I was again an education person. Let's see what I was called ... I was called ... oh, I can't remember what my title was, but anyway, I did the same thing. I did continuing education for the school of nursing here in Texas.

Sellers: When did you retire from that?

Dame: Oh, I didn't retire.

Sellers: You're still doing it?

Dame: No, no, I stayed there three years.

Sellers: Just the way you were talking it sounded like that was where you stayed.

Dame: I probably could have but the Dean really wanted an all Ph.D. staff and even though I wasn't a Ph.D. the lady who took my place was. But, I was not willing to drive to Austin to get a PhD just for that. I just did it three years and I enjoyed it very much.

Sellers: So you moved on then to — ?

Dame: Well, I did a couple of part-time things. We had a part-time business on the side; we did continuing education here in San Antonio for nurses. I worked with some of the faculty from the school. I also started to work in the hyperbaric chambers here in town. We had two centers for hyperbaric and I had been trained as a hyperbaric nurse while I was at flight nurse school teaching. So I went to work for the doctors who had run the chambers for the Air Force who were then retired and moved into the civilian community. So I was a hyperbaric nurse, then, for the next about ten years.

Sellers: That's fascinating, because that was something that was just brand new.

Dame: Yeah, it really was. The military had been doing it for a while but it wasn't in the civilian community.

Sellers: Did you prefer the military to the civilian way of doing things or were they both different but just as good? What do you think about that?

Dame: Well, since the doctors who ran the hyperbaric chambers were all former military and I had been with them down at Brooks, it was more military than it was civilian anyway.

Sellers: And you had dealt with civilians being on dependent care and things like that, so there wasn't that much of a difference one way or the other.

Dame: Yes.

Sellers: What kind of strides do you think our involvement made in medicine?

Dame: Oh, well, I'm sure that the combat medics that are overseas in Iraq now are benefitting from all of the knowledge they gained in Vietnam. One of the things that happened in Vietnam was there was an Army doctor, and I think he was from here, from Ft. Sam, who with the chest injuries, invented or devised a temporary chest tube for patients to expand their lungs.

It was called the Heimlich Valve. He also started the Heimlich Maneuver.

Sellers: So that was the fellow that originated it?

Dame: Yes, and he was a doctor in Vietnam at some time; I don't know what year. But by the time I was flying with those patients, we had those patients on flight. We would have those because we couldn't carry chest bottles and chest tubes. We had this little temporary thing that had a little flutter valve in it and it was already hooked to the patient. It was really a life-saver for them.

Sellers: I've talked to some World War II nurses who said things were invented on Hope ships and things like that, that became traditional use.

Dame: Sure.

Sellers: I don't think from the way you've been talking that you have any regrets at all. Do you have any special thoughts about how we are relating to the soldiers in Iraq right now compared to what happened in Vietnam? Do you think we're overly defensive about being critical or anything like that?

Dame: Well, I don't know. I just have the feeling that, you know, I know that they're running short of troops and we're getting too many killed. If we had more troops there and better trained, we probably wouldn't be having so many deaths. I think it's a very hard situation. I have a very good friend who is now a full colonel. She is a commander but she's based in Kuwait right now. I hear from her every once in awhile. She was a student of mine at flight school and was on the C-5 out of Saigon back in 1975 before the fall of Saigon - that's the baby-flight that crashed. But anyway, she got out of the Air Force and decided to come back in and finish her career. Her thirty years will be up next year but she's stationed in Kuwait. So I hear from her a lot about situations over there and so forth. And, of course, a lot of the people in Kuwait, I guess, are connected with the Iraqi troops. But, I don't know. I feel bad for those young people because some days I think they're fighting a losing battle with all of the terrorism and stuff.

Sellers: Yeah, I don't think we can win a terrorism battle. I think we're just going to have to learn to co-exist with it.

Dame: Yeah, and you know, we just keep getting more and more killed.

Sellers: Well, is there anything else that you'd like to add to the interview? Have I skipped over asking you anything that you wanted to talk about?

Dame: I don't think so. I mean, you certainly asked a lot of real nice pertinent questions. I didn't know what all you really wanted me to talk about, being as you're at FSU.

Sellers: Well, let's end the interview. Let me ask you again if we've had your permission to tape record this?

Dame: Yes.

End